

Bukavu Swahili Tense, Aspect and Blurry History

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This article contains a fairly exhaustive presentation of the verb forms of Bukavu Swahili, an important Central African koine spoken in and around the city of Bukavu and about which hardly any information is available. For comparative purposes reference is made to the equivalents of these verb forms in Standard Swahili. In conclusion, an attempt is made to put Bukavu Swahili in its proper historical perspective. To that extent the notions 'Lubumbashi Swahili' and 'Kingwana' are also discussed.

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Introduction

The aim of this paper[†] is to present a succinct overview of the verbal constructions that are a criterial feature of the Swahili spoken by the greater part of the population of Bukavu—a town of about 320,000 inhabitants, situated on the southern end of Lake Kivu in eastern Congo. For the sake of comparison and also for practical purposes, reference will be made to the (more or less) equivalents of these forms in ‘Standard Swahili’.¹⁾

Inherent in my presentation will be the assumption that the Swahili sentence is dominated by the nuclei of nominals *viz.* nouns. As a rule, the subject nominal, for example, should be represented in the verb²⁾ by an affix which shows concord with the noun nucleus of that nominal. In the present text, these affixes will be called markers since they are essentially symbols or signs representing either words in the linguistic context or real objects in the existential context (Allen 1971). These markers indicate what syntactic and semantic roles the elements in the linguistic or existential environment are to play. Slightly paraphrasing Polomé (1967: 110) one may easily distinguish at least 10 basic positions within the Swahili verb:

1. pre-initial position (for negator)
2. initial position (for subject marker)
3. post-initial position (for negator)
4. marker position (for tense/aspect marking)³⁾
5. post-marker position (for relative marker)
6. pre-root marker (for object marker)
7. root position
8. pre-final position (for verbal derivations; a blanket term for various verbal extensions)
9. final position (for mood)
10. post-final position (for clitics)

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- 1) As represented, for example, in handbooks and manuals such as Ashton (1968), Brain (1977) Loogman (1964), Polomé (1967) and Russell (1998).
- 2) There are of course exceptions such as e.g. in imperative sentences (e.g. *Sema!* ‘speak!’), *Ningoje!* ‘wait for me!’) and (habitual) *hu-* sentences (*ng’ombe hula majani* ‘cows eat grass’).
- 3) In principle, positions 3 and 4 could be combined as the negator *si-* is a tense/aspect marker and is in complementary distribution with the other tense/aspect markers (see examples involving positions 3 and 4 below). It should be observed that in Bukavu Swahili, position 8 also includes the tense/aspect marker *-ak*.

To illustrate the position of these markers, consider the following examples:

<i>asiyeniona</i> (s/he who doesn't see me)	a-si-ye-ni-on-a 2 3 5 6 7 9
<i>unaitwaje?</i> (what is your name? <i>lit.</i> how are you called?)	u-na-it-w-a-je 2 4 7 8 9 10
<i>wasipigane</i> (do not let them beat one another)	wa-si-pig-an-e 2 3 7 8 9
<i>hawakunisemea</i> (they did not speak on my behalf)	ha-wa-ku-ni-sem-e-a 1 2 4 6 7 8 9
<i>atakayeniona</i> (s/he who will see me)	a-taka-ye-ni-on-a 2 4 5 6 7 9
<i>walipendezanishwa</i> (they were forced to agree with one another)	wa-li-pend-ez-an-ish-w-a 2 4 7 8 8 8 8 9

The NA and A markers

Most traditional grammarians consider the marker *na* as indicating the time of discourse. It is used “when the action is actually taking place at an effective moment of speaking” (Polomé 1967: 115). The marker *a*, on the other hand, is unmarked in terms of time: it merely indicates ‘indefinite’ present (Polomé 1967: 120, Ashton 1968: 36, Brain 1977: 33) as opposed to the *na* of ‘definite’ time. For example:

mpishi asema *ataka* sukari (the cook says s/he wants some sugar)
mpishi asema *anataka* sukari (the cook says s/he is in need of some sugar [now])

Ashton and Polomé point out that although the definite time of *na* will mostly be the present (*watoto wanacheza*, ‘the children are playing *now*’) it should be observed that in subordinate clauses *na* is used for expressing time-relationship, i.e. it then refers to the present time of the literal context and not to the existential context. For example:

walitambua kuwa safari inaondoka (they realized that the caravan *was* leaving)

Several writers though have questioned the above-mentioned conceptualization of *na* and *a*. Wald (1973: 231), for example, has noticed that in newspaper Swahili, *a* is found almost exclusively in headlines while everywhere else in the article *na* is used. Zawawi, perhaps the most outspoken critic of the traditional view on *na* and *a*, claims that “the distinction has been postulated for Standard Swahili by an implicit analogy with the English verbal system” (Zawawi 1967: 46). Her native speaker’s intuition is that these forms are not in opposition but in free variation. An interesting observation of hers is that in the Mombasa and Tanga regions *a* is a dialectal variant of *na* (Zawawi 1971: 166). Furthermore, she has claimed (quite convincingly) that *na* always indicates an action point or aspect rather than

time. Indeed, her data show that an action marked by *na* can occur in the past, the present or the future and that “its particular interpretation is derived, in each case, from the context in which it appears” (1967: 60). In her view, *na* is the marker of unended action.

In connection with Zawawi’s specific position it may be of interest to point out that in Bukavu, the *a* marker of Standard Swahili (henceforth *St.Sw.*; Bukavu Swahili will be abbreviated as *Bkv.Sw.*) simply does not exist but its ‘indefinite’ present connotation is carried by the *na* marker. That is, somehow in the course of time and/or during the geographical spread from the East Coast to the Congo interior, the function of the *a* marker was taken over by *na* whose connotation of ‘unended action’ was, in turn, taken over by an entirely new construction: *personal subject marker+ko*⁴+*na+verb*. Consider the following examples:

- St.Sw. (i) mke huyu asema kwamba atakuja (*this woman says she’ll come*)
 (ii) mke huyu anasema kwamba atakuja (*this woman is saying that she will come*)

- Bkv.Sw. (i) uyu mwanamuke anasema kama atakuya (*this woman says she’ll come*)
 (ii) uyu mwanamuke ikonasema kama atakuya (*this woman is saying that she will come*)

It may be instructive to have a quick glance at the relationship between Standard Swahili and Bukavu Swahili regarding the use of *a/na* forms in Standard Swahili (negative forms are given in parentheses). Furthermore, in the Bkv.Sw. forms additional deviations from St.Sw. appear in italics).

<i>Standard Swahili</i>	<i>Bukavu Swahili</i>
nasema (sisemi)	<i>minasema</i> (siseme)
wasema (husemi)	unasema (<i>auseme</i>)
asema (hasemi)	anasema (<i>aseme/aaseme</i>) ⁵
twasema (hatusemi)	tunasema (<i>atuseme</i>)
mwasema (hamsemi)	<i>munasema</i> (<i>amuseme</i>)
wasema (hawasemi)	<i>banasema</i> (<i>abaseme</i>)
ninasema (sisemi)	nikonasema (sikonasema)
unasema (husemi)	ukonasema (<i>aikonasema</i>)
anasema (hasemi)	<i>ikonasema</i> (<i>aikonasema</i>)
tunasema (hatusemi)	tukonasema (<i>atukonasema</i>)

4) It has been suggested (by one of the anonymous referees) that the form might be *iko* with the concomitant phonological changes of *i+i→i*, *u+i→u* and *a+i→i*.

5) The forms *aseme* and *aaseme* (pronounced with [a:]) are in free variation—with *aseme* the more commonly heard one. In the remainder of this paper, only one of these two will be used in those sample sentences that contain instances of this form. Also, it should be observed that the two paradigms (*na* and *ko-na*) are not in free variation unlike in St.Sw. where the *a* and *na* forms have merged in the speech of many speakers.

mnasema (hamsemi)	<i>mukonasema (amukonasema)</i>
wanasema (hawasemi)	<i>bikonasema (abikonasema)</i> ⁶⁾

Notice that in Standard Swahili the *a/na* distinction is neutralized in the negative (a cross-linguistically natural phenomenon) yet in Bukavu Swahili it is not.

The ME and LI markers

The *me* marker is sometimes called the perfective and/or resultative marker: the action is completed at the time under reference and the results are there (Polomé 1967: 116, Ashton 1968: 36, Loogman 1965: 196). In the Mombasa area, a dialectal variant for *me* is *n* (Wald 1973: 231). Certain verbs such as sit, stand, wear, sleep etc. are often used with the *me* tense, where in English one would expect the present progressive (Stevick 1968: 95, Ashton 1968: 30):

<i>ameketi</i>	(s/he has taken a seat)	‘s/he is sitting’
<i>amevaa</i>	(s/he has put on [clothes])	‘s/he is wearing clothes’

This is also true for verbs which—when used with *a/na* markers—have an inchoative or inceptive meaning. In this case, the *me* marker indicates that attainment of a resulting state has been reached (Loogman 1965: 385):

<i>analewa</i>	(s/he is getting drunk)	<i>amelewa</i>	(s/he is drunk)
<i>anafurahi</i>	(s/he is getting happy)	<i>amefurahi</i>	(s/he is happy)

While Loogman (1965: 395) calls it a timeless present tense marker referring to a completed action, Zawawi (1967: 62) claims that it is wrong to call *me* a present perfect since it can be used to refer to times other than the present. For her the *me* marker indicates an ended action.

The *li* marker situates the action of the verb in the past versus the time of reference (Polomé 1967: 116, Zawawi 1971: 71). It is probably the one time marker all grammarians agree upon. Still, even this *li*, as Wald points out, does not always “mark a time reference value from the performative time reference” (i.e. from the time of discourse) and, therefore, it is not just a ‘time prefix’ either (Wald 1973: 165).

In Bukavu Swahili the *me* marker does not exist. Its function has been taken over by the *li* marker, which in Bukavu is used to indicate near past as opposed to the *li ... ak* marker which indicates distant (indefinite) past. The following examples illustrate the rela-

6) Historically, these forms with *ko* have come about through the contraction of *nikoninasema*, *ukounasema*, *ikoanasema*, *tukotunasema*, *mukomunasema*, *bikobanasema*. It has been borrowed into Bukavu Swahili from the neighbouring local languages which have some cognate form of (*i*)*ko* to indicate ‘progressive aspect’ (cf. *ego* in Rega). Object placement in the verb is as expected: for example, ‘ukonaniangalia’ (you are looking at me) from *ukounaniangalia*.

tionship that holds between Standard Swahili and its Bukavu counterpart:

<i>Standard Swahili</i>	<i>Bukavu Swahili</i>
amekufa (s/he is dead)	alikufa ⁷⁾
alikufa jana (s/he died yesterday)	alikufa yana
alikufa mwaka uliopita (s/he died last year)	alikufa mwaka yana
alikufa zamani (s/he died long ago)	alikufaka zamani
hajafa (s/he has not died)	ayakufa
hakufa jana (s/he did not die yesterday)	akukufa yana
hakufa mwaka uliopita (s/he didn't die last year)	akukufa mwaka yana
hakufa zamani (s/he did not die long ago)	akukufaka zamani

To summarize the state of affairs regarding *li* in Bukavu Swahili, consider the following sample paradigms (together with their negative equivalents) of the verb *kuona* 'to see':

<i>recent past</i>	<i>recent pst. neg.</i>	<i>distant past</i>	<i>dist. pst. neg.</i>
niliona	sikuona	nilionaka	sikuonaka
uliona	aukuona*	ulionaka	aukuonaka
aliona	a(a)kuona*	alionaka	a(a)kuonaka
tuliona	atukuona*	tulionaka	atukuonaka
muliona	amukuona*	mulionaka	amukuonaka
baliona	abakuona*	balionaka	abakuonaka

Notice that in Bukavu Swahili, the negative of the *li* forms also differs from Standard Swahili. In Standard Swahili the (formal) equivalent of the starred (*) forms would be: *hukuona, hakuona, hatukuona, hamkuona* and *hawakuona*.

A related construction is the one involving the verb *kuisha* 'to end, finish'. This verb can be used to render the idea of an action that has already ended. In Bukavu, people insist that its meaning always requires that explicit mention be made of *already* in the translation, which precludes a straightforward resultative reading of the examples below:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. aliisha sema/kusema | <i>he has already spoken</i> |
| 2. uliisha kula? | <i>have you already eaten?</i> |
| 3. aliisha enda/kuenda | <i>he has already gone</i> |
| 4. alikuwa aliisha enda/kuenda | <i>he had already gone (near past)</i> |
| 5. alikuwaka aliisha enda/kuenda | <i>he had already gone (indefinite past)</i> |

7) I use this example for illustrative purposes although it should be observed that whereas *alikufaka* can be used on its own (as a kind of indefinite past), *alikufa* cannot for it needs a specification of time (*yana, wiki yana, juzi* etc).

6. aliishaka enda/kuenda *he had already gone (indefinite past)*⁸⁾
 7. uliisha zoea klimá ya Bukavu? *have you already become used to Bukavu's climate?*
 8. wakati nilifikaka Bukavu, Passy alikuwaka aliisha toka mu magazini
when I arrived in Bukavu, Passy had already left the shop

The TA marker

This marker situates “the verbal process in the future versus the time of reference” (Polomé 1967: 116). Still, *ta* does not necessarily correspond to the future tense in English. Indeed, the action marked by *ta* can be situated in the past, the present or the future. Like *li* and *na*, *ta* merely shows a time relationship, a ‘later than’ relationship with respect to a specific time implied or mentioned in the context. Consider the following example:

aliniuliza kama nitapenda kusafiri naye (St.Sw.)
 aliniuliza kama ntapenda kwenda naye (Bkv.Sw.)
s/he asked me whether I wanted to travel with him

Wald (1973: 146–48) also observes that hypothetical discourse (‘If I were rich, I would ...’) and directions (‘Walk two blocks, then turn right ...’) are often marked by *ta*. The discussion regarding *ta* illustrates the general point that in Standard Swahili, the ‘tense forms’ on their own do not indicate time of action (which is invariably indicated by the adverbials).

In Bukavu Swahili, the *ta* marker exists but in addition we also find *ta ... ak*. The difference between these two markers is analogous to the difference between *li* and *li ... ak*. The reader will recall that *li* indicates near past whereas *li ... ak* is used for the distant/indefinite past. In the same vein, *ta* refers to near future and *ta ... ak* to distant/indefinite future. Consider the following sample sentences (together with their negative counterparts) from Bukavu Swahili:

1. ntaenda⁹⁾ kesho (*I'll go tomorrow*)
2. bataenda kesho (*they'll leave tomorrow*)
3. ntaenda mwaka kesho (*I'll go next year*)
4. ntaendaka siku ingine (*I'll go later*)
5. bataendaka siku ingine (*they'll leave later*)
6. sitaenda kesho (*I shall not go tomorrow*)
7. abataenda kesho (*they will not leave tomorrow*)
8. sitaenda mwaka kesho (*I shall not go next year*)

8) Forms 4 and 5 differ from one another with respect to the particular point of reference in the past (distant/indefinite v. near). As far as I know there is no significant difference between forms 5 and 6.

9) This form is in free variation with *ndaenda*. Notice, in passing, that *ntaenda* always requires a specification of time (*Utaenda wakati gani? Ntaenda sasa ivi; Ntaenda kesho* etc.). *Ntaendaka*, on the other hand, can be used on its own—its implicit reading is ‘I don’t know when’ (indefinite future).

9. sitaendaka siku ingine (*I shall not go later*)
10. abataendaka siku ingine (*they will not leave later*)

The Standard Swahili equivalents of these forms are:

- 1' nitakwenda kesho
- 2' wataondoka kesho
- 3' nitakwenda mwaka utakaokuja/ujao
- 4' nitakwenda wakati mwingine
- 5' wataondoka wakati mwingine
- 6' sitakwenda kesho
- 7' hawataondoka kesho
- 8' sitakwenda mwaka utakaokuja/ujao
- 9' sitakwenda wakati mwingine
- 10' hawataondoka wakati mwingine

In addition to the simple v. distant future distinction, Bukavu Swahili also exhibits a form (-nata) to express what may be called the 'immediate future', invariably translated by my informants as 'soon':

- minatakuwa mwalimu (*I shall soon become a teacher*)
 anatalala (*s/he will soon go to sleep*)

The HU marker

Hu presents the verbal process as habitual or recurrent (Polomé 1967: 118). *Hu* constructions are often rendered in English by adverbs such as 'generally', 'usually', 'always', 'often' and are frequently used in proverbs. *Hu* is not bound to any particular time: it suggests generality and extension of time, hence repetition (Zawawi 1967: 86). The *hu* morpheme is always the first morpheme of the verbal construction: it thus comprises (or acts as a substitute for) subject markers and tense/aspect markers. It can also be used with an object marker. Consider the following examples:

- hupenda mkate (*I, you, they etc. usually like bread*)
 ng'ombe hula majani (*cows habitually eat grass*)
 mkulima hufanya kazi kila siku (*a farmer works every day*)
 vidonda vile hujiponea (*those sores usually heal by themselves*)
 baba yao huwapiga (*their father always [often] beats them*)
 paka akiondoka, panya hutawala (*if the cat is away, the rats rule*)

The *hu* marker as such does not exist in Bukavu Swahili. To express the idea of a habitual or recurrent action, Bukavu Swahili uses *na ... ak*, as in the following sample:

minasemaka Kiswahili Bukavu (*in Bukavu I usually [always] speak Swahili*)
 banalalaka ii saa? (*are they usually asleep at this hour?*)
 anasadikiaka Mungu (*s/he believes in God*)
 mambuzi inakulaka mayani (*goats [usually] eat grass*)
 anakuwaka mugonjwa (*s/he is always ill*)
 minachokaka sana (*I am always very tired*)
 mayi inakuwaka baridi (*the water is usually cold*)
 kila mara kama kuko mupepeo mingi, miti inaangukaka
 (*trees fall down whenever there is a lot of wind*)

As far as proverbs are concerned, in Bukavu Swahili some proverbs make use of the *ak* whereas others do not:

kama pusi aiko, panya inacheza (*if the cat is away, the mice are at play*)
 macho inaonaka lakini aikulake (lit. *eyes see but do not eat*; there is no problem watching as long as you do not take it or touch it—said to, for example, an older man eyeing a young girl)

Unlike in Standard Swahili, where negation of the *hu* form is generally carried out by the simple present negative,¹⁰⁾ Bukavu Swahili has a particular negative form to express a habitual action in the negative:

<i>Standard Swahili</i>	<i>Bukavu Swahili</i>	
sisomi	sisomake	(<i>I do not often read</i>)
hasemi	a(a)semake	(<i>s/he doesn't usually speak</i>)
hawasafiri	abaendake voyage	(<i>they do not often travel</i>)
hatuandiki	atuandikake	(<i>we don't usually write</i>)
hulali	aulalake	(<i>usually, you do not sleep</i>)

It should be pointed out that as far as these negative forms are concerned, Bukavu Swahili allows for more refined shades of meaning within the actual verbal construction than Standard Swahili. For example, St.Sw. *silali* might be translated as 'I am not sleeping' or 'I do not sleep' (or even as 'I usually do not sleep') whereas in Bkv.Sw. three different constructions are to be used:

10) It would of course be possible to make use of *huwa* (meaning 'usually, habitually') as in the sentence *Baba yangu huwa halali saa hii* 'my father is usually not asleep at this hour'.

<i>sikonatalala</i>	(I am not sleeping)
<i>silale</i>	(I do not sleep)
<i>silalake</i>	(I do not always [usually] sleep)

Verbs which end in *-i* or *-u* are somewhat problematic because some of these make use of *ak* (*aka* to be precise) whereas others do not. The latter set of verbs requires that explicit use be made of some form of the verb *kuzoea* which literally means 'be in the habit'. Hence we find:

(i) kukubali (accept)	kukubaliaka
kutumaini (hope)	kutumainiaka
kujibu (answer)	kujibiaka (with change of <i>u</i> to <i>i</i>) ¹¹⁾
kusadiki (believe)	kusadikiaka
kufurai (rejoice) ¹²⁾	kufuraiaka
(ii) kuzuru (harm s.o.)	kuzoe(ak)a kuzuru
kushukuru (thank)	kuzoe(ak)a kushukuru
kuubiri (preach)	kuzoe(ak)a kuubiri
kuuzi (annoy)	kuzoe(ak)a kuuzi

Sample sentences:

uyu mutoto anazoea(ka) kufurai kama mama yake anarudia (*this child is usually happy when its mother returns*)¹³⁾

uyu mutoto anafuraiaka kama mama yake anarudia (*ibid.*)

uyu mwalimu anazoea(ka) kuzuru banafunzi yake (*this teacher has the habit of harming his pupils*)

anazoea(ka) kushukuru kila wakati anapata musaado (*s/he is thankful whenever s/he obtains help*)

anazoea(ka) kuubiri muzuri kila siku ya Mungu (*he preaches well every Sunday*)

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- 11) The frequent occurrence of forms in *-aka* probably accounts for the reanalysis that has taken place in Bukavu Swahili with respect to many verbs ending in *i* and *u* and which occur in what might (at first sight at least) seem to be their prepositional form: kurudi=kurudia, kubaki=kubakia, kuruhusu=kuruusia, kuamuru=kuamuria, kuabudu=kuabudia etc. In recent years this seems to have become such a productive process that many of the verbs mentioned in the text are not any longer problematic: the average speaker of Bkv.Sw. will nowadays use kujibia (v. *kujibu*), kusadikia (v. *kusadiki*), kutumainia 'to trust' (v. *kutumaini*) and kuubiria (v. *kuubiri*).
- 12) St.Sw. *kufurahi* (/h/ is not a phoneme in Bkv.Sw.). For the phonology of Bkv. Sw. see Goyvaerts (forthcoming).
- 13) *Kama*, of course, does not allow for the *na ... ak* form to occur. Compare, for example, *kama mutoto anafurai mama yake anarudiaka* (when the child is happy, the mother usually returns) or *kila mara mama anarudiaka mutoto anafuriaka* (each time the mother returns and the child is [always] happy).

The following sentences, all of which are adequate translations of the sentence ‘Bukavu Dawa [a local soccer team] usually beat Bilima’, constitute a succinct summary of the points mentioned earlier:

Bukavu Dawa inazoea kupiga Bilima
 Bukavu Dawa inazoeaka kupiga Bilima
 Bukavu Dawa inapigaka Bilima

Since *kuzoea* or *kuzoeaka* can be used with both sets of verbs, (i) and (ii), it would be safer for the learner of Bukavu Swahili to fall back on this particular construction with *kuzoea(ka)* whenever he needs to use the ‘habitual’ form of verbs whose stems end in *i* or *u*.

The verb *kuzoea* is especially useful to express the habitual past (‘used to’)—with two interesting shades of meaning, as will become clear from the following examples:

wakati nilikuwaka mutoto, nilikulaka chocolá ya mingi
when I was a child, I ate a lot of chocolate

but,

wakati nilikuwaka mutoto, nilikuwaka nazoea kukula chocolá ya mingi
as a child, I used to eat a lot of chocolate (but not anymore)

wakati nilikuwaka mutoto, nilizoeaka kukula chocolá ya mingi
as a child, I used to eat a lot of chocolate (and I still do)
 minazoeaka kumutembelea (or minamutembeleaka)
I usually (often, always) visit him

but,

nilikuwaka nazoea kumutembelea
I used to visit him (but not anymore)
 nilizoeaka kumutembelea
I used to visit him (and I still do)

In St.Sw. the verb *-zoea* is also used in ‘habitual’ contexts as in Bkv.Sw. but it is not restricted to the verbs which end in *u* and *i*. This is especially so if the action is situated in the past or in the future: *alizoea kuimba kanisani kila Jumapili* (‘s/he used to sing in church each Sunday’); *watazoea kuishi sehemu za baridi baada ya muda mfupi* (‘they will get used to living in cold regions after a short while’).

The KA marker

This marker has many uses. Its principal connotation is that of consecutiveness (Polomé 1967: 116). It has also been labeled the historical form (Loogman 1965: 197) as it is the main marker found in the narration of past events (Brain 1977: 70). It is mostly found after *li* but

may also occur after *ta*. In the latter case, however, the verb will be in the subjunctive (and express the idea of ‘intention’). As the examples below illustrate, a verb with the *ka* marker implies the idea of “and ...”. The *ka* itself does not imply any specific time, it merely carries over or “continues the time-reference of the preceding verb” (Loogman 1965: 386). That is why it is sometimes called the continuative form. For example:

tulikwenda mjini, tukaenda sokoni, tukatafuta mkate (*we went to town, we went to market and looked for bread*)
 nitakwenda dukani nikanunue ndizi (*I shall go to the shop and intend to buy [or: in order to buy] some bananas*)

The combination *ka+subjunctive* is also used to express the idea of ‘go and ...’ as in the following examples:

ukamsaidie mwalimu	(<i>would you</i>) <i>go and help the teacher</i>
tukale	<i>let’s go and eat</i>
akamwite	<i>let him go and call him</i>
ukanunue maembe	(<i>would you</i>) <i>go and buy some mangoes</i>
nikaseme	<i>let me go and speak</i>

In Bukavu Swahili, the *ka* marker exists but solely in order to express consecutiveness with respect to events that took place in the past (near or distant/indefinite past):

Nilienda ku soko, nikauza¹⁴⁾ bitika tano,¹⁵⁾ nikakula mbili, nikamupatia mwenzangu tatu (*I went to market, bought five bananas, ate two and gave three to my friend*)
 zamani niliendaka ku soko, nikauzaka bitika tano, nikakulaka mbili, nikamupatiaka mwenzangu tatu (*long ago, I went to market etc*)
 [zamani] alikuyaka akatupatiaka chakula kiisha akaendaka (*he came, gave us food and then he left*)

The above-mentioned Standard Swahili sentences expressing the idea of ‘go and ...’ would be rendered in Bukavu Swahili as follows:

uende kusaidia (*or* kumusaidia) mwalimu
 twende kula
 umuache aende kumwita

14) In Bukavu Swahili, *kuuza* means ‘to buy’, the causative *kuuzisha* is used for ‘to sell’ (lit. ‘cause to buy’).

15) In Bukavu Swahili, numerals always occur without concord prefix. Notice, in passing, that *bitika* (sing. *kitika*) are bananas to eat just the way they are whereas *mandizi* (sing. *ndizi*) are bananas for boiling; in addition there are also the well-known tasty and succulent *kamera* (sing. *tumera*) ‘small bananas’.

uende kuuza maembe
uniache niende kusema

To express the negative of this consecutive *ka* in Bkv.Sw. the form of the past negative is used:

tulienda(ka) ku soko, tukatafuta(ka) mandizi, atukupata(ka) kitu (*we went to market, looked for bananas and didn't get any*)

The Ø ... A↔E marker

This is the marker of the subjunctive. The Ø (zero) is found in the tense marker position (i.e. the subjunctive has no relation to time). Furthermore, a change of *a* to *e* occurs in final position and is applicable only to verbs of Bantu origin. The negative subjunctive is formed by inserting *si* between the subject prefix and the verb stem. The uses of the subjunctive are manifold. A necessarily incomplete summary would include the following: (i) a polite imperative; (ii) the adhortative; (iii) obligation; (iv) questioned suggestions; (v) intention/purpose and (vi) indirect commands, desires and requests (i.e. the subject of the second verb is different from the subject of the main verb). The following examples illustrate these six uses:

(i)	<i>ukae</i>	‘please, be seated’
	<i>uje</i>	‘please, come’
	<i>mngoje</i>	‘would you [pl.] wait’
(ii)	<i>tule</i>	‘let’s eat’
	<i>ningoje</i>	‘let me wait’ ¹⁶⁾
	<i>aanze</i>	‘let him begin’
(iii)	<i>(ni) lazima uende</i>	‘you must go’
	<i>(ni) lazima inyeshe mvua</i>	‘it must rain’
	<i>(ni) heri ule sasa</i>	‘you’d better eat now’
(iv)	<i>angoje?</i>	‘should he wait?’
	<i>nile sasa?</i>	‘may I eat now?’
	<i>asome?</i>	‘is he to read?’
(v)	<i>mwrite ili niseme naye</i>	‘call him so that I may speak to him’
	<i>alikingia asinione</i> ¹⁷⁾	‘he ran away so as not to see me’
	<i>nitafanya kazi nipate chakula</i>	‘I shall work so as to get food’
(vi)	<i>nilikuambia ufanye kazi</i>	‘I told you to do some work’

16) *Mngoje* and *ningoje* might also mean ‘Please, wait for him’ and ‘Please, wait for me’ respectively. In this case, however, we are not dealing with the subjunctive but with imperatives because they have no subject marker (see also footnote 2).

17) Note, in passing, that *asinione* could possibly be taken as a *ka* tense in the negative.

nataka umwambie habari 'I want you to tell him the news'
nataka watoto wawe na vitabu 'I want the children to have some books'

The subjunctive is also quite prominent in Bukavu Swahili. Its use corresponds roughly to the uses of the subjunctive in Standard Swahili except for category (iv) above where on each occasion some form of the verb *kuweza* 'may' is used:

- (i) *wikale/ui kale* (St.Sw. *kukaa*=Bkv.Sw. *kuikala*)
ukuye (St.Sw. *kuja*=Bkv.Sw. *kuya*)
miongoye (St.Sw. *kungoja*=Bkv.Sw. *kuongoya*)
- (ii) *tukule*
miongoye
aanze
- (iii) *inafaa uende*
inafaa mvula inyeshe (St.Sw. *mvua*=Bkv.Sw. *mvula*)
inafaa ukule sasa
- (iv) *anaweza kuongoya?*
minaweza kula sasa?
anaweza kusoma?
- (v) *umwite njo niseme naye* (or *njo nimusemeshe*)
alikimbia njo asinione
nitafanya kazi (or *nitatumika*) *njo nipate chakula*
- (vi) *nilikuambia ufanye kazi*
minataka umwambie abari
minataka batoto bakuwe na bitabu

The KI marker (and the conditional KA)

This marker has two essential meanings. First, it may indicate that an action is in progress at the time under consideration (Polomé 1967: 116). It expresses imperfect, continuous or incomplete action and is not bound to any particular time. In connection with other verbal forms it marks a simultaneous process. The equivalent of this *ki* in Bukavu is carried by the *ko+na* construction (see our section on the *na/a* markers above) as should be apparent from the following examples:

- (St.Sw.) *utawaona wakicheza* *you'll see them playing*
- (Bkv.Sw.) *utabaona bikonacheza*
- (St.Sw.) *alikuwa akifa* *he was dying (e.g. when I arrived there)*
- (Bkv.Sw.) *alikuwa ikonakufa*

(St.Sw.) nimekuona ukila *I have seen you eating*
 (Bkv.Sw.) nilikuona ukonakula

(St.Sw.) akaenda mbio akilia *(and) he ran away crying*
 (Bkv.Sw.) akaenda mbio ikonalia

Secondly, *ki* may also be used in conditional discourse. In this case, the verb bearing *ki* may be preceded by *kama* to strengthen the ‘if’ condition. For example:

(kama) ukienda Lamu, utaona bahari
if you go to Lamu, you’ll see the sea
 (kama) akinywa pombe atalewa
if he drinks beer he’ll get drunk

The same *ki* exists in Bukavu Swahili although it should be observed that the combination *kama+ki-form* is excluded. To render the above-mentioned hypothetical sentences into Bukavu Swahili two possibilities are available:

ukienda Lamu, utaona baari
 kama unaenda¹⁸⁾ Lamu, utaona baari
 *kama ukienda ...

akikunywa pombe atalewa
 kama anakunywa pombe atalewa
 *kama akikunywa ...

There is also a *ka* form which is used to express the idea of ‘immediacy’ (now, today, shortly etc.) as in:

ukaenda Bukavu utaona lac *(if you go to Bukavu [now/today/within the next few hours] you’ll see the lake)*

In Standard Swahili, the simplest way of making the negative of the *ki* form is by using *kama* and the present negative. Another possibility is to make use of the *sipo* marker (a post-initial negator *si* used together with the temporal relative *po*) which literally means ‘when not’ and may also be translated in English by ‘unless’:

kama huendi *(if you do not go)*
 kama hataki *(if s/he does not want)*

18) Note that the *kama+na* conditional also exists in Standard Swahili.

usipokwenda (*unless you go; if you do not go*)
 asipotaka (*unless he wants; if he does not want*)

In Bukavu Swahili, the *sipo* marker does not exist. The only way to turn the form with *ki* into the negative is to use *kama* together with the present negative:

kama auende ku masomo (*if you don't go to school*)
 kama apende chakula (*if he doesn't want food*)
 kama situmie mashini (*if I don't use a machine*)

The NGE and NGALI markers

The *nge* marker is used to express the idea of a possible realization though conjectural in referring to the present or future time (Polomé 1967: 117). Its counterpart for past time is *ngali* (variant *ngeli*).

The *nge* form—indicating that the supposition is possible of realization—appears in both clauses of a conditional sentence (the protasis and the apodosis). The protasis is marked by the optional use of *kama* ‘if’.

(kama) wangejua njia, wangetuonyesha
if they knew the way, they would show us
 (kama) ningeanza mapema, ningeweza kumaliza mapema
if I started (were to start) early, I'd be able to finish early

Even Swahili specialists are somewhat confused about the actual use of the *nge* and *ngali* markers. Perrott (1969: 53), for example, observes that “in actual practice, few native speakers make the distinction between *nge* and *ngali* consistently; they are as uncertain about the use of *nge* and *ngali* as many English people are about the use of *should* and *would*”. Brain (1977: 95) claims that there is a “modern tendency to combine the two tenses *nge* and *ngali* into one tense *ngeli* which has no relation to time”. This is an interesting observation for it would mean that a timeless variant is taking over the role of two distinct time-related morphemes. Zawawi, a native speaker, holds that *ngali*, *ngeli* and *nge* are free variants of the same morpheme regardless of what grammarians have claimed about the distinction between present and past conditionals in Swahili (1967: 100).

It is generally assumed that the *ngali* form is used (both in the protasis and apodosis) if the supposition is regarded as not having been realized. Traditionally, it is considered the form for the past conditional, implying “impossibility of realization, because it refers to the past” (Polomé 1967: 117).

wangalijua njia, wangalituonyesha
if they had known the way, they would have shown us

ningalianza mapema, ningaliweza kumaliza mapema
if I had started early, I would have been able to finish early

Finally, it should be pointed out that to form the negative it suffices to insert *si* between the subject prefix and *nge/ngali/ngeli*. For example:

usingekwenda ... (*were you not to go ...*)
 asingalilala ... (*if he hadn't slept ...*)
 nisingelimwandikia (*if I had not written to him/her*)

Corresponding to Standard Swahili *nge*, it should be observed that in Bukavu Swahili *nge*, *ngali*, *ngili* and *ngeli* can be freely interchanged. Furthermore, there is a second (or fifth if you want) construction with *kama* in the protasis and *nge* in the apodosis which is also frequently heard. As in Standard Swahili, they may also occur in the negative as illustrated by the sample sentences below:

(1) bangalijua njia, bangalituonyesha

nge *nge*
ngeli *ngeli*
ngili *ngili*

(2) kama balijua njia, bangetuonyesha

If they knew the way, they would show us

(1) ningali/nge/ngili/ngeli/anza mbio, ningali/nge/ngili/ngeli/weza
 kumaliza mbio

(2) kama nilianza mbio, ningeweza kumaliza mbio

If I started early, I should be able to finish early

(1) aungali/nge/ngili/ngeli/tumia mashini ungali/nge/ngili/ngelipoteza wakati

(2) kama aukutumia mashini ungepoteza wakati

if you didn't use a machine you'd lose some time

(1) aangali/nge/ngili/ngeli/jua njia angali/nge/ngili/ngeli/niuliza

(2) kama aakujua njia angeniuliza

if he didn't know the way he would ask me

It should be obvious that construction (2) above only holds for compound sentences (see footnote 19 below).

In Bukavu Swahili, corresponding to Standard Swahili *ngali*, we find the construction *nge ... ak* or *ngali ... ak* (and even *ngeli ... ak* and *ngili ... ak*) in both the affirmative and the negative as in the following examples:¹⁹⁾

bangalijuaka njia, bangalituonyeshaka (*if they had known the way, they would have shown us*)
ningetumiaka mashini, ningemalizaka ii kazi (*if I had used a machine I would have finished
this work*)

aungelitumiaka mashini, ungelipotezaka wakati (*if you had not used a machine, you would
have lost some time*)

atungilijuaka ii wimbo, atungiliiimbaka (*if we hadn't known this song, we wouldn't have
sung it*)

ningelikuwaka (niko)nasema, mwalimu angeliniitaka (*if I had been speaking, the teacher
would have called my name*)

The use of this construction is pretty straightforward and does not need any further elaboration except to say perhaps that the *ak*-form is mutually exclusive with time adverbials referring to the present or the past (such as *leo, ii wiki, sasa, leo asubui, yana etc.*):

batoto yake bangelikuwaka mu Belgique bangelisomaka masomo ya kinganga (*if his
children had been in Belgium [then], they would have studied medicine*)

batoto yake bangelikuwa mu Belgique bangelisoma masomo ya kinganga (*if his children
were in Belgium they'd study medicine*)

*batoto yake bangelikuwaka mu Belgique *leo* ...

batoto yake bangelikuwa mu Belgique *leo* ...

ange(li)kuya *leo* ninge(li)mupigia²⁰⁾ nyama (*if he came today I'd prepare some meat for him
or if he had come today I would have prepared some meat for him*)

*angekuyaka *leo* ...

angelikuyaka, ningelimupigiaka nyama (*if he had come, I would have prepared some meat
for him*)

*angelikuyaka²¹⁾ *leo* ...

*angelikuyaka *yana* ...

(*zamani*) angelikuyaka ... (*if he had come [then, long ago] ...*)

The 'still' tenses

Bukavu Swahili also makes use of what Comrie (1984: 53–55) calls the 'still' tense. Its forms differ from the ones used in Standard Swahili (Ashton 1968: 270) where we encounter the following:

-
- 19) The inherent difference between the *nge/ngali* and the *nge/ngali ... ak* construction is probably best expressed by the following two simple sentences:

ingekuwa/ingalikuwa bei muzuri

'that would be more expensive'

ingekuwaka/ingalikuwaka bei muzuri

'that would have been more expensive'

- 20) St.Sw. *kupika*=Bkv.Sw. *kupiga*

- 21) In the same vein, we have: *kama alikuya ningemupigia nyama* but **kama alikuyaka leo ningemupigia nyama*. Similarly, *niliendaka ku shamba zamani* but **niliendaka ku shamba yana*.

ningali nikilala (*I am still sleeping*)
 nilikuwa ningali kulala (*I was still sleeping*)
 nitakuwa ningali kulala (*I shall still be sleeping*)

Note that in St.Sw. the infinitive is used in the past and in the future (although, in all fairness, I should mention that I have met ‘native’ speakers for whom the correct rendition of these sentences is: *ningali nimelala*, *nilikuwa ningali nimelala* and *nitakuwa ningali nimelala*). In Bkv.Sw. these sentences would be rendered thus:

ni(ki)ngali(ki) nalala
 nilikuwa ni(ki)ngali(ki) nalala
 nitakuwa ni(ki)ngali(ki) nalala

The interesting thing about this tense in Bukavu is that it has two shades of meaning. One meaning is expressed by using *-ngali* (or *-kingali*), the other by *-ngaliki* (or *-kingaliki*). The meaning of the former is simply ‘still’ whereas the latter can be translated as ‘still and it will continue to be so’. Many informants maintain that the *(ki)ngali* form implies the idea of ‘a short while’ whereas *(ki)ngaliki* contains the idea ‘for quite a long period’. Still others claim that the former is to be translated as ‘still’ and the latter as ‘remain’. Whichever point of view one accepts, the general gist of this distinction should be clear. Consider the following sample sentences:

ni(ki)ngali nakula (*I am still eating*)
 ni(ki)ngaliki nakula (*I am still eating and will continue to do so for quite a while*)

niko apa (*I am here*)
 ni(ki)ngali apa (*I am still here*)
 ni(ki)ngaliki apa (*I am still here and will remain here*)

ni(ki)ngali mwalimu (I am still a teacher)
 ni(ki)ngaliki mwalimu (I am still a teacher and will remain so)

ni(ki)ngali na kazi (*I still have work*)
 nilikuwa ni(ki)ngali na kazi (*I still had work*)
 nilikuwa ni(ki)ngali nafanya kazi (*I was still working*)

u(ki)ngali kula! (*you are still eating!*)
 zamani siku nilikuwaka ni(ki)ngaliki mutoto (*long ago when I was still a child*)

It should be observed that the ‘still’ tense and the progressive *ko* marker (see our section on *na* and *a* markers) are mutually exclusive:

a(ki)ngali nacheza (*s/he is still playing*)

*a(ki)ngali ikonacheza

The corollary of the 'still' tense (*viz.* 'no longer', 'not anymore') is expressed by using *tena*:

siko tena mutoto (*I am not any longer a child*)

atuko tena na franka (*we don't have anymore money*)

sikule tena (*I don't eat anymore*)

Finally, the idea of 'not yet' is expressed by *ya ... bado* as in:

ayakuya bado (*s/he has not yet arrived*)

siyafanya kazi bado (*I have not done the work yet*)

atuyakula bado (*we have not eaten yet*)

Monosyllabic verbs

Monosyllabic verbs, the nightmare *par excellence* of many learners of Swahili, pose hardly any problems in Bukavu Swahili. In Standard Swahili sometimes the *ku* of the infinitive appears, sometimes it does not. In Bukavu Swahili the *ku* of monosyllabic verbs *always* appears²²⁾—call it a case of extended 'paradigm regulation' if you wish. For reference purposes it may be useful to have a look at the (more or less) complete paradigm. It also offers an opportunity to briefly recapitulate most of what has been said on the preceding pages.

Standard Swahili

anakula (*s/he is eating*)

ala (*s/he eats*)

amekula (*s/he has eaten*)

alikula (*s/he ate*)

atakula (*s/he will eat*)

hula (*s/he [usually] eats*)

alipokula (*when s/he ate*)

alipokuwa anakula (*when s/he was eating*)

anayekula (*s/he who is eating*)

(*s/he who eats*)

akila (*if s/he eats*)

kama anakula (*if s/he is eating*)

Bukavu Swahili

ikonakula

anakula

alikulula/aliisha kula

alikulula/alikulaka

atakula/atakulaka

anakulaka

wakati alikulula/wakati alikulaka

wakati alikuwa (iko)nakula/wakati alikuwaka (iko)nakula

mwenye ikonakula

mwenye kula/mwenye atakula

akikulula/kama anakula

kama ikonakula

22) The list of monosyllabic verbs is identical to Standard Swahili except for *kupa* which in Bukavu Swahili appears as *kupatia* (and always requires an object marker). *Kupa* and *kupatia* are of course different roots, *patia* being the applied form of *pata*.

akala (<i>[and then] s/he ate</i>)	akakula
hakula (<i>s/he did not eat</i>)	akukula
hali (<i>s/he does not eat</i>)	akule
ale (<i>s/he should eat</i>)	akule
asile (<i>s/he should not eat</i>)	asikule
alizila (<i>s/he ate them [bananas]</i>)	aliikula/aliikulaka
angekula (<i>if s/he ate</i>)	ange(li)kula/kama alikula
angali/ngelikula (<i>if s/he had eaten</i>)	ange(li)kulaka
hangekula (<i>if s/he didn't eat</i>)	aange(li)kula
hangalikula (<i>if s/he had not eaten</i>)	aange(li)kulaka

KUWA

To end this survey of Bukavu Swahili verb forms, it may be instructive to have a quick glance at a paradigm for *kuwa* 'to be' and its related forms:²³⁾

mie niko mugonjwa ' <i>I am ill</i> '	sie tuko bagonjwa ' <i>we are ill</i> '
wee uko mugonjwa ' <i>you are ill</i> '	nyie muko bagonjwa ' <i>you(pl) are ill</i> '
yee iko mugonjwa ' <i>s/he is ill</i> '	(a)bo biko bagonjwa ' <i>they are ill</i> '

mulango iko wazi (*the door is open*)
 mulango inakuwaka wazi (*the door is [usually] open*)
 mie minakuwaka mugonjwa (*I am [usually, always, constantly] ill*)
 nilikuwa mugonjwa (*I was ill*)
 nilikuwaka mugonjwa (*I was ill [dist. pst]*)
 sikukuwa mugonjwa (*I was not ill*)
 sikukuwaka mugonjwa (*I was not ill [dist. pst]*)
 nilikuwa (niko)naimba (*I was singing*)
 nilikuwaka (niko)naimba (*I was singing [dist. pst]*)
 ntakuwa (niko)naenda ku shamba (*I'll be walking to the field*)
 ntakuwaka (niko)naenda ku shamba (*I'll be walking to the field [dist. fut.]*)

niliisha kuwa (*I have already been*)
 ntakuwa niliisha andika ii barua (*I will have written this letter*)

kuna mukutano leo (*there is a meeting today*)
 kulikuwa mukutano yana (*there was a meeting yesterday*)
 kulikuwaka mukutano zamani (*there was a meeting some time ago*)

23) And by implication also for 'to have' (*niko na, uko na, iko na etc.*). The *-ko* forms are basically locative expressions.

ningali muzima (*I am still alive*)

bangali bazima (*they are still alive*)

ningali mwalimu (*I am still a teacher*)

siko tena mwalimu (*I am not any longer a teacher*)

nilikuwa ningali mwalimu (*I was still a teacher*)

sikukuwa tena mwalimu (*I was not any longer a teacher*)

sikukuwaka tena mwalimu (*I was not any longer a teacher then [indef. pst.]*)

Congo Swahili: Katanga Swahili and Kingwana

Swahili is one of the four national languages in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire). It is the most important language of the eastern provinces of Kivu and Katanga although its sphere of influence extends well beyond these (reaching Kisangani and Bunia in the Upper Congo region).

It is common practice to refer to Congo Swahili as *Kingwana*. In other words, Congo Swahili is considered by many to be a single dialect. Unfortunately, this is just one of the many persistent myths that concern this part of Central Africa. To the question as to whether the term Kingwana can possibly be justified to refer to Congo Swahili *as a whole*, my answer would be an unqualified no.

A number of fairly respectable linguists have, at one time or other, made statements regarding the very nature of the Swahili spoken in the Democratic Republic of Congo. These statements were apparently accepted at face value and have never been questioned. They have entered the realm of factual truths (*sic!*) to be referred to in textbooks, manuals and encyclopedias. A few examples may suffice.

Benji Wald (1987: 994) writes:

Swahili [extends] westward into [...] eastern and southern Zaire primarily as an auxiliary language, except in the Lubumbashi area of southern Zaire, where an urban dialect of Swahili usually called Kingwana has arisen since the late 19th century

This short statement contains three fundamental errors: (i) Lubumbashi Swahili is not the same as Kingwana; (ii) Lubumbashi Swahili did not arise in the late 19th century and (iii) in addition to Lubumbashi there are other areas in Congo where Swahili does not function as a mere auxiliary language (e.g. in Bukavu and in the Kasongo area Swahili happens to be the first language of the majority of the population).

John Holm (1989: 564–565) claims that the inland expansion of Swahili

began around 1800, as Swahili-speaking traders began to penetrate the interior in search of ivory and slaves. [...] Many traders settled among the indigenous people, and their descendants [...] became known as the Wangwana or 'free people'. Their language, Ngwana or Kingwana, was a variety of Swahili influenced by different languages of the Congo [...]. In the copper-rich area that became the

southern province of Katanga (now Lubumbashi), a multilingual community evolved [...]. The Wangwana enjoyed a privileged status in this kingdom and their language was an important lingua franca [...].

Except for the claim that Kingwana was influenced by local languages, the remainder of this quote would seem to be a figment of the imagination: the expansion did not begin around 1800; the notion ‘free people’ in this very context does not make sense; the southern province of Katanga is of course not synonymous with ‘Lubumbashi’ (its capital city); the Wangwana couldn’t have enjoyed a privileged status (nor could their language have become an important lingua franca) for they were not anywhere near that very region. That all of this is sheer fantasy will, hopefully, become clear as we proceed.

The emergence of Kingwana

The introduction of Swahili in the eastern Congo dates back to the sustained caravan trade, involving Swahili traders from the East African coast, which got under way by the mid 19th century and which led to the settlement of some of these traders in the interior of Central Africa by 1875 (notably in Kasongo and Nyangwe along the Lualaba). These Swahili traders established routes along which eventually Europeans were to travel as well. As the explorers not only walked but also talked their way across Africa they soon began to compile manuals which included some useful vocabularies or wordlists.

These guides and wordlists of the late 19th century exemplify a clear East Coast orientation, and there is an indication that the Swahili spoken in the Congo at that time is not yet labeled Kingwana, although the notion ‘Wangwana’ frequently occurs as a social-ethnic category. From this we may safely conclude that one variety of Swahili (*viz.* the Kiunguja dialect of Zanzibar) dominated and that its westward expansion was still too much in flux to have congealed into a distinct up-country variety. As time goes by, however, we see that many items in the wordlists begin to deviate from Zanzibar Swahili and reveal structural peculiarities that are typical of what has come to be known as Kingwana. In 1909, the Swahili spoken in the Congo was for the first time identified as Kingwana. It should be observed, however, that when reference is made to the specific geographical area of eastern Congo *in its entirety*, the term Kingwana is a misnomer. Let us have a closer look at this somewhat elusive notion.

In Swahili, the term *m̄wungwana* (plural *wangwana* or *waungwana*) captures three slightly conflicting or at times complementary notions. One connotation is that of ‘somebody free of slave descent in the male line’ as opposed to ‘someone of slave stock’. Another connotation is that of ‘a person living in or belonging to a town’ (as opposed to a *mshenzi*, a barbarian or savage). In its essential meaning, however, the term *m̄wungwana* refers to ‘a person of impeccable personal integrity, well-behaved and well-educated’. The latter is the original interpretation which is still in vogue as sole meaning in certain parts along the coast (Demolin & Goyvaerts 1986; Allen 1974). The intriguing point is that, generally, the three connotations together make up the overall meaning of the term because, after all,

descent and culture were inextricably intertwined in coastal society. This, in all likelihood, accounts for the inherent ambiguity of the term.

The men in charge of the trade caravans departing from the coastal towns were of course *wangwana*. It is they who eventually settled in the interior (more specifically, in the Maniema area, between the Lualaba and the Great Lakes) and who, together with their entourage, created well-defined socio-cultural entities. It is their language, Swahili, that came to be labeled Kingwana (lit. 'the language of the wangwana') by the Belgian colonial administrators and missionaries, as witnessed, for example, by the items occurring under the heading 'Congo Swahili' in Van Spaandonck's Swahili bibliography (Van Spaandonck 1965).

The emergence of Katanga Swahili

In spite of the common belief regarding Kingwana, it would seem that the only position that can reasonably be maintained is to say that in eastern Congo two separate dialects of Swahili must be recognized: a northern variety (Kingwana) and a southern variety (Katanga Swahili). This position can be defended on linguistic, cultural and historical grounds.

As a matter of fact, the *linguistic* differences between Kingwana and Katanga Swahili are quite significant. Of the nine important linguistic characteristics defining Katanga Swahili (Fabian 1986: 118ff) there are six which simply do not exist in the Maniema region where native speakers of Kingwana make up a large part of the population. Moreover, Kingwana and Katanga Swahili are completely different *historical* realities. The former can be traced to the trade caravans which began to make frequent incursions as early as 1850. The origin of the latter, on the other hand, is very much due to a specific *language policy* implemented by the Belgian Colonial authorities and goes back to well after the establishment of the *Union Minière de Haut Katanga* in 1906 and the foundation of the city of Elisabethville (present-day Lubumbashi) in 1909. Finally, the *socio-cultural* contexts within which the dialects developed have no features in common, as a result of which speakers of the respective dialects are seen to exhibit clear problems of identity *vis-à-vis* one another. Notice, for example, that in Katanga there existed a situation of total linguistic and cultural disorder, brought about by the exigencies of the mining industry whose labourers came from widely dispersed geographical areas and constituted an extremely heterogeneous mass. In the Maniema region, however, the Wangwana and their followers remained closely united, especially when they resisted against the *Force Publique* or when they were ostracized by the colonial authorities. This probably explains why Haddad (1983: 162) can still claim categorically that the Swahili spoken in Maniema has remained more or less pure (in contrast, I suppose, with the existing creole continuum in present-day Katanga).

The current Kiswahili foothold in Katanga has been traced to the existence of a Yeke empire (generally known as Garenganze [Katanga]) in south-eastern Congo whose Nyamwezi ruler, Msiri, is said to have conversed with his visitors in Kiswahili. This should not come as a surprise since Msiri and his Nyamwezi are known to have played a crucial role in

the Swahili caravans. Yet most—if not all—Swahili scholars have accepted at face value the putative role of Msiri in the implantation of Swahili in Katanga. When it comes to this particular topic, they all cite Polomé (1963) as the seminal article. Polomé himself is rather vague about his source, though I suspect he must have relied on Verbeken (1956). Throughout his writings on Swahili, Polomé has stuck to what may conveniently be called the Msiri hypothesis of the origin of Swahili in Katanga, claiming—rather bluntly—at one point that in Msiri’s capital, Bunkeya, Swahili was used for intertribal communication in the marketplace (Polomé 1985: 47).

Fabian (1986) has successfully rebutted this very hypothesis. Having studied the writings of a group of British evangelists (the Garenganze Evangelical Mission) who operated in Msiri’s capital in the late 1880s, Fabian concludes that Swahili must be ruled out as the vehicular medium in Msiri’s Katanga for what the missionaries describe is a clear situation of stable multilingualism involving Yeke, Sanga and Luba. To corroborate Fabian’s point of view, let me add that I managed to obtain a copy of a fairly exhaustive account of the Garenganze Evangelical Mission’s work by one of its pioneers (Arnot, n.d., probably 1891) in which there is no indication whatsoever of a Swahili ‘colony’ existing at Bunkeya between 1880 and 1890.

Then how did Swahili emerge in Katanga? The answer is simply that it was deliberately introduced by the Belgian Colonial Ministry to combat the increase of British interests in the area (up to 1920 English was the dominant European language in southern Katanga). The policy of promoting French and Swahili was seen as the only adequate means at the disposal of the Belgian colonial authorities to fulfill the political requirement of orienting Katanga toward the North (i.e. toward the Maniema region where Kingwana was in full bloom).

It is therefore not, as Polomé (1985) believes, circumstances *preceding* the colonial period which determined the language that was to be used as lingua franca. Rather, it was the growing importance of the mining industry and the concomitant Belgian suspicion aroused by the expanding influence of English in the area, that led to the development of a specific language policy on the part of the colonial authorities. Swahili was to become the symbol of the consolidation of Belgian rule in Katanga, and I think this is the reason why it came to be identified—wrongly—with Kingwana. In the course of time this contact vernacular was extensively pidginized and, when the town population stabilized, the pidginized lingua franca became the first language of a new generation. In the ensuing process of creolization it was relexicalized and reshaped grammatically, giving rise to the Katanga Swahili creole.

Let it be made clear that the state of affairs which I have just depicted is completely different from what happened in Maniema with respect to the institutionalization of Kingwana. Elsewhere (see Goyvaerts 1986: 217ff.) I have provided ample illustration of the crucial role played in this process by (i) the nature and function of the Swahili (or Wangwana) dwellings; (ii) the kind of persons occupying those dwellings; (iii) the market places; (iv) the Coranic schools; (v) the Swahili tribunals and (vi) the colonial authorities (who at one point confined the Wangwana together with their descendants or/and followers to specific

Muslim quarters). None of these crucial factors in the creation of the Kingwana dialect of Swahili can be discerned in Lubumbashi and the southern Katanga region, the cradle of Katanga Swahili.

Bukavu Swahili

Given the origins and social contexts of the two language varieties Lubumbashi Swahili is a *creole* whereas Bukavu Swahili is clearly a *koine*. We refer to a language as a koine, when it is the result of a process which leads to the mixing of mutually intelligible, genetically related language varieties. It emerges within a context of increased interaction among speakers of these varieties. A koine is the *stabilized* composite variety which results from this process (Siegel 1985: 376). Koinés differ from pidgins/creoles in that they stem from language varieties that are much more similar typologically and develop much more slowly than pidgins.

The degree of multilingualism in Bukavu is simply staggering. Over forty languages are spoken within the city boundaries. The linguistic diversity is immense. This diversity can easily be measured: if we choose at random two members of the Bukavu population, the probability that these two individuals speak the same language may be looked upon as a measure of the linguistic diversity. The diversity index can range from 0 (complete homogeneity) to 1 (no two people share the same mother tongue). The *diversity index* for Bukavu is 0.746. The enormity of this result will be obvious if one compares it with the figures known for entire countries such as, for example, India (0.837) and Thailand (0.771).²⁴⁾

The existing language mosaic in Bukavu constitutes a relatively fluid system in which negotiation of status, authority and control can be smoothly accomplished through the use of the indigenous languages on the one hand, and the three lingua francas (Swahili, French, Indoubil) on the other. The main purpose of these lingua francas is to neutralize the negative effects of ethnicity. Furthermore, it is important to realize that, today, the *communicativity index* of Swahili is 1, meaning that absolutely everybody in Bukavu is able to speak this language.²⁵⁾

Bukavu exemplifies a complex polyglossic situation with High, Low and Middle language varieties. The degree of 'highness' is a function of (i) the domain in which the variety is used and (ii) the speakers' attitudes towards it. The more public and formal the domain, the higher the status. Given this state of affairs, the languages of Bukavu can be categorized as H (French, St.Sw.), M (Bkv.Sw., Lingala), L (the more than 40 ethnic languages) and LL (extra low: the artificially created jargons and secret languages such as Indoubil and Kibalele; cf. Goyvaerts 1988, 1996 for details).

As far as the specific relationship between St.Sw. and Bkv.Sw. is concerned, this is a

24) For details, see Goyvaerts (1997).

25) Ranging from 0 to 1, the communicativity index of a language reflects the proportion of the population that is able to speak this language. In Bukavu the index of Swahili is 1 whereas the scores for Lingala and French are 0.61 and 0.22 respectively.

clear instance of what is generally known as diglossia, with St.Sw. being the H variant and Bkv.Sw. being the L variant of the diglossic relationship. In Bukavu, the high variant (St.Sw.) is used in the mass media, in school, in church and at meetings. The L variant (Bkv.Sw.) is the ‘language of the street’, the language used in day to day interaction.²⁶⁾

Some people might wish to account for the St.Sw.–Bkv.Sw. relationship in terms of a *continuum* model of language contact, in which there is a continuous spectrum of speech varieties with the upper extreme being close to the standard language spoken by the highly educated whereas the lower extreme is the variety spoken by the totally uneducated layer of the population. However, this position cannot any longer be maintained because today Bkv.Sw. happens to be a *stable* variant—stability being the crucial factor to distinguish between a diglossic situation on the one hand and a continuum on the other. Because speakers of Bukavu Swahili are not any longer motivated²⁷⁾ to use Standard Swahili in their daily speech, there are no intermediate varieties between Standard Swahili (H) and Bukavu Swahili (L). As a result, the H variety continues as a language used for special occasions whereas the L variety has developed on its own terms (See Wilt 1988 for a useful discussion). Bukavu Swahili, as a regional koine, is the fairly stable lingua franca or regional standard of a geographical area in which many dialects and languages are spoken.

Whereas Lubumbashi Swahili was artificially introduced in the early 20th century, the very origins of Bukavu Swahili—although a relatively recent²⁸⁾ phenomenon—can nevertheless be traced to the second half of the 19th century when Swahili-speaking traders from Zanzibar and the East African coast established trade networks up country extending their influence to the geographical area in eastern Congo from, roughly, the Lukuga River in the south to well beyond the Aruwimi River in the Upper Congo. There, also the regional Waungwana²⁹⁾ were instrumental in the further spread of Swahili. They had settled along the Lualaba in Kabambare, Kasongo, Nyangwe, Riba Riba and Stanley Falls (Kisangani). By 1886 the population of Nyangwe was about 10,000 and that of Kasongo (their principal Congo base) had reached 8,000 (cf. Bennett 1986: 224). It is impossible to ignore the intimate link between Bukavu and these historical concentrations of inland Swahili culture. Today, people in Bukavu still refer to Kasongo as the place where good Swahili (‘Swahili bora’) is spoken. It is of interest to note that for the people in Bukavu, when talking about

26) It is not at all uncommon for primary school teachers to make use of Bkv.Sw. to explain what has been written on the board in St.Sw.

27) After independence French became more accessible as the H language *par excellence* for socio-economic self-advancement whereas the socio-economic importance of St.Sw. became virtually non-existent. In the pre-independence era (before 1960) the situation had been different as several sociolinguistic conditions had favoured a *continuum* situation in which speakers would move away from the vernacular towards the (at that time) prestigious standard.

28) Before 1950, Swahili was the mother tongue of a minority whereas by 1970 it had become the first language of over 70% of the population (not replacing but supplementing the ethnic languages: as a rule, the average inhabitant of Bukavu is nowadays a *perfect* bilingual or trilingual). Today, as indicated earlier, the Communicativity Index of Swahili is 1 (cf. Wilt 1988, Goyvaerts et al. 1983).

29) Referring here to free persons, civilized persons or anyone working for the Arabo-Swahili traders (Goyvaerts and Kabemba 1986: 217).

‘good’ Swahili the point of reference is not the East African coast but Kasongo. Besides, another way of referring to good (=standard) Swahili is by using the phrase ‘le Swahili des arabisés’ (the Swahili of the Arabized). The term Kingwana is never used. It would seem to be a notion that appears solely in the writings of westerners to refer, wrongly, to either ‘the Swahili of Congo Zaire’ (Harries 1955: 13) or ‘some sort of pidgin-like bad Swahili’ (Van den Eynde 1944: 6).

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