Introduction

Owen Makanyassa could hold a word in the palm of his hand. It was a power he shared with printers the world over, one that assured that his own horizons extended far beyond the old handpress that he knew so well. As a young man, Makanyassa had been enslaved and transported from the east coast of Africa.[1] But at some point before reaching its intended destination, the vessel that carried him was intercepted by the forces of the Sultan of Zanzibar, likely for failing to pay a customs duty or some other infringement. After disembarking, Makanyassa and a handful of other captives from the ship were sent to the station of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), an Anglican missionary society that had recently come to the island and was situated at a rented house in Stone Town.[2] A few years later, Makanyassa was among the first students to enter the mission school at Kiungani, an institution built on land purchased outside of the town and that opened in 1871 as a high school for formerly enslaved students, eventually becoming a renowned teacher-training and theological college.[3] Though his teachers reported with some disappointment that Makanyassa did not show "any capacity for the work of a Missionary," his contributions to the organization exceeded what they ever would have been as a teacher or a priest.[4] Owen Makanyassa spent the next twenty-five years (at least) working in the UMCA printing office, beginning as a student and eventually managing operations between the tenures of European printers.

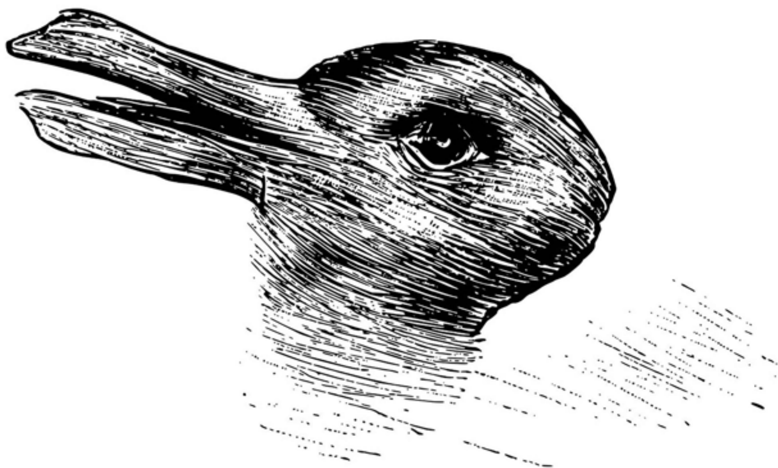
In the course of his long career, Makanyassa printed a host of materials, including Swahili translations of several hymns, parts of the Gospels, and parables.[5] He also produced parts of a Swahili school primer and spelling book and several English-language reports, as well as various small jobs that the mission press took on as a source of revenue.[6] In 1874, accompanying a priest going on leave, Makanyassa and a fellow printer traveled to England, where they apprenticed at a press "so as to see English work."[7] Speaking and reading both English and Swahili, neither of which was his mother tongue, working the handpress until the mission purchased a new machine in the 1890s, Makanyassa was often praised for the accuracy of his work.[8] He married another mission student, Barbara Luise Rikwa—on which occasion the mission's annual report remarked that they "were the oldest and of most weight at Kiungani and Mbweni, so it was a very great occasion"—and he helped to organize a Kiungani reunion in 1893, printing and distributing invitations to his former schoolmates.[9] Makanyassa's world was undoubtedly centered on Zanzibar and the printing office there. However, besides his physical travels between continents, Makanyassa was also connected to a broader community through the words printed at his press, words which reached from Zanzibar to readers across east-central Africa and on to England, words that he helped to call into being and that in turn helped to create his community. For as we shall see, language standardization and community-construction were concomitant processes that spanned decades and geographic boundaries, unfolding in often unpredictable ways.

How, for instance, should we locate someone like Owen Makanyassa? He is a figure who confounds some of our more familiar historiographic instincts. It will not do merely to emphasize the "top-down," hegemonic constraints of colonialism. Nor does the "bottom-up," subversive agency of the colonial subject adequately describe the man whom we meet at the UMCA press. Owen Makanyassa was not in control of the words that he held in his hand; he was never asked to compose a piece of writing for the press (though some of his fellow mission adherents were and did). And yet the printed appearance of these words would not have happened without Makanyassa and his colleagues at the press. Likewise, the language of the pieces that Makanyassa printed, the Zanzibar dialect of Swahili, was not his own; nor, clearly, was it the language of the UMCA's European missionaries. And yet it became their shared medium of communication; and as they worked toward a standardized version of Swahili, it became a shared medium of communication for a broader and broader collection of interlocutors.

FIGURE 0.1. Owen Makanyassa (back row, fourth from left, with hand to mouth) and his fellow printers. Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, UMCA Box List A-F, A1(IV)B, Mallender Scrapbook. Reprinted with permission of the United Society Partners in the Gospel.

So, is this a story of top-down constraint, or bottom-up agency? It is obviously both, and therefore, truly, neither. This book is built around such examples of neither-hither-nor-thither phenomena: people, objects, and ideas whose literal and figurative movement were intrinsically multidirectional. This is not simply a desire to have it both ways, to point to the gray area and throw up one's hands. I prefer instead to see it as looking for the duck-rabbit: a gestalt shift image that first appears to some observers as a duck and others a rabbit, made famous by philosophers and historians of science.[10]

Welche Thiere gleichen ein-
ander am meisten?



Kaninchen und Ente.

FIGURE 0.2. An early "duck-rabbit" image, which appeared in the German magazine *Fliegende Blätter,* October 23, 1892.

My intent is to confront the ambiguous image and, accepting the presence of both forms, to examine each in kind rather than foreclosing interpretation by refusing to see one for the other. My aim is also to demonstrate the openness of either state: one may see the rabbit first, but once the duck is pointed out, its obviousness can be startling. And, sometimes, we might just find a lion thrown into the mix, for to insist on directionality or dichotomy is to impose a frame that belies the actual dynamism of most situations. The history recounted here—a history of Standard Swahili, which is entwined with countless other histories—underlines the fact that states such as top-down and bottom-up, oppressive and empowering, indigenous and foreign, are not binary and in fact are rarely amenable to interpretation as merely the one or the other. Events, people, and ideas move rapidly and sometimes surprisingly back and forth between categories like these, from duck to rabbit to something else altogether, all at once and back again.

In 1873, Rev. Edward Steere wrote an update-cum-fundraising piece for the home supporters of the Universities' Mission. On the back cover of

the short pamphlet were printed the words "ZANZIBAR. PRINTED BY OWEN MAKANYASSA. SEPTR. 1873."[11] This is the only imprint of Makanyassa's name (that I have found) on a product of his press, and it presents us with a productive puzzle. Why did Makanyassa emblazon this particular piece with his name—a name that was at once his and not his, an adoption following the ruptures of enslavement and entry into the mission context? Was Makanyassa proud of his work on the pamphlet? Was he proud of the work of the mission as described within it? Did Steere ask him to include it, to show supporters the kind of work being done by mission students? Was the imprint of his name an expression of individuality, or of belonging? Once again, the only possible answer seems to be yes, and no, and therefore all and also none of these—a duck-rabbit moment caught in printed form.

THE TEMPORAL DUCK-RABBIT

This book is anchored by two species, if you will, of the duck-rabbit that are inherent to projects of standardization: temporal and directional. Let us begin with the former. Wilfred Whiteley, one-time director of the East African Swahili Committee, once argued, "As a national language Swahili has an extremely short history, dating back only to the attainment of independence in December, 1961; as a standard language its history reaches back only to the 1930s; and as the second language of large populations its popularity goes back no further than the middle of the nineteenth century."[12] Whiteley is not the only scholar to offer such an abbreviated history of the language, and particularly of Standard Swahili. As the conventional narrative would have it, Swahili first grew powerful as a trading lingua franca, carried from coast to interior via the caravan routes that supplied the early nineteenth-century world with ivory and slaves. Then European missionaries entered the picture, using the language as an evangelical tool, setting the stage for the appropriation of Swahili by the German and British colonial regimes. Finally, in an ironic and triumphant twist, the Tanganyika African National Union—that country's anticolonial nationalist party—embraced the language during its push for independence and utilized it as a powerful force of postcolonial nation-building. In this teleological telling, time moves unhesitatingly forward, with standardization (and standardizers) seemingly focused from the beginning on the long-term endpoint of the nation-state; consequently, Standard Swahili's role as a "double-edged sword" utilized by anticolonial nationalists has been celebrated just as resoundingly as the language has been denigrated for its links to the colonial project—and both conclusions contain a great deal of truth.[13]

Yet my central concern is not to assess which edge of that sword was the duller, nor to trace origins in order to classify "the standard" in linguistic terms; it is rather the *process* of standardization that frames the action and influences the winding change over time described here. As Derek Peterson, writing about the Gikuyu language of central Kenya, argues, "Standard Gikuyu was never 'standard.'"[14] The language's dictionaries, grammars, orthographies, and other written traces were constantly changing, and Peterson demonstrates that linguistic innovation is "never done" because languages and linguistic communities are constantly being "tested against other models of human society."[15] At times these models were located in the past, at times in the present, and sometimes in an anticipated or wished-for future. The same holds for Swahili. In the 1930s, for instance, the organization tasked with standardizing the language for the British colonial administrations of East Africa (the Inter-Territorial Language Committee), printed three Swahili dictionaries. In the eyes of some outside observers (particularly those providing financial support for the outfit), the appearance of the dictionaries meant that the standardization of Swahili had been completed. But for the members of the committee, the standardizers themselves, the assumption was altogether different: their office copies of the dictionaries were printed in interleaved style so that they could make additions and revisions just as soon as they were published. That is, for those most deeply involved in the process, standardization as an end-state, an accomplishment, was never achieved. Clearly, if a language is to go on being used and useful, a perfectly uniform, unchanging version can never and will never exist. Standardization, however, was and is an *ideal* that drives action; it is a set of processes and projects that, over time, allows for a shared linguistic baseline and mutual comprehensibility among speakers and writers. Yet the usefulness of the Standard Swahili dictionaries in the short-term, to meet the needs of the 1930s and 1940s, as well as their purported rootedness in linguistic precedent and the "expertise" of the past, did not mean that their creators were not also thinking about the long-term implications of their creation and their revision. The appearance of the rabbit, as it were, does not mean that the duck was not also there.

The history of Standard Swahili is a particularly useful way to explore time and temporality because its standardization spanned many decades and generations and incorporated multiple processes. Here it might be helpful to take a quick-fire tour of language standardization in other contexts: What are some of the potential forms that codification could take? We have, on one hand, the examples of English or French, for which historians have uncovered the work of slow, largely undirected, centripetal forces

of political, economic, and cultural power that, in retrospect, made these languages seem the inevitable victors in the linguistic arena.[16] Benedict Anderson referred to these as "unselfconscious" processes of codification, and though I might quibble with his dismissal of any potential forethought, there is no doubt that language standardization in Western Europe prior to the eighteenth century was "haphazard," particularly in contrast to the concerted, often nationalistic projects that began in that century and ran straight through to the mid-twentieth century.[17] Starting in the 1700s, Anderson characterized these later projects as either "popular nationalist movements" or "official nationalisms." The latter, rising in response to the potentially disruptive enthusiasms of the former, often featured the production of dictionaries and grammars of specifically chosen versions of languages, from Russian to Ukrainian to Norwegian—henceforth the "national" language—often by state-sponsored scholars.[18] In some cases, the impulse was to graft a national identity onto a crumbling dynastic one; at other times it was to differentiate one's realm from that of a powerful neighbor or interloper. Madagascar offers a compelling example of such state-sponsored linguistic work: the kings and queens of that East African island were very conscious of the power of language, a power that, when unified, could pull subjects closer to the royal court and, when divided, could pull them away from it. In the early nineteenth century, Madagascar's Queen Ranavalona I—building upon the interest in unifying the Malagasy language demonstrated by her predecessor King Radama—sponsored an extensive dictionary-making project that included not just British missionaries but also "hundreds of literate native speakers" who participated under orders of the crown.[19] And while Ranavalona's project usefully blurs the precolonial/colonial, indigenous/foreign historiographic divide, the involvement of clergymen alongside Malagasy speakers was typical of the kind of codification that took place on the cusp of formal colonization. Missionaries were often among the first Europeans interested in projects of language standardization in the extra-European world, and only later was their work—and their linguistic data—picked up by colonial states as part of the imperial toolkit. There were also, in the early twentieth century, similarly top-down, concerted, and relatively rapid standardization projects that took place outside or beside the European colonial sphere, such as those of modern Turkish, Mandarin, or Hebrew—enterprises which sought to buttress "modernization," nation-building, or religious revival.[20] However, even the most concertedly top-down processes required the linguistic knowledge of indigenous speakers. Take, for instance, the work of Benaiah Ohanga, a schoolteacher from Kenya. Ohanga, a Dholuo speaker, envisioned that language's future as

one of standardized, cross-border use; he enlisted the resources of the Luo Union (a welfare association) and the colonial state's Luo Language Committee, to encourage writing in the language, and even produced his own contribution to its codification: a school primer titled *How to Spell Luo.*[21]

The standardization of Swahili incorporated several of these types of processes, emerging from such divergent projects as biblical translations, grammar studies, newsletter contributions, dictionary creation, and novel writing. Moving between the telescopic, long-term view of its codification and the microscopic stories of its standardizers, one can see the overlapping, sometimes contradictory impulses that caused different projects of community-construction to converge on the same object. With Swahili, standardization becomes quite clearly not just one story but many, all operating on different timescales, from short-term exigency to planned, durable finality.[22] Conceptions of time were in fact central to codification. The notion that the creation of a uniform standard language would be in the interest of colonial subjects, for example, was based on the assumption that colonial rule would persist indefinitely. Language itself was broadly perceived as "timeless," "traditional," or "organic," something that evolved slowly and in predictable ways, and even the most constructed of languages had to borrow from existing linguistic repertoires.[23] But standard languages also had to be useful in addressing present concerns, while the hope, of course, was that the standard would remain useful for all future needs, that it would grow with speakers and writers and adapt to internal and external changes. Thus, "the standard" of any language was constantly under revision, toggling between backward-facing fixity and forward-looking fluidity. Keeping these temporal tensions in mind, each chapter of this book addresses a period in the process of Swahili's standardization, uncovering the assumptions about time made by the various participants.

THE DIRECTIONAL DUCK-RABBIT

The second category of duck-rabbit that I hope to bring into focus is a directional one. By this I refer not to cardinal directions but rather to the directions in which power and action flowed. No individual, institution, colony, or nation-state can control a language—only groups of speakers and writers can do that. And yet, powerful individuals, institutions, colonies, and nation-states can imbue certain forms of language with particular kinds of power; they can penalize or reward based on linguistic standards, and they can increase or decrease the political marginality of one linguistic group in comparison to another. These statements are as true for Standard Swahili as for any other dialect or language. Recognizing only the top-down, oppressive

direction of linguistic power, or only the bottom-up, empowering direction, is to deny the rabbit in the duck and the duck in the rabbit. Even a work as beautifully written and carefully considered as John Mugane's *The Story of Swahili,* whose author is clearly an admirer of Swahili in its many different forms, is at moments startlingly disparaging toward its standardized version. Mugane is entirely correct in his assertion that "the might of Swahili is not maintained by those in power from their palaces and ivory towers but by ordinary people in the highways and byways of everyday life."[24] These "ordinary people" were involved, too, in the process of standardization, though reduced in Mugane's narrative to "colonial creators and their African pupils."[25] Less critical takes on standardization have similarly overemphasized particular flows of power; take, for instance, Rocha Chimerah's assertion that "the [Universities'] Mission to Central Africa headed by [Bishop Steere] was wholly responsible for the standardisation of this language. . . . East Africans today owe their standard form of the language to Dr. Edward Steere and his mission in Zanzibar."[26] As I hope to demonstrate throughout the book, standardization was not the task of any single person, entity, or class of people; in fact, East African schoolchildren, clerks, translators, instructors, scholars, and servants were among the most important teachers of the "official" linguists, whether those were missionaries, government officials, or academics. Schoolchildren and clerks were also, no doubt, placed in positions that were subordinate to European missionaries and colonial officials, who often denied the former's expertise even as they put it to use. Quoting Michael Halliday's work on applied linguistics, Mugane stresses that "the history of language is part of human history, it is not some mysterious surrogate process that goes bubbling along on its own."[27] This is surely the case, and it demands that the history of Standard Swahili be peopled by the speakers and writers who were making choices, teaching, and learning about the language across many decades.

Let us take a brief look, for example, at the story of Samuel (Samwil) Chiponde. Chiponde was born on mainland east-central Africa and entered the Kiungani school on Zanzibar in 1886. Whether he was formerly enslaved or was born free and sent to Zanzibar for higher education, I do not know; the mission priest Godfrey Dale once described him as "a Yao by birth, a Mission boy by education who has worked for years in the Bondei country and is now in daily touch with educated and literary Swahilis."[28] Regardless of his exact background, Chiponde was a linguistic intermediary. He rose quickly through the ranks of the mission and became a deacon in March of 1898; five years later, in 1903, he was ordained as a priest.

In late 1892, while teaching and preaching on Zanzibar, Chiponde took over the role of chief editor of the UMCA's Swahili-language periodical,

Msimulizi ("The Narrator" or "The Reporter")—compiling the very words that Owen Makanyassa put into print. *Msimulizi* was a magazine written and produced by the African students of the mission, and, as we shall see, it had a crucial role in the dissemination of the UMCA's standard of Swahili. And through it, Chiponde, Makanyassa, and countless contributors participated in a process of linguistic knowledge production, though they did not refer to their work as "standardization." In the first half of the book, in fact, I use the term purely analytically, as shorthand for the processes by which diverse people sought linguistic commensurability. It was not until the 1920s when "standardization" began to be frequently and explicitly invoked in East Africa, with the launching of official, institutionalized projects of codification. Such distinctions are, however, never perfect, for the linguistic knowledge production of the nineteenth century had systematic qualities and shared with the later, official projects of standardization a similar goal: a common version of Swahili that could be used for relatively frictionless communication.

Returning to Samuel Chiponde: from the mid-nineteenth through the turn of the twentieth century, the members of the UMCA, both African and European, had been compiling their varied knowledge of Swahili as the mission solicited input from formerly enslaved students, Muslim Zanzibaris, and mainlanders from any number of linguistic communities, printing Swahili handbooks, dictionaries, and other publications. Then, in the 1890s, Chiponde joined the newly formed Translation Committee of the Universities' Mission (sometimes referred to as the Revision Committee), thereby transferring his influence to a process of "official" knowledge production that approximated later standardization committees. Codification became a specialized task under the concerted control of a small group of experts (a group which, nevertheless, relied on a relatively wide range of interlocutors to do its work). Three decades and one colonial regime later, Chiponde appears again in the historical record, attending a conference convened by the British colonial administration in Dar es Salaam. The 1925 meeting laid the foundation for a new project of official knowledge production, that of the Inter-Territorial Language Committee—the institution that would attempt to control the definition of "Standard Swahili." At the conference, Chiponde reflected on his personal history as a Swahili standardizer: "I had the honour of being, a Member of the Swahili Revision Committee of the U.M.C.A. in Zanzibar. I have sat on several occasions revising books of every description, Holy Bible and other books."[29] Chiponde lamented the persistent disagreements between missionary linguists, noting "I hope that this Committee will not have the same effect. I do not know who is responsible for seeing

that this work is carried out, I believe all of us are responsible . . . all of us must bear in mind that the fruits of this Conference are more for the future of Africa than for the present."[30]

I have mentioned that Chiponde was ordained as a priest in 1903; what I failed to point out was that, sometime between 1913 and 1925, he had been defrocked, left the Universities' Mission, and taken a job as interpreter in the British High Court in Dar es Salaam.[31] And his views in 1925 were, if not pro-British, then decidedly not anticolonial. "I should only like to add a few words," he declared at the meeting, "and that is, it is of no use for me to teach the British Empire how to rule. It will be of no use to fight against the wave of civilisation."[32] He concluded by calling upon the colonial administration of Tanganyika "to try and educate an African in a way that he should know his duty as a true citizen, and teach him in a way so that he himself will be able to choose right from wrong."[33] To refer to Tanganyikans as citizens rather than subjects, while simultaneously welcoming European trusteeship, Chiponde's recorded statements make it very difficult to classify him as either a collaborator *or* a challenger. Four years before the Dar es Salaam conference, he had been among a group of African civil servants who demanded that their salaries and benefits be brought level, or closer to level, with civil servants classified under the "Asian" racial category.[34] Agitation like this "pioneered African politics in Tanganyika," though the calls may have initially been for reform within the colonial system rather than an exit from that system altogether.[35]

Taking in the entirety of the figure of Samuel Chiponde, one might ask, Do we have a top-down or bottom-up driver of action? Chiponde was a defrocked priest, he was a colonial subject who worked for the colonial administration, and he was a political organizer. Chiponde was also an individual who, for nearly all his life, was involved in the standardization of Swahili, both officially and unofficially. "A teacher may begin to teach Swahili," he declared in 1925, "but the boys will finish learning by themselves: the language is already on his lips even when he is born."[36] This was not, of course, really the case, because Swahili was the mother tongue of relatively few East Africans. Yet in his role as court interpreter, or as editor of *Msimulizi,* Swahili was the language that connected Chiponde to his fellow East Africans, and to projects as seemingly antithetical as colonial rule and anticolonial agitation, precolonial community-construction, and postcolonial nation-building. Samuel Chiponde was intrinsically, simultaneously, perpetually both inside and outside the fold. And Chiponde's role in various stages of Swahili's standardization, from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, offers another one of those productive puzzles on which this study is built.

Throughout the history of Standard Swahili, knowledge production shifted back and forth between official and unofficial realms, relying on distinct sources of authority, projecting different confidences and insecurities—but always with the object of communication front of mind.

COMMENSURABILITY AND PORTABILITY

While this book focuses on the interplay between short- and long-term planning, official and unofficial knowledge production, and oppression and empowerment, I also hope to demonstrate that no matter the motivations driving one group of standardizers or another, the outcome by the mid-twentieth century was a version of Swahili that was commensurable and, thus, highly portable. Regarding the former: commensurability requires the elements in question to be not the same, but comparable. The person who first sees the duck will easily see the rabbit when it is pointed out, though their default view may always be the duck. In her study of climate science in nineteenth-century Austria-Hungary, Deborah Coen notes that "commensurate" as a verb has long been out of use, leaving English with no word "to denote the process of negotiation that produces a measurement standard." She deploys instead the term "scaling" to describe "the work that goes into mediating between different ways of measuring the world."[37] Scale is just as much a part of the history of Standard Swahili as it is of climate science: the multiscalar nature of language, from official textbooks and exams to daily conversations, is apparent. I use "standardization" rather than "scaling" to describe the process of making Swahili widely commensurable because it is the term most often applied to linguistic projects. Scaling can, according to Coen, be a subconscious process that humans do every day.[38] At other times, however, making things commensurable requires concerted effort, and scaling "depends on an agreed-upon definition of a standard unit and its instantiation in an exemplary object," behind which, Coen admits, "lurk hidden histories of contention."[39] Coen's research focuses on the possibilities of scaling, expressing optimism that humans have been and are able to make things commensurable, and giving us historical examples of scientists doing just that.

There can be, however, as Coen notes, a compulsory side to commensurability, and it is this aspect that On Barak explores in his study of time, technology, and "modernity" in Egypt. Making things commensurable, Barak reminds readers, usually requires that one party, generally the less powerful one, change to *become,* to *make itself* or to *be made,* comparable to a standard. "Because it was calendrically synchronized with the global economy," he writes, "Egypt was already behind—on its payments, among other things.

Commensurability revealed itself again to be a protocol of differentiation."[40] In fact, Barak insists that comparison and a desire for commensurability has often proliferated difference, not least because a standard can explicitly be rejected for personal, political, artistic, or other reasons. Barak's work uncovers the variety of Egyptian nationalisms that were built upon "countertempos" that "fed off a standard they could not meet."[41] And he focuses his historical examination on these different scales—the countertempos and alternative timelines—not because they represent an alternative modernity that was "outside the abstract logic of historicism, and thus free from notions of progress or linear chronology."[42] Rather, Barak follows "chronological historicist lines" because, as he stresses, he wishes to "[convey] a commitment to the emancipatory potential of this countertemporality *within* the contours of a single hierarchical modernity."[43] For an East African example of countertemporality, one could point, for instance, to the stubborn persistence of commercial, "premodern" dhow traffic in colonial Zanzibar and Pemba alongside the self-consciously "modern" and supposedly overwhelming presence of steamships, or to the "temporizing" agency of debtors, creditors, sultans, and confectioners moving between nineteenth-century Oman and East Africa.[44] Standard Swahili likewise inhabited, and facilitated, all sorts of countertempos: on one hand, by existing as the standard and thereby inheriting a certain amount of political power, it offered the constraint against which some could protest. These countertempos included coastal speakers who continued to use their own dialects or to write using the Arabic script, or, more recently, Sheng-speaking Kenyans who deliberately deploy non-Standard Swahili forms of language. For others, meanwhile, Standard Swahili offered the medium through which to convey their political or creative messages—for as we shall see, one can be subversive in Standard Swahili, too. These are all among the "overlapping swahiliphone publics" that make up the "Swahiliphone world," which stretches from the coast of East Africa into the interior, across the Indian Ocean and beyond, collecting countertempos as it goes.[45]

This attention to multiplicity within standardization is not an implicit argument that the process was wholly inclusive and empowering, for it was not. Building on the work of those who take seriously the intellectual history of African languages, this book pivots precisely on the ambiguity surrounding the question of whether standardized versions of African languages have been emancipatory or oppressive, forward- or backward-looking.[46] Inevitably, the choice and promotion of one version of a language as *standard* negatively affects those whose language has, suddenly, been deemed *nonstandard*.[47] For Swahili, this is a political issue that continues to have consequences for

speakers of dialects or other, more localized languages.[48] Creative and personal composition in all of Swahili's dialects has a long, storied history, and it has continued right alongside the standardization process.[49] But I argue that before we can even begin to reconcile the (salutary or constraining) consequences of codification, we must seek to understand the process itself.

An argument about the inclusivity or otherwise of standardization, moreover, would be impossible to sustain because standardization, as I use the term, encompasses multiple projects, official and unofficial, collective and personal, that sometimes tugged in different directions, moving at different speeds, but that were driven by a shared ideal—a commensurable mode of written communication. And this is where commensurability lends itself to portability. While Swahili has been a "language on the road" for centuries, the linguistic and material outcomes of standardization—schoolbooks, dictionaries, grammars, legal translations, novels, et cetera—have allowed it to move faster and further, starting with the far-flung mission stations of the UMCA, through pan-Africanist institutions such as the African Union, to university campuses around the world.[50] And while some advocates of the language worry that this portability has required a flattening of the multifarious landscape of Swahili, the flourishing of nonstandard forms (old and new) alongside the standard suggests not only that deviations from it have never been "impermissible," but also that codification has opened just as many avenues of exchange, encouraged just as many countertempos, as it has foreclosed.[51]

Pier Larson described the "contradictory possibilities of vernacular literacy and official language" among the Malagasy diaspora in the Indian Ocean, showing how standardization pulled some communities together while tearing others apart, regardless of the intentions of the standardizers. "These were not inevitable consequences of the linguistic programs of king and foreigner. They were the result of the ways in which Malagasy speakers in different parts of the Big Island's ocean of letters took up the challenges of reading and writing in their varying circumstances."[52] Because writers used and use Swahili, too, in a multitude of ways, it has also at once united and divided; and because standardization, too, describes not one project but multiple processes, it could never be entirely inclusionary nor entirely exclusionary. Projects of standardization were at times more or less inclusive, more or less exclusive, more or less open to acknowledging "vernacular" knowledge as central to the endeavor.[53] It is the historian's job to interrogate all such mirages, whether of open collaboration, objective scientific observation, settled linguistic fact, or hegemonic linguistic imposition. Standard Swahili, and the processes which brought such a concept into being, embraced all and therefore, again, none of these.

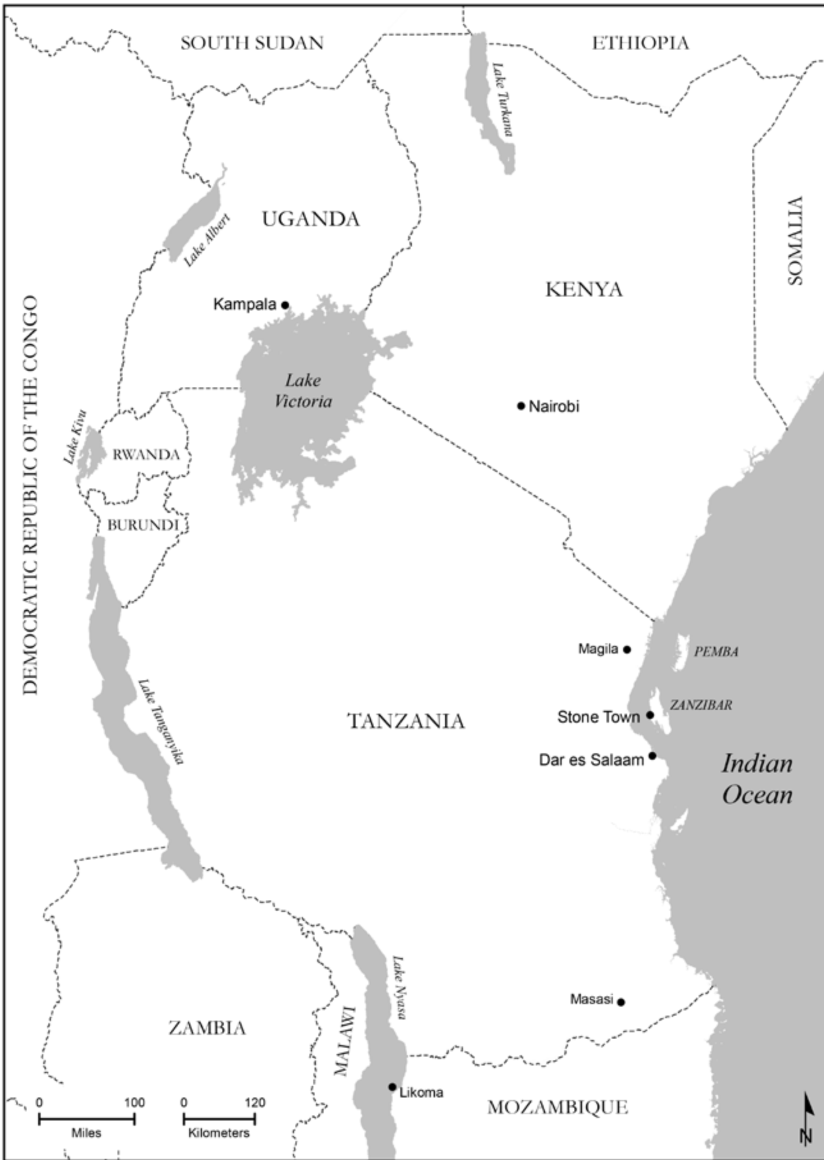
TIME AND SPACE: A CAVEAT

Encompassing the years between roughly 1864 and 1964, the work that follows begins in the middle of some timelines and ends before the conclusion of others. Swahili "as a language definably different from its closest relatives" has existed since about 800 CE.[54] The oldest extant written documents date to about 1700, and its "oral literary tradition" (and likely its written tradition as well) long before that.[55] The history of Swahili written in the Arabic script, or in a modified form referred to as ʿAjamī, is much longer than its written tradition in the Latin script; so while the first uses of the Latin script to write Swahili mark a useful starting point for the story to be told here, it must be understood within the long history, as well as the contemporary life, of Arabic-script Swahili.[56] Likewise, the standardization of Latin-script Swahili took place over the course of many decades; even once the decision was made to use the Latin script and a particular dialectical form in the arena of colonial officialdom, this only stuffed the debates, disagreements, and incomplete understandings inside the pages of printed translations, dictionaries, and grammars, and behind the connotation of completeness embedded within the very term "Standard."[57]

Geographically, much of the narrative takes place within the borders of modern-day Tanzania (including Zanzibar), though interterritorial efforts at standardization do take center stage at various moments. Does this limitation not reinforce the kind of teleologies I am trying to dissolve? Perhaps. But the historical actors engaged in standardization were not themselves thinking about the borders of a nation-state—nor even, always, a colonial territory. They lived and moved between colonial regimes, local authorities, religious spheres of influence, and linguistic ecosystems. To concentrate on Tanganyika/Tanzania and Zanzibar is to make the story manageable, to focus on connected projects of codification. Language use and language policy in colonial Kenya and Uganda were very different from those in Tanganyika prior to the interwar period, and they began diverging again almost as soon as an interterritorial institution for standardization was established.[58] This meant that Tanganyika often had an outsized influence on Standard Swahili; and as standardization is never-ending, so too would this book be, were its geographic scope as wide as its temporal one.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1, "Note-Books and Slowly Accumulating Vocabularies," introduces the missionaries and African adherents of the UMCA, an Anglican missionary society that arrived on Zanzibar in 1864.[59] It begins with an examination



MAP 0.1. East Africa contemporary political boundaries. Brian Edward Balsley, GISP.

of the linguistic antecedents to the UMCA, including the work of Johann Ludwig Krapf (1810–81) and Johannes Rebmann (1820–76). The story then moves to the Universities' Mission at its Zanzibar headquarters, explaining why the mission leadership chose to concentrate on Swahili as its evangelical language. Working in the context of Kiunguja (the Zanzibar dialect of

Swahili), by the 1870s the UMCA had printed Swahili handbooks, biblical translations, and a collection of other publications. Turning to a series of letters between Revs. Lewin Pennell and Edward Steere, the chapter presents an initial instance of linguistic knowledge production in action. Through an iterative process of conversation, translation, printing, and then more conversation and retranslation, the missionary linguists and their East African interlocutors began to approach a standard written version of Swahili. This first chapter focuses on the period between 1864 and 1884, highlighting the fluidity of the first two decades of the standardization process, not only describing the logistics of the early stages of codification but also uncovering two of the communities emergent in the process—key to which were the mission's formerly enslaved students. For missionaries and converts alike, in this period Swahili served a short-term need for communication, evangelization, and "social rebirth."

Chapter 2, "*Msimulizi* and the Cultivation of the *Upelekwa,*" covers the period between 1884 and the turn of the twentieth century, during which time the Universities' Mission began expanding its work on the mainland as well as imagining a longer-term life for its Swahili standard.[60] The chapter begins with a discussion of the demographic changes that resulted from the opening of new mission stations, as the student body gradually shifted from a majority of formerly enslaved to a majority of never-enslaved children. Along with the expansion of the UMCA's network from Zanzibar west to Lake Nyasa (Malawi), the chapter also explores the technologies of communication available to residents of eastern Africa at the end of the nineteenth century, including the power of the UMCA's printing press. Both of these changes—an expansion of the mission's reach and the availability of means of communication—facilitated the circulation of the mission's periodical *Msimulizi,* a magazine produced by African students and teachers at UMCA schools on both Zanzibar and the mainland. The magazine fostered a tangible sense of connection among adherents of the mission, both reflecting and fortifying the community of the *Upelekwa*—a Swahili term used to gloss the English word "mission," but which also contained within it the more expansive sense of community defined by religion, language, affective ties, and a sense of mutual obligation. Running parallel to the community-building project of the mission leadership, African adherents used their shared written language to build, maintain, and expand a network that extended from Zanzibar to the Great Lakes region, and even on to England. This chapter uses *Msimulizi* as a marker to trace the contours of that network.

Chapter 3, "German *Zeit* and Swahili Time," shifts briefly from the story of the Universities' Mission to that of the German colonial state, covering

the period from the 1890s through World War I.[61] The chapter begins by exploring tensions between political expectations in Berlin, colonial language polices on the ground in German East Africa, and the linguistic research of German scholars (especially Carl Meinhof in Berlin and Hamburg), exposing the tug-of-war between specific, short-term pragmatism and generalizable universalism inherent in German engagement with Swahili. In East Africa, the German use of Swahili as an administrative language represented yet another community in construction: in this instance, a bifurcated community of rulers and ruled, with Swahili as an intermediary between the two. Meanwhile, the Universities' Mission continued thinking on a grand scale, beginning a series of revisions to its biblical translations, aiming for enduring, standardized versions of its most important texts—it is with the establishment of a mission Translation Committee that standardization begins its transformation into an actors' category. World War I, however, disrupted all these projects, in essence removing the Germans from the equation of Standard Swahili, while also demonstrating the resilience of the *Upelekwa.* The language of the UMCA's African adherents acted as a lifeline for a community trying to survive during the war and rebuild after it, a process that necessitated unanticipated shifts in power between European missionaries and African adherents.

Chapter 4, "Interlocutors in Interterritorial Codification," focuses on the Inter-Territorial Language Committee (ILC), the body established by the British colonial governments of East Africa to act as the official organ of Swahili standardization. First meeting in 1930, the ILC on one hand exemplifies the short-term, pragmatic imposition of linguistic (to say nothing of political) imperialism. But the plans of the ILC to revise existing dictionaries, encourage African authorship in Standard Swahili, and create interterritorial agreement about language policy all took a longer-term perspective. Even and especially in Tanganyika, a mandate over which Britain was ostensibly only holding trusteeship in preparation for self-rule, Swahili was expected to be the most important language for many decades to come, and standardization regarded as a necessary step toward that codified future. This balance of short-term and long-term planning was driven by the ideal of a written standard of Swahili—an outcome which everyone knew would always be just beyond grasp. A close examination of the ILC also reveals that the top-down, official line of standardization was only one part of the story of Swahili in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. Focusing on the revision of the standard dictionaries, the chapter uncovers the extent to which the ILC relied on the participation of a host of interlocutors from around the region. The tension between these twin impulses

and outcomes—to pronounce while asking for help, and to empower while trying to control—is the focus of this chapter.

Chapter 5, "The East African Literature Bureau: Creating Creativity in Standard Swahili," explores the shift from standardization to "creation" in the official mind of colonial East Africa, embodied by the establishment of the East African Literature Bureau (EALB) in 1948. Through essay competitions, the publication of books in Standard Swahili and other East African languages, and the printing of the Swahili-language magazine *Tazama,* the EALB attempted to "produce literature" in Standard Swahili. The bureau evaluated creativity in various, often ambiguous ways, concerned first and foremost with "suitability" for "the African reader." As with the ILC, the Literature Bureau set a precarious balance between responding to the demands of its East African readers and trying to prescribe their needs. This tension created sites of both constraint and opportunity—an opportunity of which some authors, including the celebrated Shaaban Robert, took advantage, using Standard Swahili and the boundaries imposed by the EALB for their own creative purposes. And while the Literature Bureau was undoubtedly a part of Britain's propaganda apparatus in East Africa, its demands for East African participation in its project of literature production opened the door for greater and greater East African demands to participate.

Such appeals are the subject of chapter 6, "Rumblings of Unanticipated Demand." With the post–World War II rise of developmentalist colonial states across the continent, colonial powers realized that maintaining their territories would necessitate some modicum of reform—that long-term planning for empire would require short-term changes. This new sensitivity to the demands of colonial subjects for things like improved social services and increased political participation coincided with more vocal calls, at first, for change within the colonial system and, eventually, for an end to that system. This chapter explores in particular two sets of demands that were connected to language—the interterritorial demand for libraries and the Tanganyikan demand for the translation of laws into Swahili—demonstrating that alongside the now-classic political history of debates about citizenship and subjecthood, there is a history of debate around language and literature that only grew anticolonial in the mid to late 1950s and early 1960s.

In all of these ways, starting in the 1950s and continuing through the independence era, Standard Swahili became more national—more Tanganyikan and then Tanzanian. But standardization also facilitated the use of the language globally, for new projects of community-construction. Standard Swahili became a rallying point for some, and a focal point of criticism for others. The history of Standard Swahili is therefore not one story but the

connected stories of multiple communities contributing to knowledge production, each of which this book deliberately reconstructs on its own terms while reintegrating them into a new composite. The reader will, I hope, come away with an appreciation for the immensity of the work completed, the messiness hidden behind the standard moniker, and the powerful drive for linguistic commensurability that created a portable Standard Swahili.