

## LANGUAGE PLANNING AND LANGUAGE POLICY IN TANZANIA DURING THE GERMAN COLONIAL PERIOD

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Language development in Africa was not and is not solely dependent upon those initiatives which have been taken since the independence of former colonies. During the colonial period, decisions in respect to language (usually allocation of use) were made based upon a language policy which was usually part of the total colonial philosophy. These language planning processes helped determine what type of 'language resource' was available at independence. The goal of this paper is to illustrate this form of language planning as it took place in Tanzania during the German Colonial Period.

In 1885 a part of East Africa fell into German control and jurisdiction when Bismarck granted a charter to the Society for German Colonization. As was the case with most German colonies, the government gave a society (or societies) its official protection and thereby the rights of governing, exploiting but also of paying the cost as long as direct imperial control was not necessary. Such was the case in German East Africa; the Society for German Colonization controlled the area until the end of the Bushiri Revolt (1888—90) when direct imperial control was imposed.

The developments in respect to Swahili during the colonial period can be seen by examining the following areas: the policy towards language choice used in government schools [*Regierungsschulen*]; which languages were used in administration; and the choice and use of language in mission schools. But before these three areas are examined, it is necessary to take a look at the general language choice discussion in respect to the colonies which was going on in Germany at that time.

The colonial language choice discussion took place at two levels in Germany. The first level concerned itself with the general attitudes towards language use in all the colonies whereas the second contained itself to the particular circumstances in one colony. After a presentation of the general discussion, the specific arguments used in respect to German East Africa will be analyzed.

The general attitude displayed by German Colonial Authorities in Germany and those from trade associations, etc. which were involved in the colonialization process was one favoring the widespread use of the German language. This was seen as an important part of the 'Germanization' process. That is, the native population was to develop a certain relationship to their 'Mother Country.' The German language was to serve as a symbol of the German rule; the language of the conqueror was to be accepted with respect and to be a symbol of the subjugation of the native population. The use of indigenous languages could lead to the awakening of a national feeling in the colony which was considered to be anti-German. The following quote translated by Mehnert from the German Central Archive in Potsdam (from the files of the Reich Colonial Office,) illustrates the anti-indigenous language feeling which prevailed among many of the German Colonial Authorities:

By working on the language of the countries (that is the colonial countries, my note) and raising them to written languages, the national feelings of the natives will be awakened without doubt but not any sort of national German feeling or one sympathetic to the German nation but unjustified, mad views hitherto unknown to the natives of the importance of their nation, of their tribe ... The link between the natives and their German rulers and between native tribes with different languages should not be a language of the country but the German language. (Mehnert, 1973:385)

One could say that this position was influenced by the policy which England used in her colonies. It can also be supposed that the German attitude was somehow combined with the idea that power is not only shown in economic and political control but also through imposition of the colonial power's language. Thus the language decision should be seen as a part of the total colonial rule and not as an isolated phenomenon.

Another important group involved in the language discussion was the German Protestant Mission. At this time the protestant forces in Germany played an important political role. (A historical explanation of this fact would go beyond the framework of this paper). Although the German Protestant Mission (GPM) was made up of various missionary groups, their attitude towards language can be seen as being homogenous.

The question of language use by the GPM must be seen as an integral part of its total missionary programme. The main figure in the construction of theoretical objectives and of the means of attaining these was Gustav Warneck. The policy which he supported was one of *Volkschristianisierung* (Christianization of the people) with the goal of establishing self-sufficient mission churches. His objective was that the Church should be an institution within a certain ethnical group and not the unity of the *Volkskirche* (people's church) and the *Staatskirche* (state church). The everyday life patterns of the indigenous population was to be influenced by the Christian faith and the Church was to serve as their meeting place.

Language was an integral part of the expression of common ethnical factors. God has created ethnic groups each with its own language, customs and character which should not be destroyed by artificial manipulation. Also if one is to reach the soul of a person and the emotional area connected with it, one should only use and can only use the language which the person has spoken from birth on.

This meant that the GPM favoured the use of "vernaculars" in their work and their schools. The introduction of any other language be it a lingua franca or a European language, including German, was wrong.

This position, which in its early stage can be seen as a positive one in respect to the preservation of the indigenous languages and also for other pedagogical reasons, soon began to change. The GPM disputed the 'national German position' in the language question saying that the use of German in educational instruction represented a risk for the colonial policy. In a petition of the Committee of the GPM to the Colonial Department in 1904, the members stated that the use of the German language in instruction and its rapid spread

could easily become a danger for the colony since it leads to the development of a conceited, demanding and easily dissatisfied race as the natives hear much from the Europeans which has a harmful effect and feel tempted to consider themselves as equal to them. ... With the understanding of the language of the foreigner his personal authority also vanishes ... (translated by Mehnert, 1973:388—389).

Those who supported this attitude felt that when the native population could read and understand German they would also have access to German newspapers, magazines etc. which would allow them to understand the colonial policies and even see what was planned. K. Axenfeld stated that when the Africans could read German they would have access to "... Social Democrat newspapers, even publication like the *Simplicissimus*." (translated by Mehnert, 1973:389). (*The Simplicissimus* was a socialist-satiric magazine of the time). When such progressive ideas as those propagated in such publications were accepted, they could be spread by means of the German language and an anti-colonial feeling would be their result. The latter part of the argument could be brought against any lingua franca in the colonial area. In other words, the position of the GPM was one of 'divide and conquer.'

Carl Meinhof, a prominent German linguist of the time who specialized in African languages, supported a third position. He felt that there were two forms of domination — political and religious— both of which are closely related to language. Therefore the language question was very important for *colonialization*. He stated at the Colonial Congress of 1905 which was held in Berlin that one should not believe that the African is not capable of learning and went on:

The African, in general — except for a few charming exceptions — is not lacking of intelligence, and I have known many who could read and write German quite well ... But one should be aware of the consequences. ... As soon as the native can read and write German he can also understand German conversations and read certain German publications. This, naturally, does not have the effect that he considers himself a German ... this opinion should soon be taken away — but, as much as he can, he would use the information gained to teach his people the plans of the Germans and the political and moral situation in Germany. (my translation, see footnote 1 for original text).

For these reasons he felt that the civil servants of the colonies should learn the indigenous languages and that German should only be taught to a few selected individuals.

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- (1) "Es fehlt dem Afrikaner im allgemeinen - einzelne liebenswürdige Ausnahmen abgerechnet - keineswegs an Intelligenz, und ich habe manchen gekannt, der recht gut deutsch schrieb und sprach... Man mache sich aber die Konsequenzen klar... Sobald der Eingeborene deutsch lesen und schreiben kann, sind ihm deutsche Gespräche und deutsche Blätter teilweise zugänglich. Das hat nun auf ihn natürlich nicht die Wirkung, dass er sich für einen Deutschen hält - diese Meinung wurde ihm auch bald genommen werden, sondern er wird, so viel er kann, die so gewonnene Erkenntnis benutzen, um sein Volk über die Absichten der Deutschen und die politischen und sittlichen Zustände Deutschlands zu unterrichten." (Verhandlungen des Deutschen Kolonialkongresses 1905, 1906:345)

Meinhof went on by comparing the situation with that in the United States. One of the main differences was seen in the fact that the African slaves in the USA had forgotten their native tongues and knew only English whereas in Africa the various indigenous languages could serve as 'secret codes' for passing on information. The native population in Africa would, given a widespread of German, not only understand the colonial plans etc., but also be able to communicate their own plans in a language unknown to the Colonial Authorities.

His argument that the colonial civil servants should learn the indigenous languages was accepted and passed in the form of a resolution by the Congress. But, however, Meinhof did not succeed in changing the general opinion of the politically powerful statesmen towards the position of German. The following statement made by Herzog Johann Albrecht zu Mecklenburg, president of the 1905 Congress, following Meinhof's speech is representative of the general feeling of this group:

The study of the indigenous languages is necessary for every civil servant and missionary in order to understand the *Volksseele* (soul of the people). But, on the other hand, it must be strived at that the natives learn German as their main and colloquial language, for this is the clearest symbol of power. Only in this manner will we be permanent masters of our colonies. (My translation, see footnote(2) for original text).<sup>3</sup>

Such was the background for the discussion of the specific language question in German East Africa. The situation there was somewhat different from other colonies due to the existence and acceptance of a widespread lingua franca — Kiswahili. Yet the feelings of the Colonial Authorities in Germany and of the German Protestant Mission were directed against the use of Kiswahili. Why?

Kiswahili which was spoken as the mother tongue by the Waswahili of the coastal area was seen as the forerunner of the Islam religion. The Waswahili had been 'Arabized' and using their language propagated the Islam religion. This religion and culture were considered to be the largest opponent of the German Colonialization Programme and with it Christianization. The following quote, taken from Pastor Julius Richter's speech "Islam: A Danger for Our African Colonies" delivered at the German Colonial Congress of 1905 summarized the attitude towards Swahili:

While in the end, the Waswahili are the bearers of the Islam propaganda in German East Africa which means that the previous policy which was influenced more by convenience than by wisdom must be stopped. Swahilism must be pushed aside and replaced by a planned and energetic cultivation of Germanism. With this last challenge we are in the lucky position to have a resolution which was passed by the Kolonialrat in its meeting of June 30th of this year (which states, my note) 'The Government should facilitate

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(2) "Für Missionare und Beamte jeder Art ist das Studium der Sprache der Eingeborenen erforderlich, um der Volksseele nahe zu treten. Andererseits muss mit allen Mitteln dahin gestrebt werden, dass die Eingeborenen Deutsch als Hauptund Umgangssprache lernen, denn diese ist das deutlichste Zeichen der Herrschaft. Nur so werden wir auf die Dauer Herren in unsern Kolonien bleiben." (Verhandlungen des Deutschen Kolonialkongresses 1905, 1906: 362).

the establishment of schools which more than until this point, emphasize the introduction of the German language and work in the direction that German gradually replace Kiswahili as the colloquial language.' Naturally we are not thinking of replacing the indigenous languages with German; no German mission friend would recommend such an action; all elementary lessons should and must be conducted in the mother tongue. But when the natives anywhere in German East Africa learn a foreign language, then we should strive that that language is German. (my translation, see footnote (3) for the original text).<sup>3</sup>

Carl Meinhof, on the other hand, propagated the use of Kiswahili, even though he recognized the Islam danger. He emphasized that Kiswahili was not only the language of the Islam but was also the language understood by wide groups of the native population. In the latter respect, it offered itself as a means of reaching larger groups of native population without having to master local vernaculars. This policy, he reminded the Congress, was already being used by the Universities' Mission to Central Africa. The government had already started to break the ties between Kiswahili and the Islam by introducing Roman orthography and according to Meinhof, this policy should be carried on by eliminating certain 'Arabisms' in the language.

One cannot say that a unified position or policy was reached in the language choice discussion for German East Africa. The implications of the theoretical discussion can best be seen by analyzing the actual colonial and missionary activities there.

The German colonial school system [*Regierungsschulen*] and administration were the two areas where the German colonial authorities had their largest influence. After the introduction of direct German colonial rule in East Africa, one of the economical problems facing the administration was that of staffing its offices, supplying tax collectors, etc. and doing all this in the cheapest and most effective way. One solution was that Germans from the mother country could take over all positions, but this was very uneconomical in that a European demanded high wages, transportation costs, etc. A more economical way was that East Africans could be trained to take over the lower level positions within the administration. This demanded the establishment of schools which trained Africans to take over such positions by teaching them reading, writing, arithmetic, etc. The latter was chosen making the main purpose of the governmental schools that of producing a group of qualified Africans who could become *Unterbeamte* (subordinate civil servants) or a

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(3) "Da endlich in Deutsch-Ostafrika in der Hauptsache die Suaheli die Träger der islamischen Propaganda sind, heisst es hier, einen Strich durch die bisherige, vielmehr von der Bequemlichkeit, als von der Weisheit eingegebene Politik zu machen. Das Suahelium muss beiseite geschoben werden und an seine Stelle eine planmassige und nachdruckliche Pflege des Deutschums treten. Wir sind mit dieser letzten Forderung in der glücklichen Lage, uns eine Resolution des Kolonialrat in seiner Sitzung vom 30. Juni dieses Jahres aneignen zu dürfen: "Es möge die Regierung durch Einrichtung entsprechender Schulen die Einführung der deutschen Sprache mehr als bisher in den Vordergrund stellen und daraufhinwirken, dass allmählich das Deutsche als Umgangssprache an Stelle des Kisuaheli treten kann." Wir denken natürlich nicht daran, die

buffer group between the indigenous population and the colonial administration. (Compare Mehnert, 1973: passim).

Those who were selected to attend these schools were usually from so-called influential families. (Compare Struck, 1921: passim; Mehnert, 1973: passim). 'Influential families', although not defined by the authors mentioned, can be assumed to be those families having political and/or economical authority. Due to the historical economic and political development in the coastal area before the German colonialization, most of these, 'influential families' were highly influenced by the Arab culture and the Islam religion.

Because members of these groups were skeptical of the German school system, the German colonial authorities employed Islam religion teachers in the government schools. This helped to overcome the skepticism on the one side but produced ill-feelings in the missionary circles on the other.

During the beginning phase of the school establishment, the German colonial officials tried to apply the 'Germanization' principle by means of using German as the sole classroom language. In 1893 the first government school to train junior government officers was opened at Tanga (Compare Whiteley, 1969:59). All classes except arithmetic were held in German. This attempt at the spread of the German language failed. Struck, in his article in the *Koloniale Rundschau* in 1921, expressed the opinion that this was due to the affinity between the East African and Islam. This in turn eliminated the Africans interest in learning a European language. This of course is not the only reason for the failure of the use of German as the medium of instruction. The difficulties which arise when being taught new material in a new language were not taken into consideration. According to Eggert and Whiteley, after this failure, German was reserved for higher level classes and all efforts were placed towards a program of making Kiswahili the general lingua franca. As a consequence of this policy, the colonial authorities only supported those schools which held classes in Swahili or in German.

The German colonial authorities adopted in many respects the existing administrative forms of East Africa. Wright (1965:42) wrote that "...the Sultan's practise of using Arab or African political agents, called akidas, recommended itself and was carried into the immediate hinterland as districts expanded." Absolvents of the government schools were placed in these positions and those of subordinate civil service officers. This tactic had a double advantage for the German interests. Through the recruiting and corruption of a part of the existing upper social strata in German East Africa, a stabilizing effect was brought to the German rule. Without the help of this group, the colonial authorities would have faced large problems in the control of and the exploitation of this area. The psychological effect which was created by shifting the direct control from 'German foreigners' to a portion of the native population cannot be underestimated. The other advantage - that is the economical one - has already been mentioned.

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Eingeborenensprachen durch das Deutsche verdrängen zu wollen; kein deutscher Missionsfreund würde so etwas empfehlen; der Elementarunterricht soll und muss überall in der Muttersprache erteilt werden. Aber, wo immer in Deutsch-Ostafrika eine fremde Sprache von den Eingeborenen erlernt wird, sollen wir dahin wirken, dass diese Sprache Deutsch ist." (Ver-handlungen des Deutschen Kolonialkongresses 1905, 1906:526).

The use of Kiswahili as a lingua franca and also within most of the lower levels of administration also brought many advantages. The civil servants were not confined to placement in a certain area due to language problems; they could be used in almost all regions of the colony. Also an almost perfect *Verwaltungssystem* — Administrative Apparatus — was established in that according to Whiteley (1969:60—61) it was possible to correspond "...in writing with every Akida and village headman, and to in turn receive from him reports written in Swahili" by the end of the German colonial period. But the power and prestige of Swahili should not be overestimated. It was a requirement for employment as a subordinate civil servant but for promotion to a higher position, the knowledge of German was necessary. (Whiteley, Ibid.)

The German Protestant Mission felt that the government policy of using Swahili, of selection for schools and of allowing the teaching of the Islam religion in the schools were a threat to not only their religious goals but also to the political stability of German East Africa. The schools were attended mainly by members of the Islam religion and also the members of the lower civil service were taken from the ranks of those who had attended government schools. The GPM considered these practices to be discriminating against the followers of the Christian religion. These controversial points were presented during a Reichstags discussion in Germany in 1900. Despite the objections brought by Dr. von Buchka, Director of the Colonial Division of the Foreign Office, which were based on the actual situation in German East Africa, the Reichstag passed a resolution asking the Reichskanzler to order that all the subordinate civil servants be chosen from the Christian portion of the native population, that Christian religious studies be held in the government schools and that "... in these schools besides the *Landessprache* (language of the country) only the German language should be taught." (translated from Eggert, 1970:71). But the subordinate civil service positions could not be filled by members of the Christian faith unless they met the educational requirements. Since persons meeting these requirements were limited in number the old policy was in fact still used.

The use of the word *Landessprache* was a point of much debate between the government and the GPM. The GPM interpreted this as the vernacular language whereas the government felt this *Landessprache* must be identical with the language of administration and therefore be Swahili. As a result of this interpretation the government gave financial support or provided books only for those schools in which German or Swahili were the medium of instruction.

The GPM and the government began to resolve their disagreements with the help of arguments presented by other mission groups shortly before the outbreak of World War I. But despite all efforts, there was no official relationship between the government and the mission in the form of official terms of cooperation up to that point. The result was that the GPM and the other mission organizations carried on their own educational systems on the one hand and the government its own on the other.

Despite the various positions which have been shown in this paper concerning the language choice discussion in Germany and its actual application, the result was

the spread of Kiswahili in German East Africa. This gave Kiswahili a position which could not be ignored as British control came to the area.

This paper has tried to show the factors which influenced the development of Kiswahili during the German Colonial Period. Hopefully, this type of analysis gives us a better background for looking at the extra-linguistic factors which influence language change, language policy and language planning.

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