

The vocabularies of Vazimba and Beosi: do they represent the languages of the pre- Austronesian populations of Madagascar?



[DRAFT CIRCULATED FOR COMMENT]

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. THE MIKEA	1
2. LEXICAL DATA ON THE LANGUAGES OF THE MIKEA.....	1
2.1 Birkeli.....	1
2.2 Vazimba	2
2.3 Beosi.....	3
3. CONCLUSIONS	9
REFERENCES.....	9

TABLES

Table 1. Vazimba lexical data.....	2
Table 2. Beosi lexical data	3
Table 3. Beosi circumlocutory phrases	8
Table 4. Malagasy terms metathesised in Beosi	8
Table 5. Mixed Malagasy/Beosi phrases.....	8

1. The Mikea

Scattered among the Malagasy live groups of hunter-gatherers variously known as the Mikea or Vazimba¹ (Birkeli 1936; Molet 1960; Dina & Hoerner 1976; Fanony 1986; Yount et al. 2001; Tucker 2003). These peoples are small in stature, and stereotyped as darker than the neighbouring farmers and herders, although this may be simply the consequence of their way of life. In general they have a tendency to assimilate to agricultural communities, and all speak varieties of Malagasy. However, there is evidence for a lexical substrate distinct from both Bantu and Austronesian. Johnston & Birkeli (1920) describe some groups and give samples of the languages of the Vazimba and Baūsi [=Beosy] languages. The few lexical items they record do not apparently resemble any other known language. Later on, Birkeli (1936) gave a much more comprehensive account of these two groups, although as a rare document printed in Madagascar, this has not had the attention it deserves. Stiles (1991, 1998) was later able to confirm at least some of the Birkeli material.

Anthropologists have typically argued that the Mikea are *not* the descendants of 'Vazimba' foragers but fugitive or reinvented groups of existing populations (e.g. Yount et al. 2001; Tucker 2003; Dugal 2004)² and Blench (1998) supports this view for the pygmoid groups of the Central African rainforest. It is true that the traditions of the Mikea might be spurious, as accounts of resident 'small' populations are also common on the African mainland, but Malagasy traditions do refer to them as already in place at the period of the first migrations. The outcome for the Mikea has been mixed; in practice they exist as marginal outgroups. However, where they are no longer present among the Merina, they became transmogrified into spirits or mythical kings whose domains the Austronesians inherited. A very similar process has taken place in Twa-Tutsi relations in Burundi. A split solution is also possible; some Mikea share a common origin with the Malagasy while others represent the traces of the primary forager incursions argued for in this paper.

The purpose of this paper³ is to present the Vazimba and Beosi data in a modern format, to make it more easily comparable with other types of lexical data and to suggest an interpretation of the linguistic situation. Blench (2007) has suggested that there were foraging populations on Madagascar prior to the incursions of the Austronesians in the 5th (?) century. This argument is essentially based on palaeoclimatic and palaeozoogeographic results, but it seems from the material presented in this paper that there may also be an a priori case for a linguistic substrate.

2. Lexical data on the languages of the Mikea

2.1 Birkeli

Johnston & Birkeli (1920) and more particularly Birkeli (1936) present quite detailed information on the different groups of Vazimba and Beosi, their locations and subsistence, though within a patchy framework that makes the ethnographic data somewhat difficult to disinter. Birkeli (1936) seems to want to present an argument that the Beosi specifically are linked to the African mainland and in particular the rainforest

¹ The literature is confusing on the name of these people. In some sources they are treated as the same, in other they are distinguished, the Vazimba being the semi-mythical inhabitants of the island and the Mikea their present-day descendants.

²See <http://beedl.anthro.uga.edu/mikea> which says;

Many people in Madagascar class Mikea among the *tompontany taloha* (past landowners)... Some believe Mikea to be *Vazimba*, ghosts or living relicts of a primitive people. Others believe them to be *Hako* ("hidlers"), or *Lampihazo* (literally "tree huggers"), subhuman forest creatures who lack society, language, or technology. The people who call themselves Mikea today are not Vazimba, Hako, or Lampihazo. Mikea are Malagasy people. They speak the Malagasy language and share many customs and beliefs with other Malagasy.

The Ph.D. thesis by Dugal (2004), which is a discussion of the identity of the Vazimba, fails to reference the Birkeli material. This rather suggests that the Mikea have become a cultural icon in themselves, disconnected from ethnographic reality, the subject of incestuous seminar-room debate. One is rather tempted to conclude with Professor Kirk in C.S. Lewis' novels, 'What do they teach young people in schools today?'

³ Thanks to Martin Walsh for comparative observations on the Bantu-related vocabulary, and to Sander Adelaar for notes on some of the Austronesian items.

pygmies. At any rate, his paper suggests that there are marked differences between the lowland Vazimba and the highland Beosi and that the material on a residual or substrate language is much richer for the Beosi. In this paper I have gone through all the material and presented the Vazimba and Beosi lexical data in two separate tables with etymological comments where appropriate. The underlying thrust of the paper is to present differences with standard Malagasy, typically Sakalava here, and so basic vocabulary, such as numerals, is not given. Birkeli is very inconsistent with his vowel transcriptions and presents the same data with different orthographic renderings in different parts of the paper. I have chosen to present all his forms, but aligned in a single entry in Table 2. His data also includes a great deal of information on toponyms and social organisational terms such as clan names, but since these are not glossed they cannot be used for lexical comparison, so are omitted here.

2.2 Vazimba

Table 1 presents all the Vazimba lexical data scattered through the text.

Table 1. Vazimba lexical data

Vazimba	Gloss	Comment
beretri	salted cooked fish frequently used in offerings	
bozi	dish without meat	
goma	drum	cf. Swahili <i>ngoma</i> 9/10 ‘drum’ < Proto-Bantu
kabona	noise made when beating the surface of the water	
kadradraka	fish sp.	
katakata, kotsakotsa	dish of cut up bananas	cf. Swahili vb. <i>-kata</i> ‘to cut’, redupl. <i>-katakata</i> < restricted NE Coast Bantu distribution, similar in Indian languages and Arabic acc to Nurse & Hinnebusch (1993); also Proto-Eastern Cushitic <i>*k’ad’-</i> ‘to cut’, Proto-West Rift Southern Cushitic <i>*quutl</i> ‘to cut up, cut into pieces’
kimana	fish-trap	
kimorora	fish sp.	
kinambara	morning star	cf. Swahili <i>mbalamwezi</i> 9/10 ‘moonlight’, <i>mbala-</i> < <i>-waa</i> ‘to shine brightly’ < Proto-Bantu
kinga	bay	cf. Swahili <i>kinga</i> 9/10 (7/8) ‘screen, shelter, protection, defence’ < <i>-kinga</i> ‘to protect by screening’ < Proto-Bantu
kipampa	float	
kitseba	float made of reeds	
koho	hollow pestle (<i>pilon</i> Fr.)	
komba hara	chorus	
kondokondo	‘buoy’ probably here flotation gourd	
lani	finished, used up	
maisa	lure	
mokagi	cassava and ? pistache cooked together	
mokije	fish sp.	
robaroba	banana dish	
rondra	chasing fish to drive them into traps	
soananay	chorus	
sorondro	fish and bananas cooked together	

taotao fototse	marriage	
tarik'osi	marriage	cf. Dahalo taarik- 'to join together', or ? Malagasy <i>tarika</i> 'to drag, pull along' + <i>osy</i> 'goat'
tsibarandanda	fish sp.	
tsiotany	measure of three armslengths	
tsoborida	like <i>mokagi</i> but cooked in milk	

Birkeli also presents a couple of rather obscure phrases;

rava ny zaza	the child is dissolved [?]
lanin'dreo bevahi	they have drunk bevahi

2.3 Beosi

Table 2 presents all the glossed lexical data in Birkeli (1936). The asterisks against some items are in the source and are said to represent less trustworthy terms, although Birkeli does not say why this should be so. The etymologies in the comment column are Birkeli's observations; he does not usually give the Bantu language he considers the source so this is sometimes difficult to check. The question marks are added by me. I have retained the French term where I am not absolutely sure of the English translation as this is sometimes local French.

There are a large number of words with what are assumed to be prefixes, *be-* (bV-) and *ki-*. In standard Malagasy, these would correspond to augmentative and diminutive. Other prefixes apparently from Malagasy are *tsi-* and *fi-* (noun-forming). It is therefore likely that the root is what follows.

Table 2. Beosi lexical data

Beosi	Gloss	Comment
ahenda	to go	cf. Swahili <i>-enda</i> to go < Proto-Bantu
alabone	flower producing honey	probably <i>ala</i> 'forest' plus <i>bone</i> . ? cf. <i>bonetaka</i> (Bezanozano) <i>Croton goudotii</i>
anatana	tenrec	cf. Malagasy (Merina) <i>tantana-tantaroalela-tanta (raolana)</i> Fork-marked lemurs, <i>Phaner</i> spp. < <i>tanta</i> 'lemur sp.' + <i>roa</i> 'two' + <i>lela</i> 'the tongue' (Richardson 1885)
arakasa	type of dish	
bada	person	cf. Proto-Iraqw <i>*badiissee</i> 'old men' (> Iraqw, Gorowa <i>bariise</i>), cognate with Proto-Sam <i>*baro</i> , Oromo <i>baru</i> 'to learn' (> Digo <i>barobaro</i> 5/6 'youth'). See under <i>barera</i> for an alternative etymology. Also possibly (by metathesis) Aasax <i>dobon</i> 'young man' reflected in N. Somali <i>dob</i> 'bachelor'; similarly Taita <i>mdaβana</i> 'initiated youth' < extinct Taita Cushitic
baiaty, nibaty	hunting <i>kofy</i>	identification of <i>kofy</i> ?
bakàkà	terrified, stupefied	cf. Merina, Tanala <i>gaga</i> 'stupefied'
bakiniembe	tenrec	
barera*	woman	cf. Mbugu, Pare <i>mborá</i> 1/2 'girl' (= Chaga woman); Dahalo <i>b'óóra</i> (singulative <i>b'óóreete</i>) 'boy'; Ma'a <i>mburatú</i> 'boy'. See also <i>bada</i> above for an alternative etymology
befalohe	eel	? Malagasy prefix <i>be-</i> 'much, many, numerous, great' etc.
belanzaha	full of honey	? <i>be-</i> + <i>landzaha</i> . Probably identical with next entry - two transcriptions of the same word
belanjaho	well filled honeycombs	See above
belondo, belundu	not pubescent	? <i>be-</i> + <i>londo-lundu</i>
betampy	indri, sifaka	? <i>be-</i> + <i>tampy</i>

Beesi	Gloss	Comment
bikahoy	convulsions, child sickness	
bodja	tree	n.b. 'dj' Gallicised transcription, probably /dʒ/, i.e. Malagasy 'j'. ? cf. <i>bojo</i> (Tsimihety) <i>Adansonia bozy</i>
boitse, buitse	to run	
bokahoho,	dog	cf. Swahili <i>mbwa koko</i> 9/10 'feral dog' < <i>-koko</i> 'wild, bush' < EA Bantu at least
bukahuhu		idem. in Betsileo, Bara, Mahalafy
bokala, bukala	sweet potato	? <i>bu-</i> prefix plus Merina <i>luha</i> 'head'
boloko, buluku	head	
burindzi	dish (food type)	
dahalo, dahalu	inhabitants of the forest	cf. N. Swahili <i>mdahalo</i> 1/2 'Dahalo people' (who call themselves <i>d'áko</i>). The Dahalo are foragers living in the interior of the Kenya coast, who speak a Cushitic language which includes click in its phonology (Tosco 1981). An alternative etymology, however, the <i>da-</i> element is related to <i>bada</i> 'person' and <i>halo</i> is <i>*haolo</i> 'forest' in Malagasy. ??? see haolo below
empoempo	person, man	
endri	mother	= <i>endry</i> , listed as a 'provincial' term in the Merina dictionary
enene	low IQ individuals	
falà	lemur (mongoz ?)	
falahu	of honey	cf. Alagwa, Burunge <i>*fatl</i> 'to collect honey', <i>*fatlima</i> 'collected honey', with Cushitic cognates incl. Somali <i>*fad</i> 'to scoop'. See also <i>moa falaho</i> and <i>fiahoa~fiahua</i>
famonta	clothes	
famuuta*	in festival mood	
feni	to hide, conceal	
fiahoa, fiahua	well filled honeycombs	Possibly related to <i>falahu</i>
fikopoke,	hat	
fikupuke		
fisapé	bee	See also <i>moa fisapé</i>
fitso, fitsu	hardened wooden point used as a weapon	cf. Swahili <i>ufito</i> 11/9 'thin stick', esp. in house-building. Restricted NE Coast Bantu distribution
gevo	tenrec (<i>Ericulus setosus</i>)	though see <i>ngevu</i> (below)
gigigigi	be uneasy	
gomahita	arrowroot and cassava cooked in milk	
hadza	to eat	? < Bantu which has <i>*díà</i> for 'to eat' in zones EFHKL
hamundru	indri hunting	
haolo	feral cattle	= Merina 'wild, untamed', esp. cattle
harafa	type of dish	
hevohevo,	marsh	
hevuhevu		
huihui	taboo	
jabo, jabu	to eat	
jahamoke,	person	cf. Shona <i>jaha</i> 5/6 'young man of marriageable age' (Hannan 1984); similar in other Zone S languages (Johnston 1922); but see also Malagasy <i>jakoe~rajako</i> < French <i>jacquot</i> (<i>faire le jacques, faire le singe</i>), an abusive term for lemurs
jahamuke		
jangalea	to go hunting at dusk	
jea	open, sandy	

Beosi	Gloss	Comment
	country	
jebo	bad	
jia, jea	raffia fibre for weaving	
kabokaboke	fishing with poison	
kadebo, kadebu	wild boar	cf. Dahalo <i>te:βú</i> ‘male warthog’ (Ehret et al. 1989)
kadibake	perjury	
kalanía	perjury	
kanenge	mother	cf. Mbugu <i>énga</i> 1a/2 ‘father’s sister’ < Pare <i>énga</i> 1a/2
karioke	<i>tromba</i> spirit	
kasahala	small cooking pot	
kasahedzi	small cooking pot	
kazake	wild, unreasonable	
kazani	wild boar	
kea	male	
kea	to not be, be none	
kea	nothing	
kelo, kelu	house, dwelling	cf. Iraqw <i>qeedi</i> ‘small house type’, <i>qoori</i> ‘round, mud-brick, thatched house’
kianja	installation, court	cf. Merina <i>kiandza</i> ‘courtyard’; Swahili <i>kiwanja</i> 9/10 ‘courtyard, open area’ < Proto-Bantu
kidroa	forest tree which yields water with edible root	cf. <i>kidroa</i> (Sakalava, Bara, Mahalafy) ‘ <i>Mascarenhasia arborescens</i> ’
kidzo, kidzù	mountain top	cf. Swahili <i>juu</i> ‘above’ < Proto-Bantu
kilikie	lemur sp.	? Malagasy <i>kely</i> ‘little’ + <i>kokia</i> ‘Ring-tailed mongoose, <i>Galidia elegans</i> ’
kilindo, kilindu	clearing the brush to hunt sifakas, hunting sifakas and indris [?]	
kimoky, kimuki	vine sp.	cf. <i>kimoky</i> (Bara, Sakalva, Mahalafy) ‘ <i>Ipomoea</i> sp.’ perh. ‘ <i>I. desmophylla</i> ’ Choisy
kinango	side	
kineila	tree whose fibres are used like cloth	cf. <i>kininala</i> (Sakalava) ‘ <i>Stereospermum arcuatum</i> ’, forest tree
kineko	trap, hunting for crowned lemurs	
kipapa	path, small cave	
kisahala	cooking pot	
kisio	hardened wooden point used as a weapon	cf. Iraqw <i>tsitsihhi</i> ‘gravel; spear or arrow point’; Qwadza ‘ <i>tsatsa</i> ’ arrowhead
kiso, kokona	precipice	
kitra	hunting net	? another version of <i>kitreko</i> (below)
kitreko, kitreku	fish-trap	? cf. Swahili <i>mtego</i> 3/4 ‘trap’ < Proto-Bantu. See <i>toga</i>
kitro, kitruu	small worn hoe	
kitrola, kitroli	marriage ceremony	
kitsaoe	lemur which smells bad	cf. Swahili <i>kichawi</i> 7/8 dim. of <i>mchawi</i> 1/2 ‘witch’ (contrast Merina <i>mosavy</i> ‘witchcraft, sorcery’, perh. borrowed separately from a NE Coast Bantu source)
kitsy, kitsi	to extract honey with a <i>toga</i>	
kivohy, kivuhi	shelter, inside of house, woman	

Beisi	Gloss	Comment
kivondrahoho	lemur sp.	
kizahedzi	cooking pot	
kizaro, kizaru	house, dwelling	cf. Taita <i>gharo</i> ‘bachelors’ hut’, regional item also in Central Kenya Bantu e.g. Meru <i>gaaru</i> ‘warriors’ dormitory’ < ? Cushitic source
kizodzomaito	?	
koke	father	See following entry
koko	forest spirits	< Sakalava <i>koko</i> ‘tree spirits’ (Goedefroit 1998) but also Comorian <i>makoko</i> ‘ancestors’ (Chamanga & Gueunier 1979). cf. Proto-West Rift Southern Cushitic * <i>akookoo</i> great-grandfather, Proto-Iraqw * <i>aakoo</i> old man, Iraqw <i>aakoo</i> grandfather, master, old man; Aasax <i>koko</i> grandmother, also Oromo <i>akóokoo</i> grandchild, Sandawe <i>kòkó</i> grandfather. Regional <i>Wanderwort</i> .
kolohote,	vine sp.	cf. <i>kolohoto</i> (Sakalava, Bestimisaraka) vines used for extracting fibres, typically <i>Obetia radula</i> & <i>Bosqueia boiviniana</i>
kuluhute		
koronoke	honeycomb	cf. Swahili <i>uki</i> 11 ‘honey’ < Proto-Sabaki <i>Wuki</i> 14 ‘honey’ < Proto-Bantu
lamalama	night encampment	
lea	bee	
Limihoasa	very wise person	cf. Proto-Northwest Rift Southern Cushitic * <i>diim</i> ‘to grow old’
lompolompo	out of breath	
lufu, milofo	to eat	cf. Tanala <i>nòfo</i> ‘flesh’ and Swahili <i>nofu</i> 9/10 ‘lean piece of meat’, <i>mnofu</i> 3/4 ‘flesh, meat’. cf. Dahl (1988: 103). Perh. originally (by metathesis) from an Eastern Cushitic source, cf. Proto-West Rift * <i>fu’unay-f’u’umay</i> ‘meat’, an early transfer from a pre-Oromoid language
makabalake*	vine sp., tree sp.	
maku	you sg.	
mana	child	cf. Swahili <i>mwana</i> 1/2 ‘child, infant’ < Proto-Bantu
manaka,	dangerous aquatic	
manake	lizard	
manamo	fishing with poison	
manara*	red	
mané	bad smell	? cf. Merina <i>amany</i> ‘urine’, also Swahili <i>manii</i> 6 ‘semen’ < Arabic
mangoke	black, dark	
masea	sun	cf. Ma’a <i>i’azé</i> 5/6 ‘sun, day’; <i>m’azé</i> 3/4 ‘midday, sun, day’ < Mbugu, Pare <i>izúva</i> 5/6 ‘sun’ < Proto-Bantu
mietsy	to stand up	
miteke	there is/are	
moa falaho	honey	see under <i>falahu</i>
moa fisapé	bee	see under <i>fisapé</i>
mokara, mukara	to look for	
montsitse,	bad	
munitse*		
motselo,	cut potatoes	
mutselu		
muetsi	to dress in	
nao kea!	Well!	
nao mako	Well! applied to someone senior	
ngevu	animal sp.	though see <i>gevo</i> (above). cf. Malagasy <i>angavo~angavy</i> ‘fruit bats, Pteropodidae’; Comorian (Maore) <i>ngava</i> ‘civet, wild cat’, Swahili (Zanzibar & Mombasa) <i>ngawa</i> ‘civet sp(p).’; cf. also Sandawe <i>gáábéé</i> ‘Senegal galago, <i>Galago senegalensis</i> ’ (Blench & Walsh 2009)
otadredzi	cave	

Beosi	Gloss	Comment
oteke	female genitals, vagina	cf. Dahalo <i>t'ééŕe</i> 'body hair'; or ? Iraqw <i>takeetoo</i> 'initiated girls'
papy	fish-poison	
parapatavo	<i>mouffette</i> (Fr.) skunk ?	name not in other mammal lists
piza	tree, fruit sp.	
popo, pupuu	type of food dish	
ramy, rami	vine sp. with a bad smell	cf. <i>ramy</i> (Merina, Betsileo etc.) ' <i>Canarium boivini</i> , <i>C. madagascariense</i> ', not vines but odoriferous tree spp.
redzi	bad	
rihiake, rihiaku	cannabis	
riri	precipice	cf. Proto-Iraqw <i>*diindirimo</i> 'hill, plateau', Iraqw <i>dindirimoo</i> 'elevated land', linked to Proto-Sam <i>*dundum</i> anthill
roha [?], ruha	valley	cf. Proto-West Rift Southern Cushitic <i>*duuxa</i> 'ditch', Iraqw <i>duxa</i> 'steep, small valley' (> Chaga <i>ruka</i> 'country' (Johnston 1922))
rozo, ruzu	to drink	
saboa, sabua	spear with iron tip	cf. Swahili 9/10 <i>shaba</i> 'brass, copper' < Arabic
salu, salu	centre	cf. Iraqw <i>tla/a</i> 'middle'
samboreoke	dangerous	
sanureuke	lizard sp.	
Sapoanakatsi	most venerated individual	
sesekea	lizard sp.	
siziba	animal sp.	
sombiraho, sumberahu	tromba spirit	
sozoke, suzuke	sportive lemur (<i>Lepilemur</i> spp.)	cf. Malagasy <i>fitsidiky</i> 'Small-toothed sportive lemur, <i>Lepilemur microdon</i> ' and similar spp.
tadine	nose	cf. Malagasy (Merina) <i>tadiny</i> 'earhole'
tahia	height	
tambutru	food	
tariratse	story, folktale	
tarosa, tarusa	path	cf. Iraqw <i>tleesani~tlaysani</i> 'cattle lane'
tavaha	honey	
tebake	to remain, stay	cf. Swahili <i>-baki</i> 'to stay behind' < Arabic; cf. also Alagwa, Burunge <i>*baqat</i> 'to wait'
tega	tool for extracting honey	cf. Swahili <i>-tega</i> 'to trap, catch' < Proto-Bantu. See also <i>kitreko</i>
tiky	hunting for the <i>gidro</i> lemur	Malagasy (Merina) <i>gidro</i> = lemur spp. esp. Mongoose lemur, <i>Eulemur mongoz</i> ; this name itself can be linked to Swahili <i>ngedere</i> 'Blue monkey, <i>Cercopithecus mitis</i> ' and related Bantu forms inland to the Southern Highlands (Blench & Walsh 2009) < ? Qwadza <i>gedesiko</i> 'Vervet monkey, <i>Chlorocebus pygerythrus</i> ' (Ehret n.d)
tongali batri	shelter	
tranga	satisfied	
tsakamovo, tsakamavu	back	
tseike	small	
tsetake	good	
tsiamaravaly	vine sp.	cf. <i>marahaly</i> (Tsimihety) unidentified forest vine sought for its edible roots
tsiandrefehy, tsianandrafahy	vine sp.	
tsihaza	game, animals	<i>tsi</i> (nominal-forming prefix) + <i>haza</i> Tanala, Merina 'hunting, fishing'

Beosi	Gloss	Comment
tsimiely	tree whose fibres are used like cloth	cf. <i>tsimihely</i> (Sakalava) ‘ <i>Chlorophora greveana</i> ’ (a high forest deciduous tree)
valimbi	mountain slope, Beosi house	
vanganjea	Sakalava who has become Beosi, feral cow	
vinoa, vinua	vine sp.	cf. <i>vinoa</i> , <i>vinoana</i> (Sakalava), ‘ <i>Hildegardia erythrosiphon</i> , <i>H. perrieri</i> ’
vitravitra	wooded countryside	
voreke, vureke	wild boar trap	
zabele	woman’s couche	cf. Swahili <i>mbeleni</i> euphemism for m/f genitals, loc. of <i>mbele</i> adv. in front
zohi	cave	

Birkeli has a large number of comparisons with scattered language data he took from Koelle. Little of this is credible and it is omitted here.

Beosi has a number of stereotyped phrases which mix Beosi proper with standard Malagasy. These are shown in Table 3;

Table 3. Beosi circumlocutory phrases

Gloss	Beosi phrase	Translation	Malagasy
leg	tsi lanin tani	‘who doesn’t use the ground’	tomboka
head	fananteti	‘the one up high’	loha
river	tsi hovin tsimorika	‘who doesn’t walk against the current’	varavano
nuque	fiherena	turning, rotation	hatoka

Another Beosi practice seems to be to reverse the syllables of common Malagasy words. The word *vazaha* appears to have altered its final syllable in relation to standard Malagasy. Some examples are shown in Table 4;

Table 4. Malagasy terms metathesised in Beosi

Malagasy	Beosi	Gloss
aiva	avia	come!
adala	alada	drunk
ilova	mivola	to speak
alohoti [?]	olo ity	this man
vazamo	vazaha	European

Table 5 shows a number of set expressions which mix standard Malagasy and idiosyncratic Beosi words.

Table 5. Mixed Malagasy/Beosi phrases

Beosi	Sakalava	Gloss
tsy mihaja bokotroko	tsy homa bele	Don’t you eat potatoes?
ino miteke aminareo	ino vaovao aminareo	What is new with you?
ao, ada kea	tsy misy	There isn’t any
araboko?	vonoiko?	Shall I kill him/it?
ka fongane	ka vonoe	don’t kill

3. Conclusions

Generally speaking, the Vazimba data is so exiguous and so scattered, that it is unlikely to constitute a significant record of a substrate vocabulary, as opposed to a set of idiosyncratic words, not untypical for a population of former foragers. However, in the case of the Beosi, the set of forms is much larger, and covers a wider range of vocabulary. Many of the tree and plant names seem to be similar to Malagasy dialect names, although Birkeli was unable to detect this for lack of sources. Beosi speech clearly includes 'evasive' forms, i.e. expressions which are transformations of ordinary Malagasy, intended to obscure their speech from outsiders, like trade argots. There are also some clear, and rather more opaque borrowings from Swahili and the Sabaki languages, some of which are not standard Malagasy vocabulary. Nonetheless, *a priori*, it looks as if there may be genuine substrate vocabulary in Beosi and that this could reflect the speech of a forager group which migrated from the African mainland in pre-Austronesian times.

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