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Language contact, creolization, and genetic linguistics: the case of Mwiini

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1.0 Introduction

Historical linguistics has traditionally distinguished between two types of change. One is internal change, the other externally motivated change, equated by most practitioners with "borrowing". Over the last several decades the possibility of new models of externally motivated change has slowly gained wider acceptance. These have been brought together and given explicit form in Thomason and Kaufman 1988 (henceforth TK). To many historical linguists who have long felt the inadequacy of the existing models, the appearance of TK is indeed welcome.

Under externally motivated models TK recognize borrowing, language shift, pidginization, and abrupt creolization, although, as will be seen, the distinction between the latter two is hardly relevant for this article because they are probably indistinguishable retrospectively.

I assume the validity of these models and of the widely available details of how they work, and am not particularly concerned with such issues here. Rather I am interested in how to recognize their operation retrospectively, in the kinds of traces they leave behind, in how they might be used as tools for revealing the past. In their last chapter, TK examine eight language case studies in detail, and in the rest of the book they deal in less detail with over fifty other cases. In most of these, they know, on the one hand, the sociohistorical circumstances more or less well, and, on the other hand, the linguistic outcome of the circumstances. On the basis of this material, they are able to advance proposals about the linguistic features likely to result from each of the models mentioned. What follows is an attempt to test the predictive value of TK's proposals by applying them to Mwiini (henceforth Mw, which is Kisseberth's Chi-mwi:ni of the 1970s). This is a small, isolated, northern Swahili community of 12,000-15,000 people, located mainly at Barawa on the southern Somali coast. Whereas comparison with Mw's closest relatives establishes the linguistic changes it has undergone since it split from them approximately 900 years ago, we know only in a general way the sociohistorical circumstances of the community over that period. It thus provides a good test case for TK's models, in that we can set what we know of the sociohistorical background against the linguistic changes undergone by Mw, apply the models, and gauge the extent of the fit, but at the same time we can see if the models will offer additional suggestions about possible sociohistorical conditions or events.

2.0 Characteristic features of Thomason and Kaufman's models

A set of linguistic features characterizes each of TK's models of change. As these then become part of the language affected, they would be expected to remain in the language and be available for retrospective examination. For the details of pidginization/(abrupt) creolization, TK's proposals are supplemented by Heine 1979 (whose data is Bantu-based), Polomé 1980, and Holm 1989.

2.1 Borrowing (TK Chapter 4)

TK define borrowing as "the incorporation of foreign features into a group's native language by speakers of that language: the native language is

maintained but is changed by the addition of the incorporated features". They propose a borrowing scale with five levels:

2.1.1 Level 1. Casual contact: lexical borrowing only

Content words, non-basic then basic.

2.1.2 Level 2. Slightly more intense contact: slight structural borrowing

Lexicon: as above, plus function words (adverbials, conjunctions, etc).

Structure: minor phonological (e.g. new phonemes via loanwords), syntactic (e.g. new functions or orderings causing little or no typological disruption), lexical semantic features.

2.1.3 Level 3. More intense contact: slightly more structural borrowing

As above, plus:

Lexicon: adpositions, derivational affixes productive in new language, inflectional affixes only in borrowed items, personal/demonstrative pronouns and low numerals.

Structure: phonemicization, even in native lexicon, of previously allophonic alternations, easily borrowed prosodic and syllable structure processes (e.g. stress phenomena). No change as major as e.g. SOV to SVO, but e.g. borrowed postpositionals in an otherwise prepositional language (or vice versa).

2.1.4 Level 4. Strong cultural pressure: moderate structural borrowing

As above, plus major structural features that cause relatively little typological change.

Phonology: new distinctive features in native language, maybe loss of contrasts, new syllable structure constraints, a few natural and automatic morphophonemic rules (e.g. palatalization, final obstruent devoicing).

Morphology: borrowed inflectional affixes/categories added to native words, esp. if there is a good typological fit.

Syntax: fairly extensive word order changes.

2.1.5 Level 5. Very strong cultural pressure: heavy structural borrowing

As above, plus major structural features that cause significant typological disruption.

Phonology: new morphophonemic rules, new phonetic changes, loss of phonemic contrasts, loss of morphophonemic rules.

Morphology: changes in word structure rules.

Syntax: categorial/extensive ordering changes in morphosyntax, added concord rules.

2.2 Shift scale (TK Chapter 5)

Shift is defined thus: "In this kind of interference a group of speakers shifting to a Target Language (henceforth TL) fail to learn the TL perfectly. The errors made by members of the shifting group in speaking the TL then spread to the TL as a whole when...imitated by original speakers of that language." Shift with no interference is common, and likely if a) the shifting group is small relative to the TL community, and b) it takes several generations to complete, implying the availability of the TL, and considerable bilingualism. On the basis of significantly fewer cases than for borrowing, TK then recognize:

2.2.1 Level 1. Slight interference from shift: phonological and syntactic features, not lexical

Phonology: e.g. new accent rules, phonemicization of allophonic rules.

Syntax: e.g. a few derivational affixes, word order rules.

While one difference between borrowing and shift is that the former typically involves early and/or major lexical transfer while the latter does not, T. Schadeberg has pointed out one set of circumstances where shift would likely entail lexical transfer. Where the shifting population did not have regular access to the TL words for certain specialized semantic areas, or where the shifting population had a specialized lexicon for some area not part of the TL community's culture, then the shifters would transfer lexis to the TL. The Elmolo of Kenya's Rift valley would exemplify the latter (Heine 1982).

2.2.2 Level 2. Moderate to heavy interference: more examples of phonological and syntactic features, plus some interference in inflectional morphology (derivational morphology more likely to accompany lexical and possibly syntactic interference)

Phonology: e.g. etic replacements, emic mergers, new marked phonemes (e.g. clicks)

Morphology: e.g. some interference in inflectional morphology; loss or merger of categories, their replacement by analytic and syntactic patterns, native TL morphemes combined and used in shifting patterns (whereas in borrowing borrowed morphemes are thus used), new types of morphology (agglutinating vs. flexional etc), new morphological distinctions (case, gender, aspect...).

Syntax: as above, but more, new morphosyntactic patterns, word order and associated patterns.

It can be seen that the shifting scale is less well elaborated than for borrowing as are the details of the stages, because there are less clear and detailed cases of shift known.

2.3 Pidginization and "abrupt creolization" (TK Chapters 7 and 6)

Most scholars recognize a pidgin as an initial stage which, if it survives, is followed by a creole. TK want an additional route, namely an "abrupt" (i.e. instantaneous) creole, because they see no evidence for a pidgin stage in the early history of some creoles in West Africa, the Indian Ocean, and the Caribbean. They then however say (211): "From a retrospective viewpoint...abrupt creoles and pidgins...can be collapsed into...one..., because a longlived pidgin that...survives...will present essentially the same sorts of evidence for historical interpretation as an abrupt creole." Since the concern here is retrospective recognition of traces, in what follows pidgin and abrupt creole are therefore treated as one and referred to as 'pidgin'.

Typically, the lexicon of a pidgin is basically (= ?) that of a single source language, the vocabulary base language, whereas its other linguistic subsystems will be a function of its developers' various languages. The latter involves simplification of the various contact languages. The outcome of the simplification is determined partly by the grammars of the languages involved, partly by universal linguistic considerations. The final structures of a pidgin will be based partly on those of the vocabulary base language, partly on those of the other languages

involved, the latter being in time learned by speakers of the vocabulary base language. In contrast to borrowing, where non-TL structures usually specifically match those of some other language, the bulk of the structures in a pidgin will derive from a variety of source languages and not necessarily directly.

Lexicon: Usually that of the vocabulary base language and often restricted. The range of meaning in various lexical items is greater than in the source languages. There is a tendency to the multifunctionality of lexis (e.g. in adpositions).

Phonology: Non-systematic change in the lexicon leads to a considerable level of phonological irregularity. Typically there is reduction of the inventory and clear typological influence from the substrate languages.

(Specific kinds of phonological change are found in observing certain Bantu-based pidgins (Heine 1979): voiced merging with voiceless fricatives, plosives replacing implosives, loss of aspiration, drift to bisyllabic word structure, replacement of context-sensitive by context-free rules, reduction to five vowels, loss of distinctive length, replacement of palatal by alveolar fricatives, loss or reduction of tonal contrasts).

Morphology: Simplification. Reduction of number and gender distinctions. Loss of concord. Loss or reduction of inflection. Loss or reduction of TMA categories. New TMA markers from auxiliaries. Reanalysis of morpheme boundaries. Some structures those of TL, some those of the other languages, some not clearly either.

Syntax: Simplification. Analytic forms replacing synthetic. (See morphology)

2.4 A caveat

TK are emphatic that "it is the sociolinguistic history of the speakers, not the structure of their language, that is the primary determinant of the linguistic outcome of language contact". Relevant sociolinguistic factors include: degree of bilingualism; attitude towards, and relative prestige of, the languages involved; length, circumstances and intensity of contact; size and number of groups involved. Since in a historical situation these are never all completely known, there will always be surprises in the outcome of such contact.

3.0 The non-inherited component of Mwiini

3.1 From (southern) Somali

(Today's Standard Somali is based on northern Somali, large communities of whose speakers moved south only in the nineteenth century. Mw is spoken in and around Barawa, in the midst of southern-Somali speaking communities.

Like other eastern Bantu languages, Mw is SVO, NA, NG, prepositional, and prefixing, although some derivational suffixes occur).

3.1.1 Lexicon

Core lexis: In a modified Swadesh 100-word list, 4% (?) is from Somali, a much higher figure than for other closely related northern Swahili dialects.

General lexis: In a 500-page lexicon containing several thousand items, it has been estimated that "20%" is from Somali. Of these very few appear in other northern Swahili dialects. Many are everyday items, most obviously verbs, but there is also cultural material (agriculture, food, etc). They also include adjectives, for which the limited available data suggests non-concord with the noun, thus behaving unlike inherited adjectives.

3.1.2 Phonology

/h, q, ʔ, b, d, j, β, ð, r/ appear largely or exclusively in words of Somali origin. Not clear if this list is complete.

Syllable structure: In inherited words Mw has regularly deleted certain high vowels in certain contexts, resulting in consonant sequences which are not found elsewhere in Swahili and are more like those of Somali and Arabic. More work is needed to determine if they are specifically Somali- or Arabic-like. Words of Somali and Arabic origin do not appear with epenthetic vowels, as they do elsewhere in Swahili.

Palatalization of *k before high front vowel: Similar in Somali and Aweera.

3.1.3 Morphology

Noun: *-le* (Somali *-leh*), a derivational suffix forming adjectives from nouns (a man beard-*le* = a bearded man). *-dara* (St. Somali *-darro*), as preceding, but opposite meaning (a person *adaba-dara* = a person with no manners). Both apparently occur with Somali and non-Somali nouns.

Verb: One verb suffix *-aṭa*. In Somali this forms a past. The Mw data is limited and opaque, but it seems to be derivational and to co-occur only with verbs of Somali origin with a role other than past.

One auxiliary verb *-sula* 'want', used with any verb, regularly expressing conditional.

3.1.4 Verbal categories

Morphological simplification is not hard to discern. In Bantu languages the two main areas of morphological complexity are in the noun and the verb. In Mw the noun class system is not obviously simplified in ways different from the rest of Swahili, other than that concord between noun and adjective does not work at all or only partially in nouns of both Arabic and Somali origin, which represent a large percentage of all nouns.

More obvious is simplification in the verb. It has frequently been observed (e.g. Dahl 1985) that Bantu tense/aspect systems are among the most morphologically and categorially elaborate in the world. On the Bantu spectrum, Swahili dialects in general are toward the reduced end, and on the Swahili dialect spectrum, the tense system of Mw is one of the two most reduced: future, "progressive" = present, past = perfect. Simplification of the inherited tense system in Swahili in general was an early phenomenon (approximately mid-first millennium AD), and predates the emergence of individual dialects. Tense systems in most Swahili dialects later became more elaborated. But not apparently in Mw.

In fact, in Mw the system apparently underwent further restructuring and simplification. Most striking is the neutralization of the distinction perfect versus non-perfect/past, found nowhere else in Swahili or related languages, and brought about by extending the range of the old perfect suffix to also cover past. Information on aspect is incomplete, but for most (all?) of the tenses, there is a

distinction of 'progressive' ("I am eating") versus 'non-progressive' ("I eat"). This distinction obtains in both positive and negative tenses, a distinction rare in Bantu. Reduction and simplification of the inherited tense system is a common pidginization feature. If Mw had been for example used as a lingua franca by speakers of early related and typologically similar Bantu languages a millenium or so ago (see 3.3.2 below), one would expect it to have become more elaborated in the meantime. Neither the nature of the Somali and Arabic material in Mw nor what we know of the sociohistorical situation suggests that Mw was used as a lingua franca in recent centuries. The Somali and Arabic material is mostly simply explained as resulting from borrowing and/or shift directly from the source language(s). The sociohistorical situation appears to have been fairly stable, with Mw spoken in and around Barawa, Somali spoken in the entire hinterland, and seaborn contacts with Arabic and Bajuni communities. If this analysis is true, then the Mw tense system has remained reduced for nearly a thousand years. There are two problems with this view: why was it reduced in this particular direction by this possible use as a lingua franca, and why did it stay thus reduced ?

There is a better, explanation. After the period when the inherited tense /aspect system became reduced in early general Swahili, and after individual Swahili dialects emerged, the Mw community came to be surrounded by southern Somali communities, which lasted for 900 years or more down to the present. Although we have no information about the dialects spoken by these Somali communities, Standard Somali distinguishes future, 'present', and past. It also distinguishes 'continuous' from 'non-continuous/habitual' (but not 'perfect' from 'non-perfect'): as far as I can gather, the semantic range of this 'continuous /non-continuous' is essentially the same as what I have referred to as 'progressive /non-progressive' in Mw. It does not distinguish 'perfect' from 'non-perfect', a distinction Mw has done away with. In other words, by restructuring as it has done, Mw has evolved a tense-aspect system very similar to Somali. Despite the lack of information on southern Somali dialects, I am assuming they behave similarly to Standard Somali. In this explanation, both the initial restructuring and its subsequent maintenance would be due to pressure from the surrounding Somali dialects. It ought to be made clear that this restructuring is primarily categorial, not morphological. Mw has restructured its tense and aspect categories in the direction of Somali, but the two languages use their own morphology and morphemes to express these categories. This is similar to what happens in Chinook Jargon (Silverstein 1974).

Another feature probably related to this Somali presence is partial loss of concord. Verbal concord with the noun is a general Bantu feature, but Mw has lost 2/3 sg concord. To distinguish the two, either context or an independent pronoun is necessary. These strategies for disambiguation are also necessary in Somali, where some certain verbal inflections for person and number are isomorphic. This is not necessarily connected to the simplification of the tense system, just mentioned, but it does seem to be Somali-related.

3.1.5 Syntax

No specific data, but a reading of a few pages of Mw text did not suggest major differences from other Swahili.

3.1.6 Background

Somali speakers have likely been in the area since at least AD 1100. Today some 20% of the population is bilingual in Tunni, a Somali dialect, and presumably

(?) in process of shifting to Mw. Certain bits of evidence make it likely that similar shifts from Somali have been taking place over the centuries, especially earlier when Barawa was more prestigious as a town. During the same 900 years Mw has been an island in a sea of Somali speakers.

Typologically, Somali is SOV, NA, NG, postpositional, and suffixing. Somali adjectives and suffixes appear in Mw, even though Mw itself has few inherited suffixes, especially in the noun.

3.1.7 Interpretation

The most plausible explanation for the data would involve both borrowing and shift. One of the crucial differences between borrowing and shift is lexical: in borrowing, lexis is the first component to be transferred, whereas in shift it does not occur at all, or only in a later stage and on a lesser scale. Mw has absorbed a mass of Somali lexis, thus borrowing was involved. Phenomena such as e.g. new phonemes, derivational suffixes, syllable structure rules, and palatalization, assuming the last two are of Somali origin, could be predicted by borrowing (Level 4) or shift. But the verb restructuring suggests shift, and for a particular reason. In borrowing, new categories and restructuring such as those discussed above are expressed by borrowed morphemes and morphology, whereas in shift they are achieved through restructuring inherited material. That is exactly what has happened in Mw.

Today's situation in Barawa with Tunni attests to the fact of shift, which can likely be projected into the past, given a number of non-linguistic facts such as the large number of Somali clan names among the Mw. 900 years as an island in a sea of Somali speakers would provide the backdrop for borrowing. Thus this dual interpretation fits with the likely historical scenario.

3.2 From Arabic

3.2.1 Lexicon

Core lexis: In the modified Swadesh list, 5% is from Arabic, which is slightly higher than in other northern Swahili dialects.

General lexis: In the 500-page lexicon "25% plus" is from Arabic, which is comparable to other northern Swahili dialects, although there are apparently a few items they do not attest. Most are the same items and in the same semantic areas, rather specialized, as in other Swahili. Most cannot be assigned to proto-Swahili. They include function words (adverbials, conjunctions, etc.) and many adjectives, as in other Swahili. For some adjectives there appears to be limited concord with nouns.

3.2.2 Phonology

/θ, h, x, q, ʔ, b, d, j, ð, r/ appear largely or exclusively in words of Arabic origin. Not clear if this list is complete.

Syllable structure: In inherited words Mw has regularly deleted certain high vowels in certain contexts, resulting in consonant sequences not found elsewhere in Swahili and more like those of Arabic and Somali. More work is needed to determine their exact origin. Words of Arabic and Somali origin do not appear with epenthetic vowels, as elsewhere in Swahili.

Phonological integration: Arabic lexical items are better integrated phonologically than in other Swahili dialects. So, for example, verbs of Arabic

origin have irregular stem shapes in the rest of Swahili (e.g. *-jibu* 'answer', where /u/ is irregular) but have a regular shape in Mw (*-jib-a*).

3.2.3 Morphology

The Mw reflexive is formed by 'soul+possessive' ('I cut myself' = 'I cut soul-my'), where not just the construction but also the word 'soul' is from Arabic, apparently specifically from Omani. It is not clear that 'morphology' is the most appropriate label for this, perhaps 'idiom' would be better.

3.2.4 Syntax

(In certain minor ways nominal strategies (Arabic) replace verbal strategies (Bantu) in discourse, but this is pan-Swahili.) Otherwise no data.

3.2.5 Background

Arabic speakers have been coming to Barawa since at least AD 1100. Present or past degree of bilingualism not known. In other Swahili communities, a mere trickle of Arabic speakers shifted to Swahili over the centuries, but Mw seems (?) more Arabized than other Swahili communities.

Typologically, (Omani and Gulf) Arabic is SVO, NA, NG, strictly prepositional: both nouns and verbs have both prefixes and suffixes. Arabic adjectives, prepositions, and conjunctions appear in Mw.

3.2.6 Interpretation

The quantity of the Arabic lexical and phonological material in Mw is comparable to that from Somali, but there is a lack of morphological material and morphological restructuring. The sociohistorical circumstances are different in that Somali communities have totally surrounded Barawa for nearly a millenium, whereas Arabic speakers have mainly or exclusively been traders or missionaries over the same period. If the example of Swahili communities elsewhere is relevant, it is not likely that large numbers of Arabic speakers settled and shifted at any one time. Typologically Arabic appears a better fit with Mw than does Somali, and yet there is more non-lexical material from Somali than Arabic.

All this suggests that the Arabic material in Mw can be best accounted for as resulting from borrowing, at a somewhat lower level than for Somali, perhaps Level 2 (although the boundaries between the levels are relatively fluid). Arabic, not Somali, was also a language of prestige, the carrier of Islam, the language of an influential and important community. Thus while Somali lexis in Mw contains many everyday words, this is less obvious for the Arabic material.

3.3. Known or likely historical events sparsely attested in the linguistic record

3.3.1 Contact with other northern Swahili dialect communities to the south

During the last several centuries at least, and probably since the establishment of the Mw community, there was some contact with Swahili communities to the south, either from trading or shared political rulers. The political contact was likely greater at the start of the second millenium. The nearest of these communities is Bajuni=Tikuu.

A few Mw content words must be of Bajuni origin, because of their shape. These words are apparently scattered through the lexicon. They include phonological changes that have occurred in Bajuni but not Mw, or don't include

changes that have occurred in Mw, so falsely giving Mw the impression of irregular phonological change.

Such minor lexical traces are unambiguously assignable to borrowing from Bajuni over the last several centuries.

3.3.2 Contact with early and related Bantu communities ?

Oral traditions and scattered place names suggest that speakers of Lower Pokomo and Mijikenda, closely related and typologically similar languages whose communities now live near the northern and southern Kenya coast respectively, may once have lived around and to the north of Barawa, for a period of unspecified length at an unspecified point between ca. AD 700 and AD 1600.

At that time the relationship between the coastal town of Barawa and the Lower Pokomo and Mijikenda living just inland may have resembled that between Lower Pokomo and Mijikenda and neighboring Swahili towns in more recent centuries. The recent relationship had a linguistic and a socioeconomic side: there was some transfer of linguistic material, deriving from trading and cultural exchange, whereby the coastal towns provided imported trade goods and, in some cases, religion, in exchange for goods from the interior.

The linguistic evidence for any such possible early contact is sparse. It consists of a small number of uniquely shared lexical items, mainly of Somali origin, and three shared verbal inflections (*w-* '3 sg', *-na-* 'progressive', *nta-* 'negative').

4.0 Conclusions

4.1 About Mwiini: Many of the linguistic features differentiating Mw from its closest relatives, not mentioned here (see Nurse and Hinnebusch, forthcoming), cannot be obviously attributed to external contact.

Certain things can be attributed to such contact with Somali and/or Arabic. More than half of Mw's content vocabulary, more specialized in the case of Arabic, more everyday for Somali, derives from one or other of these languages, and this includes a large number of adjectives, which have disrupted inherited automatic concord, and a few function words. Phonologically, part of today's Mw consonant inventory and syllable structure derives from Somali and/or Arabic, and possibly palatalization from Somali. Morphologically, the restructuring of the inherited tense/aspect system, and a number of derivational suffixes, derive from Somali, and one or two other minor features from Somali and/or Arabic: derivational markers might be treated as a subset of lexis. Syntactic details are missing. For Somali the best explanation is a mixture of borrowing and shift. From Arabic borrowing is most likely.

Other features are minor or ambiguous. Limited lexical transfer indicates casual contact with other Swahili communities to the south, particularly Bajuni. The explanation for certain limited lexical innovations and possibly some verbal inflections shared with two local, related, Bantu languages is not clear: they might be due to use of Mw as an early contact language or to even earlier inheritance or to later diffusion.

4.2. General

TK's proposals carry optimism, offer hope for progress in interpretation to historical linguists, and a specific set of suggestions. Their application to a specific set of data suggests this:

4.2.1 Elaboration of the models needed

This study was intended as a trial application of the models. In general, they have worked well, but they need refinement. Any language examined will generally offer only a part of the range of possible features needed for identification of the models. Since some characteristic features of the models overlap anyway, this leads to difficulties and ambiguities of interpretation. While TK's borrowing scale offers adequate details for application and diagnosis, the details of the shift scale and of pidginization are rather general and lacking in specifics, making it hard to apply them or to compare them to details of the borrowing scale. Other projects for setting up universals in recent decades have been based on hundreds of case studies. We need more work here. Particularly lacking are details of syntax, and of general, as opposed to regional, "simplification". It would also be useful to have a continuum of 'content' and 'function' lexis (e.g. where do adjectives fit?).

4.2.2 The passage of time

The Somali and Arabic material, especially lexical, in Mw is substantial and not obscured by the passage of the centuries. Even the few (lexical) traces left by casual contact with Swahili communities to the south are unambiguous and plausible enough. But the evidence for use of Mw as a lingua franca by Pokomo and Mijikenda speakers a millenium or so ago is hard to evaluate: the vocabulary base language would have been Mw - clear enough - but the possible lexical and morphological transfers from the other two languages are so fragmentary and probably eroded by time, that it is not clear that linguistic evidence alone will unambiguously elucidate such a sociohistorical situation. How long does simplification such as that induced by pidginization last?

4.2.3 Typological factors It may seem anomalous that a possible and fairly brief period of coexistence with early Bantu relatives could have led to the transfer of certain inflectional morphemes, normally a comparatively late feature to be transferred, and a little vocabulary, whereas the most obvious results of a thousand years of contact with Arabic are in the lexicon and borrowed phonemes, which are lower-level transfer features. Apart from the difference in the models involved, typological factors appear to have played a role here.

At the time of any possible early contact with its Bantu relatives, Mw would have been very similar to them at all levels. Lexically and syntactically, there would hardly have been a need to transfer anything. Familiarity with the emerging systematic phonetic code distinguishing close relatives might have obviated the need to use each other's sounds. Differences in the tense/aspect system are however common between related Bantu languages and dialects, and not always at the conscious level. Since the basic structure of the verb would have been identical, it would not have been hard for Mw to incorporate some of its relatives' inflections.

The typological differences between Mw and Arabic (also Somali) were and are much greater. It is true that similarities exist at some levels (all three NA, NG; Arabic and Mw SVO). But categorially and morphologically, Mw nouns and verbs function very differently from those in Somali and Arabic. H. Paddock has suggested to me that contact with related and typologically similar languages tends to reinforce shared subsystems and undermine non-shared systems, whereas contact with unrelated and dissimilar languages involves new features, which are inevitably harder to transfer. Hence the main effect of a millenium of Arabic presence and prestige is a mass of lexis and some borrowed phonemes.

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