

## **Abstract**

Title: Oriental Influences in Swahili: A Study in Language and Culture Contacts

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Linking historical and linguistic sources, starting with a background survey of Swahili lexicon of Oriental origin, theories of language and culture contact and a history of such contacts in the Western Indian Ocean, this study attempts at presenting a description of Oriental influences in Eastern Africa.

The first part (Ch. 1-6) deals with the historical background of the Oriental contributors in East Africa (i.e. Arabians, Iranians, Indians, Turks, Indonesians and Chinese in descending order of importance). The study of Arabic linguistic elements is limited to an in-depth description of Arabic grammatical and structural loans in Swahili, which is followed by a sociological description of Persian and Indian descendants in East Africa and their influences in Swahili. A description of culinary influences from the Oriental contacts and a phonological analysis of Indic items concludes this part.

The second part (Ch. 7) consists of a cumulative, updated and annotated list of Persian, Indian, Turkish, Indonesian and Chinese loanwords in Swahili, with suggested alternative etymologies where necessary. This list includes a number of previously unidentified Oriental loans, corrected or additional definitions, and relevant linguistic or historical discussions.

The main conclusions drawn from the present study are: 1) that Oriental loans in Swahili are not satisfactorily documented, and further research is needed to assess their currency in the modern usage, and their socio-cultural importance in Eastern Africa; 2) that Oriental elements are of high frequency and are found in all areas of activity; 3) that contrary to earlier assumptions, Persian and Indic loans in Swahili occur also as verbs, adjectives and adverbs; 4) that most of the Indian loans in Swahili are from Cutchi/Sindhi and Gujarati, rather than from Hindi; 5) that traditional Swahili culture is an Afro-Oriental member of the North-Western Indian Ocean civilisation at large.

Keywords: Swahili, loanwords, borrowing, language contact, culture contact, Oriental influences, Arabic loans, grammatical loans, structural borrowing, Persian, Balochi, Indian languages, Turkish, Chinese, Indonesian.