Language in Society **39**, 493–520.
doi:10.1017/S0047404510000424

"I am Maasai": Interpreting ethnic parody in Bongo Flava

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ABSTRACT

In the Tanzanian *Bongo Flava* youth music scene, Abel Motika is a popular artist who uses both verbal and visual markers of Kisongo Maasai ethnicity to style himself as "the Maasai rapper" with the stage name "Mr. Ebbo." Through analysis of his 2002 song "Mi Mmasai" 'I am Maasai', this study investigates his ethnic stylizing in playful use of Maa pronunciation and an understudied Swahili language game known as *kinyume* 'backwards style'. The study finds that while Ebbo strategically disrupts the sociolinguistic order that privileges Standard Swahili, the Maasai persona he projects is humorously stylized as unable both to speak Standard Swahili and to engage with the urban lifestyle associated with Tanzania's de-ethnicized Swahili modernity, thereby leaving dominant ideologies of language and ethnicity intact. Moreover, in arguing that Motika's stylization of ethnicity has a contradictory effect, both affirming a local ethnic identity and preserving the logic of ethnolinguistic stereotyping, the study critiques approaches to hip hop that privilige authorial intent and assume linguistic subversiveness. (Swahili, Maa, Bongo Flava, parody, ethnicity, rap, kinyume)*

INTRODUCTION

Despite Tanzania's dominant ideology that it is a postethnic nation united by Standard Swahili (SS), a number of young Tanzanian artists involved in the *Bongo Flava* music scene have begun depicting their own ethnic groups through the use of verbal imagery, their mother tongues or mother-tongue-influenced Swahili, and visual symbols such as clothing, jewelry, and dance styles. If "language and identity are produced in the performance" (Pennycook 2007:58), which languages and which identities are produced through ethnicized Bongo Flava? Does such stylization challenge hegemonic ideologies of language, ethnicity, and modernity, as scholarship on hip hop linguistics would suggest? In this article I explore the stylized performance of Tanzanian ethnicities through language in Bongo Flava,

using Maasai rapper Abel Loshilaa Motika (a.k.a. Mr. Ebbo, or in this article simply Ebbo) as my primary example.[1] Through an examination of Ebbo's ethnically stylized persona—known for his playful use of Maa pronunciation and a Swahili language game known as *kinyume* 'backwards style'—I argue that while he strategically disrupts the sociolinguistic order that privileges Standard Swahili, his persona leaves dominant ideologies of language and ethnicity intact. Moreover, in arguing that Ebbo's parodic stylization of ethnicity undermines his stated intent, the study not only questions approaches to hip hop that treat rappers as cultural theorists but also the assumption that hip hop language practices are necessarily subversive.

HIP HOP LINGUISTICS

This project builds on recent scholarship in the burgeoning field of HIP HOP LINGUISTICS, the study of speech and performance contextualized in the lives of those involved in hip hop culture (Alim 2009:5). The majority of studies have focused on either the reception of English language rap "in places where English is rarely spoken" (Rose 1994:19) or on the interplay between English and other major languages in diverse international hip hop scenes (Oumano 1999a,b, Pennycook 2003), including English and Swahili in Tanzania (Englert 2008a, Higgins 2009, Perullo & Fenn 2003, Reuster-Jahn & Kießling 2006). The use of subnational languages in rap and hip hop has received scant attention, despite recognition that "regional dialects and indigenous languages other than English [are] coming to the fore as important markers for the vernacular expressions and construction of identity" in globalized rap and hip hop (Mitchell 2001:32). Mitchell's (2000) work on "resistance vernaculars" is an important exception, offering a wide-ranging survey of language use in hip hop in various contexts, as is Omoniyi's (2009) work, which offers detailed context on specific language practices in Nigerian hip hop.

A recurring theme within hip hop linguistics studies (as well as in studies of hip hop that are less focused on language) is hip hop's potential subversiveness. For example, Alim argues that "Hip Hop artists, wherever they are located … often challenge the sociopolitical arrangement of the relations between languages, identities, and power" (2009:13) and that hip hop culture not only "challenge[s] dominant ideologies of language" but also espouses "subversive language ideologies" (2009:5), loosening linguistic boundaries used to include and exclude others (2009:12). Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook (2009) provide numerous contextualized examples of these processes as work, from Cantonese vulgarities that "subvert mainstream linguistic taboos and social norms" in China (Lin 2009:164) to the linguistic and discursive marking of Whiteness as "a way for White and Black competitors to challenge hegemonic Whiteness" in the United States (Cutler 2009:80).

Though less focused on language, studies of Tanzanian rap have similarly emphasized artists' challenge to the status quo by giving voice to otherwise powerless members of society. Perullo (2005), for example, writes of rap as a medium through which artists voice the concerns of youth and other underprivileged urban Tanzanians—a powerful medium because it does not require literacy. Saavedra Casco (2006) makes a similar argument, focusing on protest within rap as Tanzanian youth discourse.

In contrast to these trends, recent research on the Bongo Flava music scene points to a move away from subversiveness as a dominant feature. For example, Englert argues that "Bongo Flava music has helped to shape a generational identity of those who grew up in the era of liberalisation and multi-party politics—an identity which transcends social classes, ethnicities and gender" (2008b:76), and therefore, I would add, supports the dominant nationalist ideology that suppresses ethnicity and devalues ethnic languages. She finds that, in contrast to those Tanzanian rappers who set themselves apart from mainstream society through slang, many rappers aim to reach "the broadest possible audience" (2008b:79). Similarly, Reuster-Jahn argues that Bongo Flava is becoming more and more mainstream and less political: "Since approximately 2006, romance, amusement and lifestyle seem to have become prevailing in *Bongo Flava* … This would suggest that *Bongo Flava* has successfully established itself as a mainstream cultural phenomenon with the characteristics that initially defined it—i.e. social-consciousness—becoming shifted to the margin" (2008:43). The shift from socially conscious music to mainstream entertainment coincides with a move away from styles labeled as "hip hop" toward a broader range of styles under the umbrella of Bongo Flava, also widely known as *muziki wa kizazi kipya* 'music of the new generation'.

Illustrating the range of terminologies used to define Tanzania's new music, Tanga-based rapper Abel Loshilaa Motika (a.k.a. Mr. Ebbo) told me, "I still haven't gotten a name for my songs. They call it [rap cartoon] because it's different from other songs. Very different! … If they call it rap cartoon, fine, if they call it contemporary, I don't know, African, whatever, that's fine. What I know is this: it's Bongo Flava. But it has a local flavor" (Motika 2006). The Swahili term *Bongo Flava* (pronounced /boŋgofleva/) derives from two slang terms. *Bongo* means 'brains' and is used as a slang term for Tanzania where, it is said, one has to survive by one's wits. *Flava* is borrowed from the English word 'flavor', so *Bongo Flava* suggests 'the flavor of Tanzania'. The term is used in at least three ways to describe contemporary popular music produced by young people who are highly influenced by US popular music but add a "local flavor" to it through the use of the Swahili language and local themes: (i) as local hip hop, (ii) as local commercial rap, and (iii) as all local music produced by young people. Many Tanzanians call Ebbo's work *rap katuni* 'rap cartoon', a subcategory of commercial rap that uses parody and satire extensively and in which performers act out the humorous lyrical content of their songs in stage performances and music videos.

Although Bongo Flava artists are known for their linguistic creativity, the majority of published research has relied on the CONTENT of Bongo Flava lyrics rather than their form (Englert 2003, Perullo 2003, 2005, 2007, Saavedra Casco 2006, Stroeken 2005a,b, Suriano 2006, Thompson 2008, in press). Language has been examined with respect to the choice to use Swahili over English (Perullo & Fenn 2003, Remes 1998), slang (Englert 2003, Higgins 2009, Perullo 2005, Perullo & Fenn 2003, Suriano 2006) and the appropriation of "(African American) Hip Hop Nation Language" (Higgins 2009). While scholars have noted in passing that some of Tanzania's other languages are being used in Bongo Flava (e.g. Aunio 2008, Englert 2003), their use has not yet been analyzed.

Bongo Flava's "home sound" (Brennan 1994:684) is an informal register of Swahili sung or rapped with standard grammar and pronunciation but with extensive use of slang, borrowed words, and English code-switching (Reuster-Jahn & Kießling 2006). Tanzanians call both slang and heavily code-switched Swahili *lugha ya mitaani* 'street language' or *Kiswahili cha mitaani* 'street Swahili.' In contrast to Higgins, who defines *lugha ya mitaani* as "a term used by Tanzanians to refer to nonstandard Swahili" (2009:100), I make a distinction between it and other forms of non-Standard Swahili, including not only Swahili that is code-switched with, or otherwise influenced by, Tanzania's other ethnic languages but also the language game *kinyume*, that is, those features I examine in Ebbo's work. Because Swahili has been used to develop a national identity explicitly identified as both MODERN and NONETHNIC (Askew 2002, Blommaert 1996, Thompson 2006), *lugha ya mitaani*—a form of Swahili that is even MORE modern than SS—is more acceptable in public discourse than is the use of Swahili that is ethnically marked (cf. Thompson 2006); thus the two are treated as distinct.

Alongside the majority of Bongo Flava in various registers of SS, a few artists have drawn on Tanzania's other languages, through the use of code-switching, pronunciation that is influenced by them or deliberately imitates them, and grammar that is nonstandard. For example, the name of the Tanga-based rap group Wagosi wa Kaya is a Sambaa expression used to translate the African American slang expression "homeboys" (Busara Promotions 2009, cf. Saavedra Casco 2006). The two rappers in this group, Frederick Mariki (a.k.a. Mkoloni) and John Simba (a.k.a. Dr. John), although not ethnically Sambaa themselves, are known for "copycatting the accent of Sambaa," performing Sambaa dance styles (John 2006), and sometimes using Digo accents (Hassan 2007). Similarly, Dr. Leader sings "Mi Msambaa" 'I am a Sambaa' with a distinctive Sambaa accent and a chorus that is entirely in Sambaa. Another crew, X Plastaz, includes one Maasai rapper in its ranks, who sings and raps almost entirely in Maa, while other members of the group are Haya and Pare, who rap primarily in Swahili; they called their first album *Maasai Hip Hop*. Englert 2003 also cites examples of underground rappers in Morogoro including some Pare lyrics. Abel Motika (Ebbo), the rapper whose work I will discuss in more detail here, includes code-switched

Maa lyrics in many of his recordings, along with various other symbols of ethnicity.

Although still limited, the use of Tanzania's diverse languages in Bongo Flava is part of a larger trend toward the localization or "Africanization" of this new music. Alongside computerized beats heavily influenced by American pop and rap music, some Bongo Flava artists use indigenous instruments such as xylophones, drums, and animal horns; styles influenced by other African music such as Congolese *rumba/soukous/lingala* (Saavedra Casco 2006); and long-standing Tanzanian genres *ngoma, dansi, taarab*, and *beni* (Englert 2008a,b, Karega 2006, Saavedra Casco 2006). Alongside such "Africanization," Bongo Flava also draws on other "ethnic" world-music imports that have been popular in Tanzania for decades such as African diasporic music (e.g *zouk*, *tumba*, and jazz) and Indian film music (Karega 2006), as well as more recent imports, such as *bhangra* (Englert 2008a). Research in other world rap music has shown that the use of regional languages, dialects, and instrumentation "serves as a cultural repository for 'tribalized' local cultural forms" (Mitchell 2001:22). In the case of Tanzania, the positive aspects of such a "cultural repository" are complicated by equivocal, often negative, local attitudes toward displays of ethnicity.

In contrast to those artists aiming for success in the world market "by making the beats sound more 'African' " (Englert 2003:82), Ebbo claims to have little interest in the market beyond East Africa (Motika 2006), positioning himself instead as a proud Maasai within a local music scene. As such, he differentiates himself from other local rappers by performing Maasainess but nevertheless must remain comprehensible through the use of Swahili (cf. Jaffe 2000).

In performing Maasainess, Ebbo has suggested in interviews that he aims to offer a positive representation of Maasai ethnicity: "We've got our own beautiful culture and we need to be respected for that. That's what I'm talking about in ['Mi Mmasai']" (Motika n.d.). A more positive depiction of the Maasai would be a necessary corrective to widespread stereotypes. "Discrimination against the Maasai exists. Discrimination exists. We are working hard to reduce it. But, you know, many people think that the Maasai is a backwards person, the Maasai has not made progress, the Maasai is dirty" (Motika 2006).

Bongo Flava scholars appear to have accepted at face value Ebbo's claims to represent the Maasai more positively. Englert, for example, refers to "Mi Mmasai" as "a positive confirmation of his Maasai identity" (2003:79), and Künzler echoes, "Mr. Ebbo is proudly stating his Maasai identity in 'Mi Mmasai' " (2006:21). Similarly, Aunio (2008) cites Ebbo as an example of a new trend in Bongo Flava that "represents the Tanzanian youth culture even more widely and adds to the pride and self-respect of the ethnic groups whose languages are not recognised in the official institutions." In contrast, I argue that these readings place too much stock in Ebbo's intent, decontextualize his work from existing ideologies of ethnicity in Tanzania, and ignore the polysemy inherent in his parodic persona.

ABEL LOSHILAA MOTIKA AND THE "MR. EBBO" PERSONA

Abel Loshilaa Motika was born in Arusha, Tanzania, and entered the local music scene in the mid-1990s under the stage name Mr. Ebbo (an Africanization of his given name, Abel), originally as an unsuccessful reggae and R&B artist. After dropping out of music for a few years, Mr. Ebbo became a household name in Tanzania in 2002 when he released his first hit song, "Mi Mmasai" 'I am Maasai' on the album *Fahari Yako* 'Your pride'. His family belongs to the "branch of the urban Arusha" Maasai, who "don't dress in a Maasai way nor pierce our ears" like the Kisongo Maasai do, he told me (Motika 2006). In other words, he is one of the "many educated 'swahilised' Maasai in towns who share cultural norms with the *Waswahili* and speak Standard Swahili" (Drolc 1999:11–12), and yet in performance he wears the iconic red *lubega* and beaded jewelry characteristic of the Kisongo Maasai, and parodies Kisongo Maasai speech styles.

Being Maasai has become Ebbo's signature, marking him as distinct from other Bongo Flava musicians from whom he seeks to differentiate himself. For example, in the Tanzanian popular press he is referred to by the following epithets: "mwana-muziki anayerap Kimasai" 'the musician who raps in a Maasai style' (Hkibari 2004), "Mmasai Mr. Ebbo" 'the Maasai Mr. Ebbo' (Hassan 2006), "a young Masai" (Nkwame 2002), and "rapa wa Kimasai Mr. Ebbo" 'Maasai rapper Mr. Ebbo' (Hassan 2007). While being Maasai itself marks Ebbo as different from other Tanzanian artists, intentionally marking one's ethnicity in any visible way is also unusual among Bongo Flava artists (and indeed among Tanzanians more generally). "So many tribes have lost their identity," Ebbo told a BBC journalist; "A Maasai is the only person who knows who he is" (Yahya n.d.). Indeed, the Kisongo Maasai referenced by the Ebbo persona are exceptional precisely for their refusal to concede to the hegemonic ideology that encourages Tanzanians to become postethnic and thereby modern.

While Ebbo has become well-known as a character whose ethnicity is always visibly on display and whose lyrical content also frequently references his ethnicity, little attention has been paid to the linguistic features of his rap-cartoon style. I turn now to an examination of his use of non-Standard Swahili (NSS), demonstrating the polysemy inherent in his language use as it relates to the Maasai identity he projects as well as to Tanzanian attitudes toward language and ethnicity. The analysis aims to show that his use of parody does not simply challenge but also reproduces "influential images and stereotypes" of the Kisongo Maasai, a group Ebbo himself does not "(straightforwardly) belong to" (Rampton 1999:421).

Ebbo's most well-known songs include "Mi Mmasai" 'I am Maasai', "Nisa-mehe" 'Forgive me', and "Mbado" 'Not yet'. Musically, his work is described as "very catchy," typically with a "sing-a-long chorus and beat up [upbeat?]

track."[2] As part of the rap-cartoon genre, his songs have been described as "funny," "tongue-in-cheek" and "naughty."[3] For example, one journalist wrote about the song "Nisamehe," which also features Mkoloni of Wagosi wa Kaya: "Ni mfululizo wa vituko ambavyo ukisikiliza vitakufanya ushike mbavu kwa kucheka." 'It is a series of surprising events which if you listen will make you clutch your sides laughing' (Mollel 2006). Another writes similarly that it is "guaranteed to crack the ribs of any person who dares to withstand it."[4] Part of the humor in Ebbo's songs comes from his use of language that Tanzanians call "Maasai intoned, broken Swahili"[5] and that is assessed as an accurate representation of "matamshi ya kabila la 'nyumbani' Umasaini Arusha" 'the pronunciation of the "home" ethnic group in Maasailand, Arusha' (Hassan 2006).

"MI MMASAI"

In "Mi Mmasai," Ebbo introduced his trademark style: humorous content about Maasai identity juxtaposed with a humorous use of non-Standard Swahili (NSS), and in live performances and videos, Kisongo Maasai costumery. In terms of content, Ebbo artfully draws on local stereotypes of the Maasai in ways that not only include his non-Maasai listeners in the humor attached to these stereotypes but also, paradoxically, make urban Tanzanians the butt of his jokes. His humorous content draws on stereotypes and yet subtly subverts them (Thompson in press). In the remaining sections I address how his humorous use of language functions in a similarly equivocal way. In linguistic terms, his style is marked by Maa and English code-switching, Maa-influenced pronunciation of Swahili words, NSS grammar, an ironic misunderstanding of SS words and grammar, and a Swahili language game known as *kinyume* 'backwards style.'[6] I examine each of these features in turn. The full transcript of the song, and my translation, are including in the appendix.

CODE-MIXING AND CODE-SWITCHING

The song opens with two lines of code-mixing and code-switching:

(1)

1 Yo! Sikilisa napurisendi
'Yo! Listen, I present'
2 M. J. Prodakishan
'M. J. Production'

The song begins with a word from African American Vernacular English, *Yo!*, a interjection intended to grab the listener's attention and to identify the genre as rap (cf. Pennycook 2003, 2007). The call to attention is further emphasized with the Swahili command, *Sikilisa* 'listen!', in which Ebbo first introduces his Maa accent by replacing the voiced /z/ in the SS *sikiliza* with a voiceless /s/.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404510000424 Published online by Cambridge University Press

These two attention-grabbers are followed by the Swahinglish verb, *napurisendi* 'I present', a borrowing from the English verb *present*, here made to follow SS morphological rules through the affixation of the first-person singular subject marker *na-* 'I' and phonotactic rules that require CV syllables (cf. Higgins 2007 on Swahinglish). Similarly, Ebbo integrates the English noun *production* into Swahili by inserting vowels between the English consonant clusters to create CV syllables. The song contains a few other English borrowings, shown in (2).

(2)

16	ndisheti kawoshi	'car wash t-shirt'
43	derefa [SS: dereva]	'driver'
71	soda	'soda'
71	hotreli [SS: hoteli]	'hotel'
73, 77	sugari [SS: sukari]	'sugar'

Unlike these borrowings, *Yo! Sikilisa napurisendi M. J. Prodakishan* in lines 1–2 can be more clearly identified as code-switching and code-mixing, as they require knowledge of English in order to make sense of them. Their function here is to establish the rapper as a skilled wordsmith and, more specifically, a skilled imitator of various accents.

Maa code-switching is more marked in the song than English code-switching, both because code-switching between English and Swahili is widespread in urban Tanzanian speech (Higgins 2007) and because Maa is a Nilotic language with a phonological and morphological structure markedly different from Swahili and other Bantu languages spoken by the majority of Tanzanians. As I demonstrate, the use of Maa lexical items adds to the sense that Ebbo is a skilled rapper, identifies him as a Maa speaker, adds a Maasai "flavor" to his work, allows him to avoid taboo SS words, and adds to the song's theme of linguistic (and other) misunderstandings; here boldface indicate Maa.

In lines 3 and 4, Ebbo raps:

(3)

3 Kwa wafijana na wasei
SS: Kwa vijana na wazee
'For the young and old'
4 Nakuja kama **lowaru kerikeri**
'I come like **a leopard**'

The Maa words *lowaru kerikeri* 'leopard; lit. spotted lion' (Mol 1978:95) identify the narrator as a Maa speaker, adding a sense of authenticity. Although the word is written as *kerikeri* in Maa, in Ebbo's pronunciation the /r/ is nearly elided, producing (to my ear) *keikei*, a near-rhyme with *wasei* (SS: *wazee* 'old people') in line 3. The use of a Maa lexical item here, while denotationally meaningless to most Swahili speakers, adds rhythm and rhyme to these lines that would be absent had Ebbo used the SS equivalent *chui* 'leopard'.

The majority of Maa words in "Mi Mmasai" are proper names and other "untranslatable" expressions. For example, Ebbo asks:

(4)

6 Nimtume nani kule kwetu **Longido**?
'Who should I send to my home in **Longido**?'
7 Aende samilia kule kwa Mama **Toto**
'To go greet at Mama **Toto**'s place'

Longido is a small village north of Arusha in Tanzania and south of the town of Namanga, on the Kenya-Tanzania border, while *Toto* or *Chocho* is a term of endearment in Maa.[7] While Swahili speakers may not recognize *Toto* as Maa (perhaps mistaking it for NSS *toto* 'child'), the word *Longido* doubly connotes Maasainess in that it is both a Maa word and a real village in Maasailand. In lines 53–54, Ebbo parodies the Maasai taboo against eating fish and their stereotyped bravery around lions, rapping:

(5)

53 Bora simba ale mimi si samaki jamani!
'It's better that a lion eat me, not a fish please!'
54 Sina nafasi ya kufa **matumoki toii**!
'I don't have time to die; **I'm not ready**!'

Matumoki toii! is a Maa interjection of fear that is only partially translated here by the English phrase 'I'm not ready!'. While its literal meaning remains opaque to those who do not speak Maa, a Swahili speaker understands the overall meaning of these lines because of the preceding SS expression, *Sina nafasi ya kufa* 'I don't have time to die'. The phrase also serves a poetic function; like the Maa in line 4 discussed above, here *toii* (line 54) creates a vowel rhyme with *jamani* in line 53, again displaying Ebbo's verbal ingenuity (cf. Alim 2006). The use of both Maa interjections and proper names gives the song a Maasai "flavor" (a dominant metaphor among Bongo Flava artists and listeners; cf. Karega 2006) with little loss of denotational meaning for non-Maasai listeners.

The use of Maa also allows Ebbo to refer to concepts that would be impolite in SS and in Maa, while obscuring their meaning. In lines 79–80, he raps:

(6)

79 Soda kama maji bado imejaa magadi
'Soda like water still filled with soda ash'
80 Chungu kama **ngorotiki** munausa makusudi
'You intentionally sell it bitter like **diarrhea'**

While most listeners will not understand the denotative meaning of the Maa word *ngorotiki* 'diarrhea,' the description of it as *chungu* 'bitter' makes the overall meaning of these lines clear: the soda tastes bitter and ashy. Interestingly, most listeners will also not be aware of the taboo nature of the word in Maa: according to a Maa speaker I consulted, "The Maa use it as a very belittling word. One can

swear to another saying 'you are shit' but to be called *engorotiki* is much more potent and enlists more harm and/or response."[8] The word *ngorotiki*, used in place of the crude SS *maharisho*, also displays Ebbo's verbal virtuosity: following a traditional caesura form common to Swahili poetry (Mazrui 2007) as well as the poetic technique of assonance that is central to rap (Alim 2006), he creates assonance by ending each half-line with the vowel /i/ in *maji*, *magadi*, *ngorotiki*, and *makusudi.*

MAA INFLUENCE

The word *Kimasai* in reference to Ebbo as "mwanamuziki anayerap Kimasai" (Hkibari 2004) and "rapa wa Kimasai Mr Ebbo" (Hassan 2007) can be read not only as references to his style and ethnicity, but also to his language. The morpheme *ki-* (capitalized for proper names) in Swahili denotes both language and style, much like the suffixes *-ish* and *-ese* do in English ethnonyms such as *Swedish* and *Chinese*. Although Ebbo does not rap IN MAA, Tanzanians identify his "Maasai style" in part through his use of Maa-influenced Swahili.

Most Tanzanians speak Swahili as their second language, and therefore many exhibit interference from their first language, particularly in pronunciation (Roehl 1930). Because Swahili has more consonants than Maa, for example, the following sound replacements occur in the Swahili speech of both Kenyan and Tanzanian Maasai speakers of Swahili in both Kenya and Tanzania (Drolc 1999, Musau 1993), shown in (7).

(7) /z/ z > [s]
/ð/ dh > [s]
/h/ h > ∅
/v/ v > [f]

The Maasai traditional practice of removing the bottom two front teeth (Wanzala 2006) may also have an effect on their pronunciation of dental consonants.[9] However, the more formal education Maa speakers receive, the less likely they are to exhibit such interference.

During a 2006 interview with Ebbo, who received ten years of formal schooling, I observed that he speaks SS with minimal interference from Maa. Yet in rapping as Ebbo, he deliberately uses Maa pronunciation to add to his Maasai persona:

KDT: Many people say you insert Maa pronunciation into Swahili.
Is that normal for you? Or do you do that intentionally?
Ebbo: I do it intentionally. (Motika 2006)

Consider the following examples from "Mi Mmasai".

(8)
5a bana
SS: bwana
'man, sir'

5b najifunia
SS: najivunia
'I'm proud (of)'
11 kasi
SS: kazi
'work'
14 mnasheka /mnaʃeka/
SS: mnacheka /mnatʃeka/
'you all laugh (at)'
49 naamaama
SS: nahamahama
'I move around a lot'

The consonant cluster /bw/ and the phonemes /v/ and /z/ do not exist in Maa, and are thus replaced with /b/, /f/, and /s/ respectively. Although the sound /tʃ/ does occur in Maa, it changes to /ʃ/ when the gender prefix is dropped (Mol 1978:79). Alternately, this could also indicate familiarity with the same feature in Sambaa (Werner 1906), a major language in Tanga, where Ebbo has lived for many years. Similarly, the phoneme /h/ is rare in Maa, occurring primarily in interjections and songs (Mol 1978), and thus is simply dropped before the vowel /a/. In all of these examples, the Maa-inflected pronunciation adds no denotative meaning to the Swahili words. All of these examples can be explained through stylized imitation of Maa; Ebbo is aware of the dialect features of Maa-influenced Swahili, and exploits them creatively. That he does so more in performance than in conversation illustrates Rickford's claim that "some verbal (and non-verbal) performances—especially those that involve radio broadcasts, large audiences, and public occasions are more stylized than others. … People in such situations are trying more consciously than most of us may do in everyday life, to project personas of various types" (2001:230). While Ebbo is proficient in SS and uses it in conversation, when performing he refuses to choose between Maa and SS, instead imposing Maa pronunciation on Swahili, subverting a language ideology that treats Swahili and ethnic languages as occurring in isolation from one another.

In one example, Ebbo's Maa pronunciation creates humor on several levels. In lines 23 and 24, he raps:

(9)
23 Badala kufuga ng'ombe wapate kula nyama
'Instead of herding cattle in order to get to eat meat'
24 Eti wanafuga ndefu wawe kama Usama
'They grow beards in order to be like Osama [bin Ladin]'

As in a previous example, Ebbo performs the Maa /f/ instead of the Swahili /v/, which does not exist in Maa, replacing the SS *ndevu* 'beards' with the Maa-inflected *ndefu*. Here, Ebbo plays with the multiple uses of the SS verb *kufuga* 'to herd, domesticate, grow'. In line 23, *kufuga* is used in the expression *kufuga ng'ombe* 'to herd cattle', a stereotypical activity of Maasai males. In line 24, the

rapper repeats *kufuga* in reference to another common SS expression, *kufuga ndevu* 'to grow a beard'. He references Osama bin Ladin, both alluding to global events and rhyming with *nyama* 'meat' in the previous line. *Kufuga ndevu* also has a slang meaning of 'to live with a homosexual partner', used to describe gay men (Reuster-Jahn & Kießling 2006:37). Ebbo's pronunciation of the SS *ndevu* as *ndefu* creates irony in that these words are minimal pairs, with *ndefu* an SS word meaning 'something long.' Thus, while *kufuga ndefu* 'to grow something long' is not an expression in SS, here it complements the slang reference to homosexual sex, a taboo topic that often elicits laughter in Tanzanian conversations, and possibly a reference to stereotypes of coastal Muslims as homosexuals. This usage is similar to the "bilingual puns" described by Woolard, who suggests that their humor comes from the juxtaposition of "languages that are usually constructed socially as mutually exclusive, and the humorous move provides a release from the tension of the sociolinguistic opposition" (1998:10). In this case it is not two languages which are juxtaposed, but rather two forms of Swahili, standard and ethnically-marked.

NON-STANDARD SWAHILI (NSS) GRAMMAR

Standard Swahili (SS) is an agglutinative language in which verbs (and other parts of speech) are formed through the joining of morphemes. A typical verb contains a subject marker, tense marker, possibly an object marker, and a verb stem. For example:

(10) ni-na-m-penda = ninampenda
I-pres-him/her-like = I like him/her

In violating SS grammar, Ebbo frequently leaves off the subject marker of verbs, performing the speech of a Maasai learner of Swahili (Drolc 1999). Of the seventy-six conjugated verbs in "Mi Mmasai" (counting those in the chorus only once), forty-four (57.8%) are missing subject markers. When these are present-tense verbs (with the tense marker *-na-*), the absence of a subject marker creates polysemy because in SS *na-* can also function as a first-person singular subject marker in the simple present tense (where *ni-* and *-a-* elide to form *na-*). Consider the example in (11).

(11)

14 Saridalama watu mnasheka file naishi
'In Dar es Salaam you people laugh at the way I live'
15 Nasema hii Mmasai natembea uchi
'They/You say this Maasai walks around naked'
16 Wao wanataka mimi vaa ndisheti kawoshi
'They want me to wear a carwash t-shirt (i.e. a vest)'

In line 15, Ebbo leaves off the subject marker in both verbs, *nasema* '(someone) say(s)' and *natembea* '(someone) walk(s).' Heard or read alone, this line might mean,

'I say this Maasai (i.e. myself), I walk around naked.' Yet the context provided by lines 14 and 16 offer the meaning that the grammar does not: the absent subject marker in line 15 is either the second-person plural *m-* 'you all' repeated from line 14, or the third-person plural *wa-* 'they' that appears in line 16. Yet the polysemy also allows the interpretation that Ebbo is aligning himself with those who stereotype the Maasai for wearing traditional and/or insufficient clothing.

Other examples of NSS grammar in "Mi Mmasai" include adjectives that do not agree with the noun class of the nouns they modify, as shown in (12).

(12)

5h	utamaduni yenye ngufu
	SS: utamaduni wenye nguvu
	'a culture with strength (a strong culture)'
9	maisha mbovu
	SS: maisha mabovu
	'a rotten life'
22	fitu mingi
	SS: vitu vingi
	'a lot of things'

Unlike the dropping of subject markers, the nonstandard use of adjectives does not change the denotational meaning of words nor hinder the listener's comprehension. Rather, it mimics the process by which a non-Bantu speaker acquires a Bantu language, acquiring the stems before the prefixes. Their use here thus adds to Ebbo's performance of a Maasai character who does not speak SS.

PARODYING MISUNDERSTANDING

A fourth aspect of Ebbo's language use is his parodied misunderstanding of SS words and English borrowings. In the first example, Ebbo performatively "misunderstands" the SS word *jinai* 'crime,' taking it for a proper name:

(13)

44	Kama we iko na kosa nakuwa ya Jinai
	'If you make a mistake, it belongs to Crime'
45	Jinai mutu ya wapi kila kosa akatai?
	'Where is Crime from? Every mistake he doesn't deny'
46	Nasingisiwa sana au ni rushwa hatoi?
	'Does he make a lot of excuses or is it bribes he doesn't give?'
47	Nachafuliwa jina na jela apelekwi
	'His name is sullied and he is not sent to jail.'

The humor here comes from the dramatic irony created by the listener's and Ebbo's knowledge of the word *jinai* 'crime,' juxtaposed with his "mistaking" of the word for a person named Jinai who is blamed for simple errors. By addressing this situation through humor and irony, Ebbo offers a subtle criticism of the Dar es Salaam

police, their application of criminality to simple mistakes, and their practice of asking for bribes.

In a similar example, Ebbo "mistakes" the borrowed word *bise* 'busy' for a proper place name:

(14)

63 Na hapa Saridalama ni wapi naitwa "Bise"
'And here in Dar es Salaam where is it that's called Busy'
64 Ukitafuta mutu naambiwa iko bise
'If you look for someone you are told it's (in) busy.'
65 Uko Bise ni wapi? Mbona mimi bado fika?
'Where is Busy? Why haven't I been there yet?'

Here, Ebbo plays on an unusual grammatical construction in SS. Typically in present-tense SS sentences that involve a subject complement, the linking verb *ni* 'am, are' unites the subject and adjectival subject complement, as in (15a).

(15) a. Mama ni mzuri. 'Mother is beautiful.'
b. Mama yuko tayari. 'Mother is ready.'
c. Mama yuko bise. 'Mother is busy.'
d. Mama yuko Dar es Salaam. 'Mother is in Dar es Salaam.'

Yet there are a small number of adjectives that are used as subject complements after the locative verb 'to be' (*-ko*), including *tayari* 'ready' and *bise* 'busy', as in (15b,c). Outside of its use with subject complements, the locative verb 'to be' (*-ko*) is more typically used to indicate the location of the subject, for example, in (15d). Thus Ebbo parodies Maasai misunderstanding of the function of *-ko* in the expression *iko bise* 'it's busy' (SS: *yuko bise* 's/he is busy'), taking it for a location rather than the introduction of an adjective complement. The performed "misunderstanding" suggests not only Maasai ignorance of common Swahili vocabulary but also of the geography of Dar's urban landscape (further suggested by Ebbo's NSS pronunciation of place names throughout the song).

KINYUME

The fifth and final aspect of Ebbo's style I address is the use of *kinyume* 'backwards style.' Kinyume is a Swahili language game similar to *verlan* and Pig Latin, in which syllables are transposed. Its origins are not known, but as early as 1910 kinyume was identified as "an artificial jargon" of Zanzibar (Werner 1910:252). A decade later, Ingrams wrote about it in his study of Zanzibari dialects: "Kinyume is not a dialect, but an enigmatic way of speaking. The commonest form, at which many natives are expert, is the transposition of the last syllable of a word to the beginning. This causes a shift of the accent" (1924:535). Trevor encountered it in 1930 south of Dar es Salaam and speculated that "Zanzibar and the adjacent Tanganyika coast may well be its center of distribution" (1955:96), though

he found examples in Kenya and the Comoros islands as well. The Tanzanian variety he encountered was said to be used only by women and children.

I now compare Ebbo's kinyume examples to those in the literature, in order to show the degree of creativity involved in Ebbo's language game. Consider the examples in (16) from "Mi Mmasai."

(16)

7	samilia[10]
	SS: salimia
	'greet'
8	Saridalama[11]
	SS: /daresalaam/
	'Dar es Salaam (a major city in Tanzania)'
18	Michokeni
	SS: /mikocheni/
	'Mikocheni (a suburb of Dar es Salaam)'
19	Otisabei
	SS: /ositabei/
	'Oysterbay (a wealthy suburb of Dar es Salaam)'
19, 31	Kindononi
	SS: Kinondoni
	'Kinondoni (a suburb of Dar es Salaam)'
56	Motibel
	SS: Mobitel
	'Mobitel (a cell phone company)'
57	Fokodam
	/vodokam/
	'Vodacom (a cell phone company)'

In the limited examples from the literature, kinyume appears to follow a simple rule of syllable transposition. Trevor (1955:96) cites the following example from Mbwa Maji, just south of Dar es Salaam:

(17) SS: Jambo, bwana, hali gani?
kinyume: Mboja, nobwa, liha niga?
'Hey, man, how are you?'

In Trevor's example, syllable order S_1S_2 changes to S_2S_1 through "syllable metathesis" (Lefkowitz 1989:314), a common process of phonological transformation in language games the world over, including verlan (Walker 2006, Weinberger & Lefkowitz 1991), Pig Latin, and Sheng (Githiora 2002). This process partially accounts for Ebbo's production of *Kindononi* in which he changes the internal syllabic order of the SS *Kinondoni* from $S_1S_2S_3S_4$ to $S_1S_3S_2S_4$.

Ingrams (1924:535) provides an additional example from Zanzibar that uses words with more than two syllables:

(18) SS: Ng'ombe wangu amekufa jana.
kinyume: Mbengo nguwa faameku naja.
'My cow died yesterday.'

Ingram's example illustrates syllable methathesis with syllable order changes from $S_1S_2S_3$ to $S_3S_1S_2$; in other words, the finally syllable moves to the syllable-initial position and all other syllables stay in place. Since all of Ebbo's examples are polysyllabic, we can see that Ebbo does not follow the Zanzibari rule for forming polysyllabic kinyume words. In all but one of the rapper's examples the first and last syllables do not shift.

Goyvaerts (1996) also locates kinyume in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a city near the Western border of Tanzania. He writes: "In Kinyume—also known as *Musekembo* or *Kilamanyuzi*—words exhibiting the syllabic structure S_1S_2 undergo a structural change yielding S_2S_1 (similarly, $S_1S_2S_3$ will become $S_3S_2S_1$, etc.)" (Goyvaerts 1996:126). One of Ebbo's examples comes close to the Bakavu kinyume: in his pronunciation of *Saredalama*, he changes the syllabic order of the first four syllables in SS *Dar es Salaam* /daresalaam/ from $S_1S_2S_3S_4$ to $S_3S_2S_1S_4$ and changes the final syllable (S_5) from the VC structure borrowed from Arabic to a more Bantu-sounding CV structure.

Sheng, an "age-marked, urban dialect of Kenyan Swahili whose outer form is pidgin-like" (Githiora 2002:176) also shares features with kinyume. Githiora discusses the use of pig Latin within Sheng and provides five examples. The majority of these examples are bisyllabic, following the same phonological rule as Trevor's examples from coastal Tanzania, that is, a shift from S_1S_2 syllable order to S_2S_1. Yet Githiora (2002:167) includes two examples of polysyllabic words that provide an additional possible phonological transformation, given in (19).

(19) a. SS: anakula
Sheng: analaku
's/he is eating'

b. SS: mmoja
Sheng: mjamo
'one (person)'

In both of these examples from Sheng, the prefixes and infixes are not affected by the phonological rule (e.g. the subject marker prefix *a-* and the tense marker *-na-* in *anakula* and the class 1 noun prefix *m-* in *mmoja*), while the syllables in the stem of the verb or noun shift from S_1S_2 to S_2S_1. None of Ebbo's examples are words with prefixes or infixes, since *salimia* is a verb stem and his other examples are proper names. It appears that he has avoided using kinyume for morphologically complex words.

Unlike the three documented varieties of kinyume and similar processes in Sheng, Ebbo's version of kinyume is based on a phonological rule of consonantal (rather than syllabic) methathesis. Table 1 illustrates the phonological process for the remainder of Ebbo's examples. In all cases here, the second and third consonants shift positions. *Kinondoni* can be considered a case of either syllabic or consonantal metathesis, since its second and third vowels (V_2 and V_3) are both /o/.

TABLE 1. *The phonological processes of Mr. Ebbo's kinyume.*

Standard Swahili pronunciation	Mr. Ebbo's kinyume pronunciation	Phonological process[a]
salimia	samilia	$C_1V_1C_2V_2C_3V_3V_4 \rightarrow C_1V_1C_3V_2C_2V_3V_4$
/mikotʃeni/	/mitʃokeni/	$C_1V_1C_2V_2C_3V_3C_4V_4 \rightarrow C_1V_1C_3V_2C_2V_3C_4V_4$
/ositabei/	Otisabei	$(C_1)V_1C_2V_2C_3V_3C_4V_4V_5 \rightarrow (C_1)V_1C_3V_2C_2V_3C_3V_4V_5$
Kinondoni	Kindononi	$C_1V_1C_2V_2C_3V_3C_4V_4 \rightarrow C_1C_3V_2C_2V_3C_4V_4$
Mobitel	Motibel	$C_1V_1C_2V_2C_3V_3C_4 \rightarrow C_1V_1C_3V_2C_2V_3C_4$
/vodokam/	Fokodam	$C_1V_1C_2V_2C_3V_3C_4 \rightarrow C_1V_1C_3V_2C_2V_3C_4$

[a]Since Swahili has a CV syllabic structure, I inserted an absent C_1 in the example of Oyster Bay /ositabei/, which allows one to see the shared rule among all of the examples listed here.

Overall, it appears that Ebbo's use of kinyume has some similarities to other varieties but also relies on Ebbo's playfulness with a less common phonological rule, consonantal metathesis, which has not previously been documented in kinyume. His creativity contributes to the uniqueness of Ebbo's style.

INTERPRETATIONS

What does Ebbo's use of NSS—in the form of code-switching, Maa-influenced pronunciation of Swahili words, NSS grammar, an ironic misunderstanding of SS words and grammar, and kinyume—add to "Mi Mmasai" and to his signature style? The relationship between language and identity in the song is equivocal and can be understood in (at least) two contradictory ways.

On the one hand, Ebbo's NSS (kinyume in particular) may function like other urban youth languages, language games, hip hop performances, and even anti-languages—deliberately flaunting the "misuse" of SS in order to critique the dominant ideology that SS is superior to NSS. Ebbo's NSS shares the following features with other anti-languages: "a certain degree of flaunting, as well as a significant reshaping of, the standard variety by means of phonological and semantic skewing and … systematic morphological manipulations." Whereas standard languages are associated with "respectable society," anti-languages are associated with "impoverished or outcast groups" (Goyvaerts 1996:127). The Maasai are the quintessential impoverished and outcast group in Tanzania, not only cast as the "noncontemporaneous 'other' " to modern Tanzanians (Schneider 2006:103) and perceived and depicted as "primitive" (Hodgson 2003:212–13), but also with less access to the material benefits of development (Galaty 2002).

NSS may carry with it a certain prestige among the Maasai and other NSS speakers, even though it is perceived as negative by SS speakers. Goyvaerts, in his

examination of Kibalele (an anti-language spoken in the DRC near the Tanzanian border) suggests that such

> (covert) prestige should be explained as a result of the fact that [an anti-language] compensates for the lack of knowledge among its speakers (who have enjoyed no formal education) of any prestigious language… To show off, these speakers may occasionally speak [the anti-language] amongst themselves in public places in order to impress bystanders (and gain some social status by doing so). (1996:128)

Here "bystanders" can be understood as the majority of listeners to Ebbo's music, who will understand his language but be positioned as "other" to it. Ebbo's Maa-inflected Swahili, Maa code-switching, playful misunderstandings of SS words, and NSS grammar, can be understood as "flaunting" and "showing off" precisely because they are so exceptional and marked in relation to the typical language practices of Bongo Flava: SS, code-mixing with English, and urban slang.

Like Swahili slang more generally, Ebbo's NSS fits with the typical profile of urban youth languages and anti-languages:

> where a general attitude of jocular disrespect towards social and linguistic norms entails what one might call disrespectful ways to deal with the linguistic forms that serve as a basis in lexical manipulation. This disrespect is expressed in linguistic shape by [among other features] phonotactic "violence" which distorts the linguistic icons of the 'standard' … (Reuster-Jahn & Kießling 2006:51)

The emphasis on "jocular disrespect" is important here since it allows Ebbo to simultaneously critique and support hegemonic attitudes toward SS, NSS, Maasai ethnicity, and by extension, marked ethnicity more generally. Indeed, his ability to play with Maa and Swahili by rhyming code-switched Maa words with Swahili ones, to create polysemy through his dropping of SS subject markers and NSS pronunciation, to riff on polysemous Swahili grammatical constructions, and to metathesize consonants all point to Ebbo's linguistics skills and verbal virtuosity in both SS and NSS.

On the other hand, Ebbo's performance of Maasai identity remains uncomfortably close to local stereotypes of the Maasai and may therefore lend support to an ideology that critiques those Tanzanians who refuse to abandon their ethnicity in favor of a postethnic version of modernity. One example of such a reading comes from a Tanzanian journalist's comments on "Mi Mmasai":

> [T]he real rap words as churned out by Mr. Ebbo (able), also known as Abel Loshilaa Motika, in his Masai intonation chants, portray the Maasais as some ignorant, backward and totally out of touch, people. … For many years now, various local and foreign NGOs, have been striking it rich in the pretext of doing something or another, for the Masai. So, Mr. Ebbo is simply following suit. … To make the matter worse, he backs all these claims, with a full

> length video recordings [sic], that remind you of those; "The gods must be crazy," movie series! What Mr. Ebbo (able), have not been "able" to realise is that, most people loving this song are Non-Masai fellows, who simply enjoy being reminded that, there are some certain ethnic groups that are more inferior, than theirs. No wonder some smart street fellows have already dubbed the third line of Mr Ebbo's "Mi Masai!" Chorus, by singing in the same intonation; "Na-dumisha Ujinga, ile wengine nakwisha acha!" ("I maintain Stupidity! Something that, others have long abandoned") (Nkwame 2002; spelling, grammar and use of punctuation as in the original)

Nkwame's critique illustrates a reading of Ebbo's style as a mockery of the Maasai similar to Tanzanian comics in which interference from one's ethnic language is stereotyped, mocked, and used to indicate distance from a modern, urban, postethnic "Swahili" identity that is valorized (Thompson 2006). Ebbo's use of Maa code-switching suggests his attachment to his own language and ethnicity and refusal to fit into mainstream Tanzanian language practices, a refusal some may interpret as an inability. His NSS grammar relies on stereotypes of Maasai-influenced Swahili and also creates more than one meaning in the song. His playful misunderstandings of SS vocabulary and grammar call to mind popular stereotypes of the Maasai as poorly educated and ignorant of the urban space in which they are depicted as wandering aimlessly. Likewise, Ebbo's kinyume feeds into stereotypes of Maasai ignorance of SS. Although using it for proper place and brand names helps assure his listeners' understanding of these unusual lexical items, it also plays into stereotypes of Maasai ignorance of the urban, modern space of Dar es Salaam. If it is true that kinyume in coastal Tanzania is a language game of women and children (Trevor 1955), Ebbo's use of it also emasculates the Maasai.

CONCLUSIONS

How is it that these two contradictory readings can coexist? Woolard argues that "bilingual practice can dismantle (but does not simply neutralize) binary distinctions, in this case between language varieties" (1998:6). Her own work suggests, however, that it is not merely "bilingual practice" PER SE but more specifically the HUMOROUS practice of bilingualism that dismantles binary distinctions between languages or language varieties. I would add, too, that Ebbo's use of humor in this context does not merely upset the binary distinctions between SS and NSS (both of which Ebbo knows, indeed MUST know, in order to play with them the way he does), but also between the two interpretations of his work that I mapped out above.

Woolard's (1998) focus on the fundamental undecidability of bilingual parodic texts is useful here as is Johnstone's (1999) work on self parody. Ebbo's performance of ethnicity through his NSS is open to multiple interpretations depending on the social positioning and ethnolinguistic identification of the audience. His

extensive use of NSS in a public arena both marks his identification with Maasai ethnicity and disrupts dominant language ideologies that are used to disparage the Maasai; and yet some take his work to be based in an anti-Maasai attitude, hearing his stylings as yet another biting parody of the most stereotyped ethnic group in Tanzania. It is impossible to discern whether it is a out-group Swahili (zed) or an in-group Maasai voice—in other words, Ebbo or his narrator—that comments on Maasai who bring an impure linguistic code to the urban modern space of postethnic Swahili identity. An equivocal parody, Ebbo's stylized performance of the Maasai rapper simultaneously offers both a "purist mockery" of non-Standard Swahili and a critique of Swahili linguistic hegemony. "The ironizing voice is ambiguous and the comedy is bivalent, simultaneously heard differently by different segments of the audience" (Woolard 1998:22–23), and therefore undecidable.

For these reasons, we cannot place too much stock in Ebbo's romantic claims to represent the beauty of, and his respect for, the Maasai. While acknowledging Ebbo's stated intent is a necessary part of the hiphopographic goal of engaging "the cultural agents of the Hip Hop Culture-World directly, revealing rappers as critical interpreters of their own culture" (Alim, Meghelli, & Spady 2006:28), we should not mistake Ebbo's agency for subversiveness. While he has successfully carved out and created a space for himself within the Bongo Flava scene, the Maasai as a whole still remain marginalized within Tanzania, and it remains unclear whether Ebbo's parody of local stereotypes has been complicit in their marginalization. The humorous content and parodic use of NSS in "Mi Mmasai" simultaneously create the sense of Ebbo as a skilled rapper and of his Maasai persona as a stereotypical Maasai who "has not made progress," belying a simplistic interpretation of Ebbo and the representations of Tanzanian ethnicity he offers.

NOTES

*This work was supported by a research grant from the Globalization Research Center-Africa (GRCA) and a travel grant from the James S. Coleman African Studies Center, both at UCLA. An early version of the study was presented at the University of Florida's 2009 Gwendolen M. Carter Conference, African Creative Expressions: Mother Tongue and Other Tongues; I thank the organizers and participants for stimulating conversations. In addition, I am grateful to Mr. Ebbo, who agreed to talk with me in Tanga; to my research assistant Michelle Oberman who helped with proofreading; to my colleague Saning'o Milliary, who proofread and commented on the Maa portions of the transcript; and to Barbara Johnstone and two anonymous reviewers for constructive criticism on an earlier version of the article.

[1]A note on names and their spellings: in English, *Maasai* refers to Maasai people, *Maa* to their language. In Swahili a Maasai person is called *Mmasai*, and this spelling sometimes carries over into Tanzanian-written English, but without the Swahili class 1 noun prefix, hence, *Masai.* The language is referred to by Swahili speakers as either *Kimasai* or *Kimaa.*

[2]Mr. Ebbo strikes yet another funny musical chord. *Arusha Times*, 21 August 2004. Online: http://www.arushatimes.co.tz/2004/33/sports_4.htm (accessed December 2, 2008).

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]While other sources capitalize kinyume, indicating that it is a proper name for a language, I leave it lower case in order to suggest that is a speech style rather than a language.

[7]Saning'o Milliary, e-mail message to author, February 12, 2009.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Where orthography matches IPA pronunciation, I have included only the SS orthography.

[11]Also found in lines 14, 22, 39, 41, 63, 67.

[12]*Kiloriti* is a root (of *Acacia abyssinica*) that Maasai use as a stimulant (Lehman 1982:341) or tonic (Saning'o Milliary, e-mail message to author, February 12, 2009) that helps with digestion (Ondaatje 1998:150).

[13]Reuster-Jahn and Kießling (2006:39–40) explain that *ndisheti kawoshi* is a slang term for 'sleeveless top' that is "metonymically transferred from English *carwash* [and] based on the habit of men to wear sleeveless T-shirts when washing cars in order to prevent their clothes from getting wet."

[14]*Ndombolo* is a Congolese music and dance, a subgenre of *soukous.*

[15]*Kiwasense* (*kiwazenze*) is a coastal Tanzanian dance style (Saning'o Milliary, e-mail message to author, February 12, 2009).

[16]*Amishenengule* is a Congolese dance style (Saning'o Milliary, e-mail message to author, February 12, 2009).

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APPENDIX: "MI MMASAI"

Below is the transcript of the lyrics to "Mi Mmasai" by Mr. Ebbo, from the album *Fahari Yako* (2002), transcribed and translated by Katrina Daly Thompson.

KEY:
Bold indicates non-Standard Swahili pronunciation.
Underlining indicates non-standard Swahili grammar.
Double underlining indicates *kinyume* 'backwards style'.
Italics indicate Maa vocabulary.

1	Yo!! Sikili**s**a napurisendi	Yo!! Listen, I present
2	M. J. Porodakishan	M. J. Production
3	Kwa **waf**ijana na wa**sei**	For the young and old
4	Nakuja kama *lowaru kerikeri*.	I come like a leopard.
5	chorus:	
	a. Mi′ Mmasai **b**ana nasema 'Mi′ Mmasai'	a. I'm Maasai, man, I insist, 'I'm Maasai'
	b. Ni kitu naji**f**unia Masai fahari yangu	b. It's something I'm proud of; Maasai(ness) is my pride
	c. Mi′ Mmasai **b**ana nasema 'Mi′ Mmasai'	c. I'm Maasai, man, I insist, 'I'm Maasai'
	d. Naruhusu kushangaa kwa wageni na w**a**nyeji	d. I allow visitors and locals being surprised
	e. Mi′ Mmasai **b**ana nasema 'Mi′ Mmasai'	e. I'm Maasai, man, I insist, 'I'm Maasai'

	f. Nadumisha mila ile wengine lishashindwa	f. I preserve the culture others have failed
	g. Mi′ Mmasai **b**ana nasema 'Mi′ Mmasai'	g. I'm Maasai, man, I insist, 'I'm Maasai'
	h. Utamaduni yenye ngu**f**u liobaki Af**u**rika.	h. A culture with strength which remains in Africa.
6	Nimtume nani kule kwetu *Longido*?	Whom should I send to my home in Longido?
7	Aende samilia kule kwa Mama *Toto*	To go and greet there at Mama Toto's place
8	Ambia yeye Saridalama mejaa joto	Tell her that Dar es Salaam is full of heat
9	Maisha mbovu Bongo kila siku ndio musoto	Life is rotten in Bongo; every day is a struggle
10	Mimi mpaka wa leo bado kamata pesa	Myself, up to now I haven't gotten money
11	Na ka**s**i ninafanya ni ya kulinda fitasa	And the work which I do is to guard door hinges
12	Sipati ma**s**iwa, nyama, kiloriti mekosa	I don't get milk, meat, I miss *kiloriti*[12]
13	Nakula ma**ragi** na ugali ngumu kume**s**a	I eat beans and ugali is hard to swallow
14	Saridalama watu mna**sh**eka **f**ile naishi	In Dar es Salaam you people laugh at the way I live
15	Nasema hii Mmasai natembea uchi	They/You say this Maasai walks around naked
16	Wao wanataka mimi vaa **ndi**sheti kawoshi	They want me to wear a carwash t-shirt[13]
17	Au masuruali kama mimi tarishi	Or pants like I'm a messenger
18	Temeka, Ilala, Ma**k**omeni na Michokeni,	Temeke, Ilala, Magomeni, and Mikocheni
19	Otisabei, Mwenge pamoja na Kindononi	Oyster Bay, Mwenge, and Kinondoni
20	Pia kuna Sin**s**a, Man**s**ese na Burugunyi	Also there is Sinza, Manzese, and Buruguni
21	Nawe**s**a kupotea kama nakosa ramani	You can get lost if you don't have a map
22	**F**itu **m**ingi nashangaza hii Saridalama	Many things are surprising in this Dar es Salaam
23	Badala kufuga ng'ombe wapate kula nyama	Instead of herding cattle in order to get to eat meat

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24	Eti wanafuga nde**f**u wawe kama Usama	They grow beards in order to be like Osama
25	Na bado **mu**tu hiyo nasema ati mesoma	And still that person says he has studied
26	Watu nasema baada ya **s**iki ni fajara	They say "baada ya dhiki, faraja"
27	Maisha hapa Bongo la**s**ima uwe imara	Life here in Bongo requires that you be strong
28	Ukiwa legelege nawesa pata ma**s**ara	If you are relaxed you can get harmed
29	Na **mu**li utakonda kama mufupa ya panya.	And your body will waste away like rat bones.
30	(chorus)	(chorus)
31	Na ile Kindononi imegeuka kuwa Kongo	And that Kinondoni has changed into Congo
32	Kila kona Wakongo wanaimba ndombolo	On every corner the Congolese are singing *ndombolo*[14]
33	Wanapenda "Masai, hero! *Supha nemeyelo*!	They like, "Maasai, hello how are you?"
34	**Ny**ele meweka dawa nafanana ya **mus**ee	They dye their hair; it resembles that of an old man
35	Ebu fundisha mimi kucheza kiwasense	Please teach me the *kiwasense*[15] dance
36	Au ile nyingine naitwa amishenengule	Or that other one called *amishenengule*[16]
37	**Wafi**jana wa Bongo ingine ni mabito**si**	The Bongo youth, some of them are hip
38	Navaa na kupende**s**a **a**pana iko na ka**si**	They dress and look good and have no work
39	Saridalama jua inachoma kama pasi	In Dar es Salaam the sun burns like an iron
40	Kama **a**pana oga hawe**si** pata singi**si**	If he doesn't shower he can't get sleep
41	Saridalama hata kama ni maji **nauswa**	In Dar es Salaam even if it's water it's sold
42	Gari ina dere**f**a naongo**s**wa na mataa	A car has a driver which is led by the lights
43	Ile taa **na**jua **s**aidi kuliko dere**f**a	Those lights know more than the driver
44	Kama we iko na kosa nakuwa ya Jinai	If you make a mistake, it belongs to Crime
45	Jinai **mu**tu ya wapi kila kosa **a**katai?	Where is Crime from? Every mistake he doesn't deny.

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46	Nasingi**s**iwa sana au ni rushwa hatoi?	Does he make a lot of excuses or is it a bribe he doesn't give?
47	Nachafuliwa jina na jela **a**pelekwi	His name is sullied and he is not sent to jail
48	Mama *yeyoo* nashindwa andikia wewe mbalai	Mama *yeyoo* I'm not able to write you a letter
49	Sababu wewe na**a**ma**a**ma na ng'ombe e**f**iridei	'cause you move with the cattle everyday
50	Nataka kwenda **S**an**s**iba lakini siamini	I want to go to Zanzibar but I don't believe
51	Gari ya kwenye maji nawe**s**a ku**s**ama chini	A boat can sink down
52	*Singiri* nakula mimi ni aibu kwa Morani	Fish eat me; that's shameful for a warrior
53	Bora simba ale mimi si samaki jamani	It's better that a lion eat me, not a fish please!
54	Sina nafasi ya kufa *matumoki toii*!	I don't have time to die; I'm not ready!
55	(chorus)	(chorus)
56	Pigia mimi simu meshanunua Motibel	Call me; I already bought a Mobitel cell phone
57	Au pigia **F**okodam uli**s**ia ole Molel	Or call Vodacom and ask for Ole Molel
58	**Mu**tu ingine nasema Masai watu duni	Some one says the Maasai are inferior people
59	**A**we**s**i amini sasa napurisendi fani	He can't believe now I present successfully
60	Mpa mimi bia ile naitwa Kibo Gold	Give me that beer called Kibo Gold
61	Au ndugu yake Foma Gold baridi	Or it's relative, a cold Foma Gold
62	Natanga**s**wa sana nalewesha **s**aidi ile	It's well advertised that it's more intoxicating
63	Na hapa Saridalama ni wapi naitwa "Bise"	And here in Dar es Salaam where is it that's called Busy
64	Ukitafuta **mu**tu naambiwa iko bise	If you look for someone you are told it's (in) Busy
65	Uko bise ni wapi? Mbona mimi bado fika?	Where is Busy? Why haven't I been there yet?
66	Nasikia Bise tu na mwaka nakatika	I just hear "Busy" and the year is ending
67	Kweli Saridalama watoto na**a**ribika	Truly in Dar es Salaam children are being ruined

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68	**A**ogopi mara**s**i napenda kuruka ruka	They don't fear diseases; they just like jumping around
69	**Mu**tajirusha sana na mwisho **mu**taanguka	You will throw yourself high and in the end you will fall
70	Shuka **s**ima motokaa takuja kuumbuka	Come down, turn off the car, (or else) you will get hurt
71	Jana mekwenda kunywa soda kwa ho**tr**eli	Yesterday I went to drink a soda in a restaurant
72	Soda ililetwa nikaweka kwa kibakuli	The soda was brought and I put it in a small bowl
73	Nikaonja hapana iko su**g**ari kamili	I tasted it and there was no sugar at all
74	Nikataka niongese ara **f**ijiko mbili	Then I wanted to add two more spoonfuls
75	Au kijiko moja isiwe kama asali	Or one spoon lest it like honey
76	Ati watu nasema Mmasai **mu**shamba kweli!	And people say that a Maasai is truly a country bumpkin!
77	Soda bila su**g**ari na bado inau**s**wa **g**ali	Soda without sugar and it's still sold expensively
78	Nanipa chupa moja inau**s**wa mia mbili	He gives me one bottle it's sold for 200 (shillings)
79	Soda kama maji bado imejaa magadi	Soda like water still filled with soda ash
80	Chungu kama *ngorotiki* **mu**nausa makusudi	You intentionally sell it bitter like diarrhea
81	Ati **mu**nasema ni kilab soda.	Yet you claim it's club soda.
82	(chorus)	(chorus)

(Received 8 April 2009; revision received 4 November 2009;
accepted 20 November 2009; final revision received 3 December 2009)