

## REVIEWS

**Thilo C. Schadeberg, Francisco Ussene Mucanheia, Ekoti: The Maka or Swahili Language of Angoche. Foreword by José Ibraimo Abudo, Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 270 pp., 2 maps.**

This work is assigned for linguists and students of African languages. At the same time it is indirectly involved in the discussion concerning the fate of minority languages in Africa, since the EKoti speakers, about 64,000 in number (1997), compose only a diminutive part of Mozambique's population, comprising 18 mln inhabitants. According to the authors, „EKoti might be considered a small language, but it is not a dying language. On the contrary, it has been a growing language during the past decades [...]” (p. 1).

The existence of such a vivid minority language opposes, to a certain degree, the spreading standpoint that minority languages are gradually losing the struggle with dominant African and imported languages, among other things, as a result of the governmental language policy of exclusion and glottoeconomics (Bambgboşe 2000, Brenzinger 1998, Sommer 1990). Therefore especially important becomes the „discovery” of minority languages lost in the process of mapping the African continent (p. 5). For example, EKoti is missing on D. Dalby's *Language Map of Africa* (1987) while J. Maho's reference guide *African Languages Country by Country* (2000) recorded among 28 languages, used in Mozambique, only an Ekoli (*sic!*) language with question mark (P30?).

The work under review has been structured strictly in compliance with essential linguistic foundations: a short introduction is followed by a description of EKoti's phonology, tone and

orthography. Next, noun classes and minor word categories are discussed. The description of verbal morphology, especially verbal derivation, inflection and tenses is carried through with the utmost precision. The formation of syntactic constructions is presented step by step and in the fullest detail. Sample texts comprise two tales with interlinear and free translation. Conventional greetings and formulas have been added. The last chapter encloses an EKoti-English and *vice versa* wordlist which contains about 1,600 entries.

J.I. Abudo, the Minister of Justice agreed in his „Foreword”, that „[...] one of the most remarkable aspects of this book is the clear recognition of Ekoti as a Maka or Swahili language, implying that apart from the fact that Ekoti has close links with Emakhuwa, the language is a separate unit, a separation that is legitimated by its closeness to a distant culture, that of Arab-Swahili civilization” (p. viii). More specifically, EKoti, in terms of genetic classification, is best regarded as belonging to the Makhuwa group (P30) while culturally its speakers are considered to represent Maka, i.e. Swahili-Islamic values.

The strong connection of the Makua inhabitants with „[...] Moorish traders from the Levantine African coast who settled in Angoche in the 15<sup>th</sup> c.” (p. 7) is sometimes reflected through a surprisingly close grammatical and terminological affinity by contemporary EKoti. Compare for example numerals in EKoti with their Swahili counterparts: 1 *-mote*: *-moja*, 2 *-wiri*: *-wili*, 3 *-ttatthu*: *-tatu*, 4 *-ne*: *-ne*, 5 *-thanu*: *-tano*, 6 *sitha*: *sita*, 7 *sapa*: *saba*, 8 *-naane*: *-nane*, 9 *tiisiya*: *tisa*, 10 *khumi*: *kumi*, 50 *hamsiini*: *hamsini*, 100 *miiya*: *mia*.

Exactly in EKoti as in Swahili the same numerals are invariable; they do not agree with the counted noun and have no NPx of their own (p. 56f.).

It happens that the assimilation of Swahili concepts is more sophisticated. For instance, Makua is using three locative classes whose formal features are pre-prefixed to the given nominal prefixes of encountered nouns (Jungraithmayr 1983: 154). The locative noun class 16 contains only one noun in Swahili, namely *mahali*, dialectally *pahali* „place”. This is an Arabic word which has supplanted the old Bantu words formed with the root *-tu*, such

as *patu*, „a definite place”, *kutu*, an indefinite place and *mutu*, an inside place. Although these nouns have quite disappeared in Swahili, their prefixes operate as locative concords (Perrott 1957: 24). In EKoti there are three locative classes, each with its own rather untypical NPx and agreement pattern: class 16 *vaháli*, class 17 *oháli* and class 18 *nháli*, all with the same meaning „place”. The difference in meaning between these three locative classes is only realised through their prefixes attached to the given noun, for example *kintta n-nyupa* „I am going into the house” (p. 40f.). The use of locative NPx demands the application of several sophisticated morphophonemic rules. The pairing of 16/18 typical of Makua (Maho 1999: 197, 321) has not been mentioned with reference to EKoti.

The analytical presentation of the EKoti language constitutes an impressive achievement. Nevertheless there remain two open questions. The first one concerns the linguistic substance. Taking into account that the linguistic material has been based in fact on several in-group idiolects, the work represents a spoken and non-standardised EKoti in order to harmonise the EKoti varieties. For the time being EKoti forms a variant cluster.

In the English „Introduction” several printer’s errors appear which, however, cannot mislead the reader. Hopefully their occurrence has been avoided in the EKoti text and exemplification, out of the reader’s control.

The second question concerns a sociolinguistic issue. The authors depicted the inhabitants of the EKoti area in a bucolic fashion, almost idyllically: plenty of coconut palms near the village, farmland, people keep chickens, ducks, goats. Some families have rice farms far inland. The main economic activity of men in the villages is fishing; fish is sold on markets, cassava bought. Transportation is mainly by sailing boats (p. 2).

Meanwhile the reader may expect to find some information concerning literacy, education, social conditions, urbanisation processes, more on cultural tradition, which might support the author’s optimistic view on EKoti’s survival. On the one hand, it seems that the Portuguese language, despite its numerous official functions, is unknown to the EKoti population who has only some

additional knowledge of Makhuwa and its dialects (p. 1). Meanwhile Portuguese is the bread-and-butter language of Mozambique and its infiltration of the Koti's social texture and communication system seems to be inevitable. On the other hand, Makua is becoming the dominant indigenous language, at least in number (50% of Mozambique's population), cf. also Tsonga - 25%, which may lead to sociolinguistic confrontation.<sup>18</sup> It might not be excluded that EKoti would have to give way to standardised Makua or Portuguese at school as means of secondary socialisation which could endanger also the role of EKoti in primary socialisation.

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<sup>18</sup> Swahili is spoken as *lingua franca* in northern Mozambique. In addition, FRELIMO freedom fighters, trained in Tanzania for years, began to spread Swahili in Mozambique which caused the reaction of the late President S. Machel who attacked this sociolinguistic occurrence, calling it „Kiswahili imperialism”. The FRELIMO leadership declared Portuguese as the main communication means of Mozambique.