

# **An Ethno-Linguistics Perspective on Kingome Swahili Narrative Texts**

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## ABSTRACT

Recording and analysing a language in a natural setting provides ample sources of empirical materials to linguists and ethnographers. Yet, competing opinions arise as to the best method to undertake such endeavour without risking the inherited weakness of the direct elicitation. In this article, I provide three narrative texts of a previously unknown Swahili dialect of Kingome, as currently spoken in Mafia Island, Southern Tanzania, as evidence that ethnographic approach is suitable to record and document ethically sensitive themes that often preserve much sought language and culture heritages of the isolated communities.

*Keywords: ethno-linguistics, Kingome, texts, rituals, and metallurgy*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This article presents some results of my recent field collection (March – July 2002) of empirical materials of a previously under-studied dialect of Swahili, known locally as *Kingome* or *Kipokome* (Kipacha 2004a; 2004b). This is currently spoken in the northernmost villages of the Mafia Island District off the southern coast of Tanzania. I wish to present three texts<sup>1</sup>, along with a morpheme-by-morpheme analysis, to be easily subsumed by interested linguists, followed by free translations. Apart from providing useful insights into the lexis and structure of the dialect, the texts also aid our understanding of traditional Swahili culture.

The methods I employed to record the direct narrations and casual conversations of my local informants has drawn me very close to the use of a typical ethnographical approach. Such a manner of direct elicitation will not meet every field linguist's approval, as some will claim that it is prone to grammatical judgement (Chelliah 2001). However, before embarking on fieldwork my host, the late Mikidadi Kichange<sup>2</sup>, a well-known figure in the locality, acted as a 'gatekeeper' by introducing me to his relatives and other villagers. I was accorded the status of *mwanetu* 'our son' which I cherish and honour to this day. In

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<sup>2</sup> The late Mikidadi Kichange was a friend and a companion, and without him this exercise would have been futile. My sincere *shukrani* go also to my anonymous informants.

addition, I had the blessings of and messages to her friends in the village of Kanga from *Mama Patricia*, otherwise known as Prof. Pat Caplan who has been conducting social anthropological research among the Wangome since 1965. These two personalities paved way for a friend-of-a-friend sampling technique (Milroy 1987: 66) to take place. My informants willingly consented to my audio-recording of our conversations and interviews, although my elderly informants provided me with such sensitive material that it would be unethical to disclose their identities. One of the themes narrated here is seldom addressed publicly: the practice of *majini* or *pepo* cults is deemed to be impure by some orthodox Muslims in the villages. I had to be extra vigilant in my endeavours.

The organization of this article is as follows: Section 1 describes the field area. Section 2 presents three selected texts with interlinear transcription. Section 3 is a general discussion, while Section 4 is a set of concluding remarks.

## 1.0 KINGOME DIALECT

Kingome is part of an understudied Mafia Swahili dialect group designated as G43d, according to Guthrie's (1967–71) classification. As is typical of the lesser-known and under-studied languages of the world, the speakers of Kingome are found in the more isolated parts of the Mafia island archipelago. The area is estimated to cover 150 square kilometres and the estimated number of speakers<sup>3</sup> is roughly 8,000 in the six villages of Banja, Jojo, Mrari, Jimbo, Kanga and Bweni.

The state of the infrastructure in this area is very poor. Lack of all-weather roads and reliable transport (boat or bus) to and from the capital *Kirindoni* restricts mobility. Hence, it is no wonder that their form of Swahili is rather distinctive and provides an interesting case of an archaic southern Swahili dialect.

## 2.0 KINGOME TEXTS

Each text is first presented with a morpheme-by-morpheme analysis, a close interlinear translation and finally a free translation. Texts A and B were narrated by a male informant (XY) aged 65, whilst Text C is part of a recorded conversation with a female informant YY aged between 66 and 70. Text A is about a traditional Kingome marriage ritual. Some of the customs narrated here have begun to change but the words are still known to the majority of people. Text B is a narrative concerning the WaNgome *majini* cult, which includes belief in 'owning' spirits with supernatural power. The narrative involves a person who went to a *fundi* to 'buy' a jinni in Kanga village. Text C was a recorded conversation involving *mundu* 'billhook' forging in Jimbo and Kanga villages.

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<sup>3</sup> This estimation was done by the Agriculture Extension Office (AEO) of the Mafia Islands District Council in 1999.

**TEXT A: Marriage Ritual at Bagoni**

Mwanamuka	baada	ya	kuorewa		hu[w]işi			
mu-anamuka	baada	ya	ku-or-ew-a		hu-ishi			
1-woman	after	of	15-Inf-marry-Pass-FV		Hab-live			
kwa	siku	saba	fungateni.	a[y]işi	na	mumewe		
ku-a	siku	saba	fungate-ni	a-işi	na	mu-me-we		
15-for	10a-day	seven	honeymoon-Loc.	ISM-live	with	1-male-1Poss.		
Na	nguo	za	kawaida,	kira	asubuhi	apikirw-a		
na	n-guo	z-a	kawaida,	kira	asubuhi	a-pik-ir-w-a		
with	10- cloth	10-ass	normal,	every	9a-morning	1SM-cook-AppI-Pass-FV		
mihogo,	kunde,	vitumbuwa,		mupepeta	na			
mi-hogo,	kunde,	vi-tumbu[w]a,		mu-pepeta	na			
4-cassava,	9a-peas,	8-rice fritters,		3-rice crisp	&			
uji.	n <sup>h</sup> ana	huriswa		wari	wa			
uji.	n-cana	hu-ris-w-a		wari	w-a			
14-porridge.	9/10-afternoon	Hab-eat-Pass-FV		14-rice	14-Ass.			
nazi,	kitowere	kyeñewe	ni	asari	na	samuri	ya	ñombe
n-nazi	ki-tower-e	ky-eñewe	ni	asari	na	samuri	y-a	ñombe
9-coconut	7-broth	7-itself	is	9a -honey	&	9a -ghee	9 -Ass	9-cow
kisa	baba	wa	muka	anasema,	awari	ya	rero	
ki-sa	baba	w-a	mu-ka	a-na-sem-a,	awari	y-a	rero	
then	1a-father	1-Ass.	1-wife	1SM-TA-say-FV,	from	9-Ass.	9a-today	
fañeni	hisabu	mpaka	siku	ya	saba	muje		
fañ-e-ni	hisabu	mpaka	siku	y-a	saba	mu-j-e		
make-pl	count	until	9a-day	9-of	Num-seven	2plSM-come-Subj		
mumtowe		harusi	wenu.	Na	mama	naye		
mu-m-to-[w]e		harusi	w-enu.	na	mama	na-ye		
2plSM-1OM-release-Subj		1a-bride	1-poss.	&	1a-mother	&-herself		
anatowa	habari	zi-re	uwani.		Ire	siku		
a-na-to[w]a	habari	z-ire	u[w]a-ni.		i-re	siku		
1SM-deliver-FV	10-news	10-Dem.	11- backyard-Loc.		9-Dem.	9a-day		
ya	sita	mabinamu	wa	mwanamuka	wanunuwa	ruzi		
y-a	sita	ma-binamu	w-a	mu-anamuka	wa-nunu[w]a	r-uzi		
9-Ass.	Num- six	6:2-nieces	2-Pos	1-woman	2-buy	11- thread		
wawo	na	sindano	ya	ko-sonera.	Wanatungiya			
wa-[w]o	na	sindano	y-a	ku-son-er-a.	wa-na-tung-i[y]a			
11-their	&	9a- needle	9-ass	15-weave-App-FV.	2SM-TA- weave-App-E-FV			

usaNga; u-sanga 11-bead	Upo u-po 11-Dem	usanga u-sanga 11-bead	wa w-a 11-Ass	kiunoni, ki-uno-ni, 7-waist-loc,	upo u-po 11-loc	wa w-a 11-of	mwagaro mu-agaro 3-buttock	na na &	upo u-po 11-Loc
wa w-a 11-Ass	rukosi. ru-kosi. 11-neck.	Anaviswa a-na-viš-w-a 1SM-TA-wear-Pass-FV		pete pete 9a-earring		na na &	ko-togwa ku-tog-w-a 15-pierce-Pass-FV		
masikio[y]o. ma-siki[y] o. 6-ears.	Tundu Tundu 10-hole	za z-a 10-Ass	masikiyo ma-siki[y]o 6-ears	za z-a 10-Ass		kati kati 9a-centre	huitwa hu-it-w-a Hab-call-Pass-FV		
map <sup>h</sup> ete. ma- p <sup>h</sup> ete. 6-earings.	Na na &	puwani pu[w]a-ni 9a-nose-Loc	anatogwa a-na-tog-w-a 1SM-TA-pierce-FV			upande u-pande 11-side	mmoji m-moj-i 11:3-one	wa w-a 11-Ass	
nk <sup>h</sup> ono n-k <sup>h</sup> ono 3-hand	wa w-a 3-Ass	nsoto n-soto 3-left	awu a[w]u or	nriye. n-ri[y]-e 3-right		Kweñe ku-eñe 17-Loc	ndewe n-dewe 9-ear		
anatiwa a-na-ti-w-a 1SM-TA-Pass-FV		harine, harine, 9a- earring,	puwani pu[w]a-ni 9a-nose-Loc	'kipini 'ki-pini 7-medallion		kya ky-a 7-Ass	Ndege'. n-dege'. 9-bird'.	Sasa sasa Now	
anaviswa a-na-vis-w-a 1SM-TA-wear-Pass-FV		usanga u-sanga 11-bead	wa w-a 11-Ass.	kiwunoni ki-[w]unoni, 7-waist-Loc		na na &	mwagaro. mu-agaro 3-hip		
Harafu then then	fundi fundi 5-trainer	anamfunza a-na-m-funz-a 1SM-TA-OM-teach-FV		kuiši ku-iši 15-Inf-live	na na &	mume mu -me 1-husband	wake. w-ake. 1-Poss.		
Afere a-fer-e 1SM-follow -Subj		amuri amuri 9a-rule	ya y-a 9-Ass.	mume. mu-me 1-husband					

## Free Translation

A woman after getting married has a honeymoon for seven days. She lives with her husband with her everyday clothes, every morning they cook her a breakfast of cassava, peas, rice-fritters, beaten rice and porridge. In the afternoon she is fed with coconut rice with sauce of honey and ghee. Then the father of the woman says, 'From today count till the seventh day (then) you come to take your bride out'. And the mother also delivers a similar message to the people in the courtyard. On the sixth day cousins of the bride buy their thread and sewing needle. They thread beads. There is a waist (band of) beads, there is one for hips and there is one for the neck. They put on her a ring and pierce [her] ears. The

holes pierced in the ears are called *map<sup>h</sup>ete*. And on the nose they pierce her on one side either left or right. In her ears they put earrings, in her a nose a pin with the likeness of a bird. Next they put beads around her waist and the hips. Then her trainer teaches her how to live with her husband and tells her that she ought to follow her husband's orders.

**TEXT B: Buying a Jinni**

Bwana	we	kija	hapa	kutaka	ñikuuziye	jini.
buana	we	ki-ja	ha-pa	ku-taka	ni-ku-uz-i[y]e	jini.
1a-mister	you	1sm-come	loc-16	15-want 1sg-	15-sell-Appl-Subj	1a-jinn.
Miye	jini	wangu	si-nt <sup>h</sup> umi	kank <sup>h</sup> ate	furano	
mi-ye	jini	w -angu	si- N!-t <sup>h</sup> umi	ka- N-k <sup>h</sup> ate	furano	
I-pron-	jinn	1-poss	Neg-1OM-send	1SM-1OM-cut	somebody	
au	kamurarise		furano.	Situmii	tangu	mizimu
au	ka-mu-rar-is-e		furano.	Si-tumi-i	taNgu	mi-zimu
or	TA-OM-sleep-Caus-Subj		somebody.	Neg-use	since	4- spirits
ya	mababu	kuñirusiya		miye.	Kunt <sup>h</sup> uma	jini
y-a	ma-babu	ku-ñi-rusi[a]		mi-ye.	ku-n-t <sup>h</sup> uma	jini
4-Ass	6-ancestors	15-1sgOM-restrict		1-pron.	15-1OM-send	1a-jinn
ukamurarise			furano	au	amupe	šida
u-ka-mu-rar-is-e			furano	au	a-mu-pe	šida
2sgSM-TA-1OMsleep-Caus-Subj			1a-somebody	or	1SM-OM-give	9a-problem
munt <sup>h</sup> u	hapano.	Sasa	rete	kitezo.		
mu-nt <sup>h</sup> u	hapano.	sasa	rete	ki-tezo.		
1-person	no.	Now	bring	7-burner.		
weka	mukaa	na	rete	ruvumba.		
weka	mu-kaa	na	rete	ru-vuNba.		
put	3-charcoal	&	bring	14-incense.		
We!	muzee	kičongwečongwe		kija	kiumbe	ayu
we!	mu-zee	kičoNgwečoNgwe		ki-ja	ki-umbe	a-yu
2sgpron	1-elder	kičoNgwečoNgwe		3sgSM-come	7:1-person	1-Dem
anakutaka		awe	rafiki	yako.	umusiki[y]e	maneno
a-na-ku-taka		a-we	rafiki	ya-ko.	u-mu-sikie	ma-neno
1SM-TA-2sgOM-want		1SM-be	1a: 9-friend	9-Poss.	2sg-3sgOM-listen	6-words
gake	goNt <sup>h</sup> e	anagogataka		kosema.		
ga-ke	go-Nt <sup>h</sup> e	a-na-go-ga-taka		ko-sema.		
6-Dem	6-all	3sg-TA-6Rel-6OM-want		15-say.		

Uwe	naye	umuringe	na			
u-we	na-ye	u-mu-riNge	na			
2sg-be	&-Pron	2sgSM-1OM-see -Subj	&			
kengeja	wake	uwarinde			muzee.	
kengeja	wa-ke	u-wa-rind-e			mu-zee.	
1a-wife	1-Poss	2sgSM-2OM-protect-Subj			1-elder.	
Tambo	za	kutupiwa			mbere	uzikinge,
Tambo	z-a	ku-tup-iw-a			mbere	u-zi-kiNge,
10a-charm	10-Ass	15- throw-Pass-FV			front	2sg-10-OM-guard-Subj,
ikiwa	za n̄uma	na	kufukiwa	pi[y]a	uzikinge,	
ikiwa	z-a n̄uma	na	ku-fuk-iw-a	pia	u-zi-kiNge,	
or	10-Ass 9-behind	&	15-dig-Pass-FV	also	2sg-10OM-protect,	
umupepetuše		nguru	asikañage		rubaya	
u-mu-pepet-uš-e		n-guru	a-si-kañag-e		ru-baya	
2sgSM-3sgOM-keep off-	Caus-Subj	3-leg	3sgSM-NEG-tread-FV		14-bad	
wowont <sup>h</sup> e.	Soka	ra	kupigani[y]a		unaro.	
wow-oNthe .	soka	r-a	ku-pig-an-i[y]-a		u-na-ro.	
14-all.	5-axe	5-Ass	15-hit-Rec-Appl-FV		2sg-have-5Rel.	
Murinde	na	uwe	mačo.	Zawadi	zako	zipo.
mu-rinde	na	u-we	mačo .	Zawadi	z-ako	zi-po.
2sgOM-protect	&	2sg-be	6-eyes .	10a-gift	10-Poss	10-16Loc.
kyano	pi[y]a	utapata.	Na	nk <sup>h</sup> wavi	umrorweze	
ky-ano	pi[y]a	u-ta-pata.	Na	n-k <sup>h</sup> wavi	u-m-rorw-ez-e	
7-feast	also	2sg-TA-get.	&	9-cattle 2sg-	2SM-3sgOM-slaughter -Caus-Subj	
Haya	suguri	iša	twara	jini	ryako	ukatumi[y]e.
haya	suguri	iša	twar-a	jini	ry-ako	u-ka-tumi[y]-e.
Ok	9a-ritual	complete	get-FV	5x- jinn	5-Poss	2sgSM-TA-use-Sub.

## Free Translation

Mister you have come here to ask me to sell you a jinn. I won't ask my jinn to go and kill somebody or to possess anyone. I have not been allowed to do that since the time of my ancestors. To send a jinni to possess or hurt a person is forbidden. Now bring an incense burner, put on some charcoal and bring incense. 'You old man *Kichongwechongwe*, here comes a person who wants to be your friend. Listen to all the words which he wants to say, be with him, look after him and his children, protect them, old man. Guard him against any charm thrown in front of him or from the behind and protect him. Keep his feet from treading on any bad thing whatever. You have an axe to fight with. Guard him and be alert. You will

have your rewards. You will be given your tray of delicacies. You will have a cow slaughtered for you.’ Ok, the ritual is over you take your jinn and use him.

**TEXT C: Forging a Billhook**

Heje?	kufura	muNdu	Jimbo?	kwenda	
he-je?	ku-fura	mu-ndu	Jimbo?	ku-enda	
Intg-Cl.?	15Int-forge	3-matchete	Jimbo?	15Inf-go	
nawo	bara	weye?	Basi	tafuta	nt <sup>h</sup> u
na-wo	bara	we-ye?	basi	tafuta	n-t <sup>h</sup> u
&-Rel.	9-land	2per.Pron?	ok	find	1-person
akupangiye		harafu	aukurure.		
a-ku-pang-i[y]-je		harafu	a-u-kurur-e.		
1SM-2sgOM-process-App-Subj		then	1-SM- 3OM-smooth-Subj.		
nenda	pare	kwa	Nasoro		
n-enda	pa-re	ku-a	Nasoro		
2pers -g o	16-Dem	17-Ass	Nasoro		
akupangi[y]e.		Hebu!	ñi-pa		
a-ku-pang-i[y][-e.		hebu!	ñi-pa		
1-SM-2sgOM-forge-Subj.		Alright!	1sgOM-give-Impve		
ñi-u-ringe.		Mu-ndu	n-zito.		
ñi-u-riNg-e.		Mu-ndu	n-zito.		
1SM-3OM-see-Subj.		3-matchete	3-heavy.		
Sasa	pereka	aukurure,	kiša	aunore	sawasawa.
sasa	pereka	a-u-kurur-e,	ki-ša	a-u-nore	sawa sawa.
now	send	1SM-3OM-smooth-FV,	then	1SM-3OM-sharpen	well.
kama	haukururiwa		haupati	makari.	
Kama	ha-u-ku-kurur-iw-a		ha-u-pati	ma-kari.	
if	Neg-3SM-15-smooth-Pas-FV		Neg-3SM-get	6-sharpness.	
Akisaunora		utakwenda	kurimi[y]a		
A-ki-ša u-nora		u-ta-ku-enda	ku-rim-i[y]-a		
1SM-TA-Aux -3OM-shapern		3SM-TA-15Inf-go	15-Inf-cultivate-App-FV		
kisa	utaku-wa	unanora	tu	kinoroni.	
kisa	u-ta-ku-wa	u-na-nora	tu	ki-noro-ni.	
then	2sg-TA-15inf-be	2sg-TA-sharpen	only	7-whetstone-Loc.	
Mundu	wa	korotora	ndio	unafaa	kwa
mu-ndu	w-a	ku-rotor-a	ndi-o	u-na-faa	ku-a
3-machete	3-Ass	15-Inf. smooth	be-Rel	3SM-TA-right	15-Ass.

kučengeya	vava,	na	kukati[y]a	kongowa.
ku-čeng-e-[y]-a	vava	na	ku-kat-i-[y]-a	Kongowa.
15-clear-Appl-FV	9a-shrub,	&	15-cut-Appl-FV	10-poles.

### Free Translation

Hey? Have you forged your billhook at Jimbo? Do you intend to take it along when you go to the mainland? Ok, then find a person who will process it then smoothe it. Go to Nasoro to process it. Alright let me see it. It is a heavy billhook. Now send it to be smoothed. Then, to be sharpened well. If it hasn't been smoothed, it never becomes sharp. After being sharpened you will use it for cultivation but you will [need to keep] sharpening it with a whetstone. The smoothed billhook is perfect for clearing bush and cutting poles.

## 3.0 GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE TEXTS

The three texts are excellent examples of a distinctive form of Swahili as currently spoken in the northern part of a Mafia island. We obtain in these texts a vivid description of the long-standing cultural and social structure of the coastal Swahili. Documenting such surviving examples of Swahili culture are vital at this time when efforts are being made to revive and archive endangered and understudied languages and culture of the world. In what follows I pinpoint the striking and pertinent lexicons on each text that will allow us to establish their link to the general information available so far. We will comment on each text in turn.

### 3.1 The Traditional Marriage Ritual

Text A describes a traditional Swahili marriage. The narrator seems to be well versed in the traditional wedding ritual of the Wangome, in which the decoration of the bride takes central stage.

The use of *maphete*, *kipini kya ndege*, *usanga wa mwagaro* and *harine* may be things of the past, but it is an important clue to marriage decorations typical of the coastal Swahili in the 1950's. There is no sign of foreign influence as narrated by the informant. We see a type of feast that accompanies the celebration and consisting of *mupepeta* 'beaten rice', *muhogo* 'cassava', *kunde* 'peas', *vitumbuwa* 'rice fritters', *uji* 'porridge' and *samuri* 'ghee'. More important is the occasion when the *fundi*, also known on the Swahili coast as *kungwi* or *somo* 'instructress' teaches the bride in her pre-marital ritual. This is the rite of passage *unyago wa kiafrika*, a highly secret female initiation ritual which teaches sex and how to obey and entertain a husband and is common all over Swahili coast and hinterland (see Hashim 1989: 2). We are informed that bride is expected to *fera amuri* 'obey (her



husband's) orders' all the time. The narrator in the text assumed a position of an African traditional storyteller.

### 3.2 The Swahili Majini Cult

The general beliefs and practices of the Swahili *majini* cult are not confined to Ngome area alone. They are found in many sub-Saharan countries. A detailed description of the Swahili or Sabaki *majini* or *pepo* cults can be found in Caplan (1975), Lambek (1981), Gilles (1987), and Erdtsieck (2001). However, none of these works have discussed the merchandising aspect of *majini* or *pepo* found in the text. The narrator hinted that one can purchase a jinn or *pepo* for good use or bad. In other words 'spiritual power' and 'authority' can be bought and sold at will in the Ngome area (and indeed in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa).

The text portrays Jinni as creatures with powerful attributes ascribed to them. They are given localised identities with names, such as *Kichongwechongwe*, *Mbarakuni*, *Nyororo*, and *Fatuma*. No other Swahili coastal area has similar names. Communication with these jinn, in this case, *Kichongwechongwe*, follows ceremonial chanting and the use of sacred languages plus the creation of an environment that pleases him, including the burning of specific *ruvumba* (14)-'incense' in the *kitezo* (7)-'burner'. Once a jinn is felt by an 'expert' as being present, he is then told why they called him and assigned various tasks such as protecting the buyer and him (his family) against other bad spirits and the evil-eye. In return, he is promised a special sacred feast '*kyano*' or an animal '*nkwavi*' to express their thanks for the job undertaken, and to ensure continuing prosperity and protection against future calamities and any form of affliction. It is interesting to note that the Wangome use their own form of sacred language here represented by *kurworeza* 'to slaughter', *nkwavi* 'animal', *panga* 'sacrificial cave', *kyano* 'feast' or *kuturu* 'sacrifice', and *tambo* 'sorcery'. Consider the term *nkwavi* 'animal or cow' as used in Ngome *majini* ritual practices, other parts of the Swahili coast use different terms such as *farasi* or *tuyuri* to refer to sacrificial animal or fowl. This is an interesting area worth examining. There is a need to extend the collection of culturally-specific terminology in Swahili dialects as already initiated by Caplan (1997: 239–242). There is no sign in sight that these practices will dwindle with the advent of more advanced technology, western medicine, greater political awareness or indeed greater religious orthodoxy since, as the text reveals, they are part of everyday indigenous healing practices. Even Islamic religious leaders are unable to stop the practice of these secretive but powerful ancient healing and divination practices.

### 3.3 Traditional African Metallurgical Technology

Text C pays tribute to the existence of a traditional African metallurgical technology passed from one generation to another. This is part of well-documented Swahili craftsmanship (see Allen 1974: 115). The following are key Kingome metallurgical terminologies:

Metallurgical terminology	Gloss
<i>mundu</i>	‘billhook (sickle)’
<i>fura</i>	‘forge’
<i>kurura</i>	‘smoothen’
<i>nora</i>	‘sharpen’
<i>kinoro</i>	‘whetstone’
<i>rotora</i>	‘first-time, new’

It is interesting to note that *mundu* ‘billhook’ and *Kinoro* ‘whetstone’ (the latter appears as *Chinolo* ‘whetstone’ in the neighbouring Kimakonde language, see Steere 1876: 3). *Miyundu* ‘billhooks’ are famously forged by a skilful group of iron-smiths in the Jimbo area. However, a newly-forged billhook ‘*mundu wa kurotora*’ still needs further work before it can be used. We are told of the division of labour in Ngome area, as one needs to consult another craftsman named Nasoro in Kanga in order to smooth a newly forged *mundu* made by another. The handy *mundu* is not only used for slashing and cutting weeds, but also for the clearing of bushes, the building of mud huts and cutting of *kongowe* ‘polls’. Generally, such iron smelting in Ngome is part of wider indigenous metallurgy skills found throughout Swahili coast (Chami 1998).

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

The texts presented here form important documentation of severely diminishing records of ancient Swahili culture and socio-economic life. I have attempted to present and discuss these texts so that both anthropologists and linguistics could use the material. The article does not pretend to be exhaustive but offers a small contribution to documenting our Swahili heritage.

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