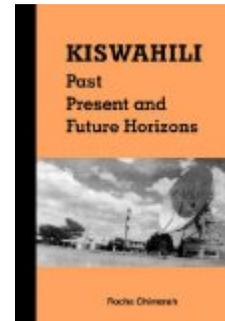


Rocha Chimerah. *Kiswahili: Past, Present and Future Horizons*. Nairobi, Kenya: Nairobi University Press, 1998. xii + 152 pp. \$13.75 (paper), ISBN 978-9966-846-35-8.

Reviewed by Patricia S. Kuntz (Indiana University)
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Kiswahili: Past, Present and Future Horizons

Rocha Chimerah. *Kiswahili: Past, Present and Future Horizons*. Nairobi, Kenya: Nairobi University Press, 1998. xii + 152 pp. Bibliography. \$13.75 (paper), ISBN 9966-846-35-2.

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Rocha Chimerah's *Kiswahili: Past, Present and Future Horizons* illustrates ways that Swahili (Kiswahili) has evolved into a regional language. Chimerah states "Kiswahili has made a lot of strides in many areas," (p. ix) and sets out to document the changes. The essence of the book is that residents of East Africa should take a proactive stance to support Swahili as a national, regional, and even continental language.

As stated in the preface, this book contains a collection of essays which the author wrote between 1989 and 1991. Thus, these chapters represent the author's views held in the late 1980s concerning language planning of Swahili. Further, these chapters may draw on Chimerah's doctoral dissertation, "The Implications of the Selected works of Ngugi in the Educational Thinking and Practices of Kenya," earned at Ohio University in 1989.

Chimerah divides the book into two parts. The first part contains four chapters which respond to the idea that Swahili might be "[a]n African alternative to [an] imported European language." In Chapter 1, the author describes some of the achievements made as of 1989 such as language status, language use as medium of instruction, language programs around the world, archival

records, radio and television programs, and linguistic research. In Chapter 2, the author provides a historical summary of attitudes held by colonial administrators, missionaries, and local leaders concerning the use of Swahili prior to independence obtained in the 1960s. In Chapter 3, the author outlines the controversies put forth by different East African constituents. Finally, in Chapter 4, he focuses on different government policies which articulated when and where Swahili could be taught as a language course and would be the medium of instruction.

In the second part, Chimerah pursues the proposition that Swahili is or can become an international language. Three chapters provide justification. Chapter 5 enumerates uses of Swahili in the fields of trade, religion, and politics. The next chapter examines the language policies of independent Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Congo (Democratic Republic). The final chapter advocates the adoption of Swahili for the rest of the continent by citing Wole Soyinka (Nigeria) and Museveni (Uganda).

Although Chimerah's fundamental research question concerning the importance of Swahili is important, this book contains some fundamental flaws such as data collection and sources. For example, the book contains no original or new data. Based on the title and publication date (1999), this reader expected to see results from a case study illustrating applications of Swahili. The book does not provide an epilogue which highlights changes in the use of Swahili since the 1980s. Likewise, this reader anticipated current statistical data from Ministries of Education (for instance) followed by an interpretation of the

results in context with the designated country's language policy. For the most part, the author utilized examples provided by European researchers and he did not evaluate or interpret their conclusions. Moreover, most chapters utilized the analyses of linguists such as Whiteley (1969), Ladefoged (1971), Polome (1967), Prins (1961). For instance, in every chapter that contains a reference list, the author cited Whiteley (1969). This practice led the reader to ponder if the book might more accurately be viewed as a historical summary of the 1960s. Given the title of this book, this reader expected the final chapter to contain a detailed plan of action, including a timeline, which would inspire readers to a thorough integration of Swahili into East African society.

The author made general statements without citations or substantiation. Without evidence, his argument appeared empty. For instance, the reader would expect to see data showing enrollment changes in Kenya over time at all levels of instruction rather than a statement. Instead, the chapter entitled, "English as the Language of Instruction in Kenya," contained a historical review from the Phelps-Stokes Commission (1924) to the Mackay Commission (1981). The author mentions government policies but does not provide full archival references. The reader would like to know to what extent the Kenyan populous adhered to the edicts of these commissions and if not, why not. Chimerah did not interpret the implication of government policies in terms of educational policy, teacher training, textbook preparation, or employment opportunities. The second half of this chapter described English language policy in a variety of countries around the world based on the finding in one reference.

A third annoyance is the mentioning of facts without support or a conflict of information. For example, the author listed contributors to the Mhina dictionary *Kamusi ya Kiswahili Sanifu* (1981), but failed to provide an explanation of the contents and design. The text implied that the dictionary was not yet published, and yet, the chapter references did provide a citation. In the same chapter, Chimerah described programs in Swahili on the radio

and television. However, he did not provide supporting evidence or an analysis of the programs, their audience, and the time of broadcast. Moreover, it was not stated in which years the broadcasts occurred. In a later chapter, Chimerah lists artists who use Swahili either in creative writing or in musical lyrics. However, he does not include data concerning sales of books or tapes or attendance at concerts of exclusive Swahili songs. As a result, the reader is not certain if the lists are an aberration of a point in time or of a feature of the growing popularity of Swahili over time.

Finally, the text contained numerous typographical errors. For instance, the spelling of some names and places in the U.S. were incorrect. The list of institutions which offer Swahili had no citation and many of them were not current. The author ascribes professors to universities where they have not taught since 1984. Unfortunately, these flaws detract from the book's usefulness as a current work. The book might be used as a point of discussion for the history of language policy in East Africa.

In conclusion, in contrast to this book, works by Middleton (1994) *The World of Swahili: An African Mercantile Civilization* and Roy-Campbell (1992) *Power or Pedagogy: Choosing the Medium of Instruction in Tanzania* utilize the historical texts such as those that Chimerah cited but they also provide results from new, original data collections and new interpretations of current or archival data. Consequently, the information provided in *Kiswahili: Past, Present and Future Horizons* appears redundant to works which came previously. For the reasons mentioned above, I would caution other U.S. readers from using this book in introductory classes.

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