

## **Contact between Austronesian and African Languages: A Short Overview**

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Contact between Austronesian and African languages took many forms.

Most noticeable is the Bantu element in Malagasy. It mainly consists of influence from coastal East Bantu languages, and more particularly from languages belonging to the Sabaki group. Kiswahili had a major lexical impact as an important trade language and the vehicular language for the introduction of Islam in Madagascar's Northwest. Comorian languages were also a source of lexical influence, being spoken on islands constituting the gateway from Madagascar to the African mainland, and therefore to some extent to the external world in general. Earlier, there may have been other forms of Sabaki involved (closely related to Kiswahili and Comorian languages but not identical to them). As to non-Sabaki Bantu languages, Makhuwa became a lingua franca among East African slaves in Madagascar (a large proportion of whom came from Mozambique). Its impact on Malagasy was apparently limited.

There may also be a substratum from a non-Austronesian and non-Bantu language in Malagasy, which would support the theory that Madagascar already had a population prior to the arrival of Austronesian speakers.

Finally, the Austronesian languages Malagasy and Malay also left their traces in Bantu languages (a fact which has been systematically underestimated among Africanists).