Arabic and African Languages: Mutual Influences

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Overview

• Background information
• Influence of Arabic on African languages
  – Spoken language
  – Literary language
• Influence of African languages on Arabic
• Creole Arabic (Juba Arabic, Nubi)
• Conclusion
A. Arabic in Africa

• Arabic is largest language in Africa
• Probably most differentiated
  – Form
  – Functions in societies it is used in
# Arabic-speaking population in Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Estimated % L1 Arabic</th>
<th>% Arabic-speaking (L1+ L2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>77,949,000</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>34,895,000</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>31,744,000</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>39,154,490</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>70%?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>10,432,500</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>6,420,000</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>11,274,106</td>
<td>10-20% (?)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>3,291,000</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>.5%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>14,517,176</td>
<td>1-5%</td>
<td>1-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographic conclusions: Arabic is an important African language

- Estimated Arabic L1 and L2: 194,000,000
- Nearly 25% of all Africans speak Arabic fluently as L1 or L2
- More Arabic speakers in Africa than in Arabic-speaking Asia (115,000,000)
Two aspects relating to spread of Arabic in Africa

1. Migration of Arabs
2. Spread of Islam

Related to Varieties of Arabic

1. colloquial (dialect) = native language, spoken
2. Classical/(Modern) Standard Arabic, literary
Arabic Variety 1: Standard Arabic/Classical Arabic

- Not a spoken variety, but
- Language of formal education and therefore the language of literate Arabs and a good number of literate Africans
- Language of the Qur’an hence extremely important in Islamic education
Variety 2, 3, 4 …: Arabic dialects

- Native language of Arabs, the language of everyday communication among them; 99% of all daily oral interactions are carried out in dialect

- The lingua-franca language in mixed ethnic societies, particularly Morocco, Algeria, Chad, Mauritania, Libya, Sudan (?)
How did it get to Africa?

- 640-711: Arabic spread from Egypt to Morocco (and Spain) with the Islamic expansion
- Mainly a language of urban centers
- 1040: a second expansion to North Africa from Upper Egypt to Libya, Tunisia (Bani Hilal), 12th century + to Morocco
- 1300: emigration from Upper Egypt to the Sudan, Chad, Lake Chad
- Limited migration to East African coast, Zanzibar, particularly ca. 1750-1800 from Oman
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Arabic influence I: Spoken language

- Arabic displaced languages in North Africa
  - Coptic
  - Berber in many areas
  - Immigrants to Arabic speaking areas
    - “Fulani” and “Kanuri” in Sudan speak Arabic
Structural influence on African languages

- Arabic-African languages
- Arabic – Berber
  - Negative
  - Arabic
    - *ma ba-ktub-š*
    - NEG I-write-NOT
    - ‘I don’t write’
  - Berber (Amazigh)
    - *ur yə-xḍim ara*
    - NEG work.PRF.3MSGNEG
    - ‘He didn’t work” (Kabyle, Algeria)
  - Tuareg

- Swahili: *bado ha-ja-fanya hivi: “he didn’t do it yet” bado + negative verb*
  - Gulf Arabic *ba’d ma sawwaa: “he didn’t do it yet” “not yet” = ba’d + negative verb*
- Fur, (Darfur), Kanuri: little structural influence
- African languages: Kanuri SOV, different possessive construction
- But generally, no strong influence outside of lexicon
Vocabulary

• Up to 50% of Swahili vocabulary derives from Arabic
  – (http://www.freeweb.hu/etymological/swahili.htm), http://wold.livingsources.org/language/1
  – asante ‘thank you’ (< aḥsanta), tafadali ‘please’ (< tafaDDal)
  – adhana [< ’adān] = ‘call to prayer’
  – adhuhuri [< al-DHuhr] = ‘midday’
  – adili [< ‘aadil] ‘just’ (adj.)
  – adui [< ‘adu] ‘enemy’
  – damu < dam ‘blood’
  – elimu [< ‘ilm] ‘knowledge’
  – fahamu < faham ‘understand’
  – Numerals 5-9, 1,000

• Berber, broken plural nouns
  – ssuq ‘market’, ləswaq < Ar əs-suq, əl-aswaaq)

• Hausa: Kullum ‘every day’ (< Kanuri < Arabic kull yoom/yuum “every day”), etc.
Arabic influence II, Islam, Classical/Standard Arabic
Arabic language and African culture and politics

• Loanwords
  – Hausa
  – Kanuri
  • Kanuri (3 newspapers, 1951-1989), 9,657 Arabic loans (tokens) vs. 2,263 English

• Important domains of many African languages have significant Arabic-origin vocabulary
  – Kanuri: luwaram (< l-Qur’aan,), liitafi < al-kitaab
Lack of structural influence via literary Arabic, even in translated texts

[YM, 2:122]

Ar:

adhkur-ū ni‘mat-ī ’[’allātī ’an‘am-tu ‘alaykum] remember-2.PL.M.IMP favor-my REL bestowed-I on.you

‘Remember my favor [which I bestowed on you]’

LG:

<[/xūyi nadīro kir-gr-ēk] -ka nadīyi lifūgō>

1 sg.SJ you.PL.IO CAUS-favor-1SG.CNV-DO you.PL.SJ remember.IMP
Tarjumo: Quranic commentary in Kanembu
Arabic African literature

- Ibn Furtu, 16th century
- Kano chronicle (17th-19 centuries)
- 19th century jihadist literature in Northern Nigeria
- Correspondence
Ajami scripts:
African languages in Arabic script

• Swahili
• Harari
• Hausa
• Kanuri
• Mande
• Berber (Amazigh)
• …
Swahili ca. 1900
Swahili, 1900

Bemaniki taala.

Ila muhebbina ilakram innasih fulan bin fulan.
Mande writing system: nko
B. African - Arab

North Africa: Berber influence on Arabic
  ? Phonology: both Berber and Maghrebi Arabic dialects lack vowels:
  Arabic katab “write”, Moroccan: ktib; Berber
  But Tuareg maintains vowels; original Aramaic substratal influence?

Jijeli Arabic (eastern Algeria) < Berber focus marking
  nxəllṣu dəlwak d nazla l-əwwlaniyya
  We will send off the first load now

Loss of distinction in 2SG in Arabic in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Malta
  iktib-ti “you (M or F) wrote” (usually iktib-t/iktib-ti)

Sudanic Arabic, particularly western Sudan, Chad, Cameroon, NE Nigeria
Semantics
Primary colors: 6 reduced to 5
Most Arabic dialects: aswād “black”, abyaD “white” aṣfar “yellow”, aḥmar “red”,
  axDar “green”, azrag “blue”
Sudanic region: azrag, “black”, abyaD “white” aṣfar “yellow”, aḥmar “red”, axDar
  “green, blue, dark”

Ideophones: ’arabi bang “pure Arabic”,
  • daxál bu lubb al-hille “I went into the middle of the town”
Idiomatic structure (collocations)

• *akal-o amaanti* ‘they ate my trust’ = deceived me = Kanuri *amân-a zu-wú-na*

• *an-naar akalat il-hille* ‘the fire ate the town’ = burned it up = K. *kánnú beladé-ya zu-wú-na* (fire town-ACC ate)

• *akal an-naas* ‘he ate the people’ = cheated them = K. *kam-a zu-wú-na*
Aside from lexicon and semantics

- Relatively little mutual influence in Sudanic region and East Africa in core domains of phonology, morphology and syntax

- Arabic in Chad in Nigeria: still has emphatic sounds, \( \text{a} \text{ṣ} \text{faR} \) ‘yellow,’ has typical rules of vowel epenthesis, \( \text{ahamar} \) ‘red,’ has “Arabic” tense system and broken plurals (\( \text{beet}/\text{buyuut} \) ‘house’), possessive construction, topicalization …
C. Restructured-Arabic: Arabic creole

- Juba Arabic (Nubi in East Africa)
- Lingua franca of newest African nation

Nubi:

\[ \text{ana bi-gi-masi ma sabi tayi} \]
‘I will be going with my friend’

Sudanic Arabic:

\[ \text{b-a-mshi ma’ sajahib-i} \]
ana = ana ‘I’
b < imperfect verb prefix
gi < gaacid progressive morpheme
maši < maaši active participle form of verb maša
ma < mač ‘with’
sabi < sajahib-i ‘my friend’
tayi < tač-i ‘of me’ = mine
In general

- Arabic has had a large impact on vocabulary in African languages, both from the spoken language and from Classical Arabic.
- Arabic has had an important impact on literacy in Africa.
- It has had a large impact on languages in North Africa, but there never were many languages in North Africa.
- Arabic where it is not a dominant language has been strongly influenced semantically by African languages.
- An interesting linguistic question: why has there not been widespread mutual structural influence between Arabic and other African languages.