

Kiswahili: The Mother Tongue

The production of this issue of *The Journal of Pan African Studies* echo my undergraduate years at California State University at Hayward (now California State University, East Bay) when I was studying Kiswahili under the direction of D. Chilaylya Mwalizi. I remember his willingness to teach, and our desire to learn an African language, thousands of miles from the motherland, on the strength of the Black Power Movement, and the energy of the Black Arts Movement. Now, at least thirty-three years later, I am pleased to present via guest editor Clara Momanyi of the Kiswahili and African Languages Department in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya, a collection of ten articles and twelve authors devoted to Kiswahili: the language most used in a systematic context between persons not sharing a ‘mother tongue’ in east and central Africa; the national or official language of four nations, and the only language of African origin among the official working languages of the African Union, an intergovernmental organization of fifty-three African nations, established in 2002, the successor to the Organization of African Unity, established in 1963.

Thus, in this historical record, we are introduced (as mentioned above) to ten approaches concerning: the role and challenges of Kiswahili in the integration of east Africa, how Kiswahili can be tapped as a resource for mobilizing popular support; how historical interaction between the Swahili people and Islam contributed to the expansion of Kiswahili; the processes of how loanwords are adapted from Arabic into Kiswahili using optimality theory discourse; a discussion and analysis of the nature and functions of Kiswahili vowels; dialogues of narratology (i.e., the theory and study of narrative and the ways they affect human perception) from semiotic and functional perspectives; a discussion that attempts a pragmatics analysis of Kiswahili literary political discourse; a paper on the effects of ‘Sheng’ within the educational institutions of Kenya in contrast to the official languages of Kiswahili and English; a suggestion that steps be taken by institutions of higher learning, planners, policy makers and scholars to ensure that Kiswahili and English facilitate the contribution of science and technology to development in Kenya, and a final paper on actualizing free primary education in Kenya with a focus on Kiswahili as the language of instruction.

An ironic twist in this presentation is that none of the articles are fully in Kiswahili; however, we are open to this option, as stated in our guide for submitting articles. Hence, in a future issue, we can indeed explore publishing full articles in a language other than English. How else can we begin to decolonize the mind from the halls of Europe, which already directly or subliminally influence the consciousness of too many people on the planet?

Sincerely,
Itibari M. Zulu
Editor