

## ONE REMARK UPON BANTU PLOSIVE /k/

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It is trivial enough to maintain that when the same language phenomenon is viewed simultaneously from a different perspective (synchronic and diachronic) this does not deprive its description of an adequacy but only broadens our ideas about it. In turn, an endeavour to find a proper etymology of one or another phenomenon can, to a certain extent, explain or at least force attention to be paid to some processes which took place during the history of languages which have been analysed, according to preservation or lack of rudimentary elements in them. An analysis of the behaviour of a plosive voiceless /k/ under the same distribution but in different positions (preradical vs postradical) could serve as a kind of example. The question is how a phoneme /k/ changes according to its position: in a prefix {ki-} of the 7th concord class in some eastern Bantu languages, as a final consonant of the verb root and also in a verbal suffix of a stative form in the same languages, especially in Swahili.

As is generally known, /k/, forming a part of a phonological structure of the prefix {ki} before a stem noun vowel, turns into /ch-/ which could be illustrated in the following way:

ki + V...>k (y) + V...> ch + V...

Whereas the postradical /k/, which forms a part of the phonological structure of a verbal stative form expressed by the suffix {ka} or /k/ being the final consonant of the root of a verb, when brought into contact with a causative suffix {ya} turns into /sh/. For example:

-ruk(a) "jump" + -ya> -rusha (caus. form)

-somek(a) "to be studied, to be legible" + ya > -so.nesha

"teach", where: -som(a) + [l](a) + k(a) + ya > -somesha

According to a synchronic approach this is an example of the realisation of the lost-occlusiveness principle, by the time of complete loss with a preservation of the voiceless aspect [Okhotina 1969].

However, the ascertainment of the occurrence of the mentioned principle in a modern language does not supply enough information from the historical point of view. An attempt to find an etymology of this phenomenon forces us to assume that in the languages in which this process takes place, we deal with two different phonemes (or variants of phonemes) on the assumption that a prefixal /\*k/ is rudimentary (not mentioned in Meinhof [1932, 1948] and Guthrie [1968-1971]). An argument in favour of this is the behaviour of a prefixal /k/ in a modern language in the infringement of the alternation /\*k/ into /ch/ principle before the stem vowel of a noun in the case when hiatus of vowels interdiction principle is not obeyed. Naturally, this does not cause a transition of /i/ into /y/ which is necessary condition for the alternation k > ch and k > sh. For instance:

chumba "room" - kiumba "creation"

In a considerable number of Eastern Bantu languages, independently of their sociolinguistic characteristics, the following alternation could be found:

/\*k/ > /ch/ before /y/ but (e)ky- in Luganda, ky- in Meru. In a pre-position to a noun stem it is observed in Nyamwezi, Kipare, Ruanda and others (sub-, mid- and super-ethnic languages). In these languages infringement could occur simultaneously with a neutralisation of vowel hiatus interdiction. This process is, consequently, independent of the communicative status of a language.

It should be mentioned here that the alternation k>ch under the specific distribution (i.e. before y) does not occur in Luganda, Meru and other languages of this region (for instance, prefixes of the 7th concord class in Luganda and Meru, respectively).

Thus it could be assumed that languages in which the above mentioned process occurs, insert a certain proto-Bantu *substrata* which forms an element of one sub-system and joins these languages in a kind of unity, crossing contemporary borders of eastern Bantu languages.

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