

# Enatthembo

## An Appraisal of Linguistic and Socio-Linguistic Factors



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# Enatthembo - An Appraisal of Linguistic and Socio-Linguistic Factors

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Angoche, June 2000*

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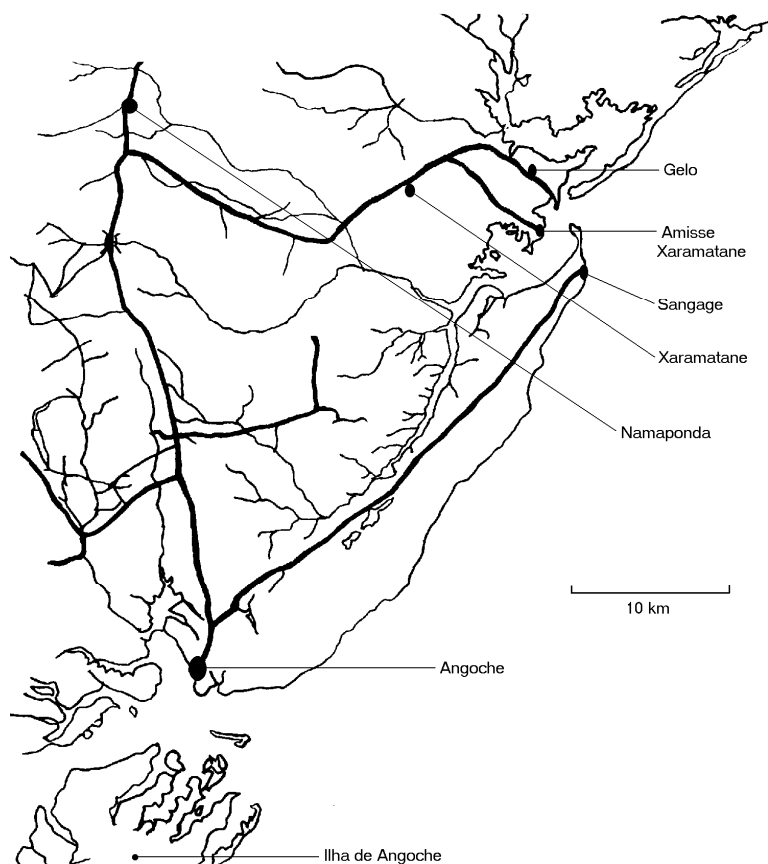
## 1. Introduction

Map1: 16° 05' South, 40° 05' East

This paper attempts to assess the Enatthembo language situation, spoken in a small area of Nampula province, in northern Mozambique; the exact location is shown in map 1.

### 1.1 General information

The Anathembo are a small people group, thought to be originating from the province of Cabo Delgado. The local elders claim that they fled from an area around Pemba called Shanga/Sanga about four centuries ago because of Arab-Portuguese warfare. They were already Muslim when they came to the area, and presently almost 100% adhere to folk Islam. Apparently they settled as a sheikhdom in an area where many elephants were living - Natthembo is said to be derived from tthembo, the local word for elephant. After many years of an isolated living situation, the Anathembo today have increasing (trading) contacts with the surrounding Makuwa people who mostly speak the Enlai variant. The main activity for men is fishing; the women work in the fields.



### 1.2 Geography and Names

Presently the Anathembo live mainly in 2 villages, on the map marked as Xaramatane and Amisse Xaramatane. These names refer to former *régulos* (local chiefs under the Portuguese colonial administration), the local people refer to Xaramatane as Nthamala and to Amisse Xaramatane as Natthembo, the latter being the true centre of the Natthembo<sup>1</sup> language and culture. There are some

<sup>1</sup> The names of all languages mentioned in this report use the class 7 prefix 'e-'. Thus Enatthembo refers to the Natthembo language. We have chosen to capitalise only the first letter of such names, whereas other writers prefer to capitalise differently as in 'ENatthembo' or 'eNatthembo'.

Enatthembo speakers on the Sangage peninsula, particularly in the place Zubair, but there they form part of a linguistic and cultural mixture. Xaramatane and Amisse Xaramatane are 6 km apart and are located on the West (i.e. inland) of the Sangage peninsula, which is separated by the Nlocanhama or Mlokhanhama River. Local administrative matters are dealt with in nearby Gelo, which is an Enlai speaking village.

Another name for Enatthembo is Edheidhei or Eteitei which is considered a derogative term. The language Enatthembo has been referred to as Esangage (variously spelt Esakaji; Esangaji ) in previous reports, including reports attached in the appendices. This has given rise to some confusion. The people of Natthembo, i.e the owners of the language, do refer to Esangage as an alternative name to Enatthembo. But nowadays, people outside the area e.g. in Angoche, refer to Esangage as the language that is predominantly spoken on the Sangage peninsula, i.e. across the Nlocanhama river and outside the Enatthembo area, which is in fact Enlai. We believe that historically the Enatthembo speaking area was larger and at least partially covered the Sangage peninsula.

### 1.3 Previous work and reports

- Padre António Pires Prata wrote a six-page article in Tempo Magazine in January 1982 called “Línguas da Costa Norte de Moçambique (languages of the Northern coast of Mozambique)”. About half a page of this article is dedicated to “A língua de Sangage ou eSankaji” based on personal time spent in the area occupied by the Natthembo people (which was larger at the time) during the fifties.
- The German professor Thilo Schadeberg, working at Leiden University, the Netherlands, has particular interest in languages that are influenced by Swahili. He did one week of fieldwork in the Enatthembo speaking area in June 1995. He has a quantity of Enatthembo data, as yet unpublished.
- SIL member Sebastian Floor spent 20-22 March 1995 in Angoche for a socio-linguistic survey of Ekoti. In his write-up “Report on visit to Angoche”, he summarises some findings on Esangaji and Enatthembo in chapter 3.4
- L. Dippenaar (Inserv) (ed) 1996. The people of the coast of Nampula, Mozambique. Inserv Research. Pretoria. This report is based on a short visit and literature study.

(Note: these reports refer to studies of the language that we refer to as Enatthembo)

Malcolm Gurthrie does not refer to Enatthembo and Ekoti in *The classification of Bantu languages (1948)*, nor in *Comparative Bantu (1967-1971)*. Both languages show a marked influence of Swahili, particularly on the lexicon, but are regarded as belonging to the Makuwa group (P.30).

## 2. Procedures

Chronology of events:

- 20 Jan 97 Lyndons attempt pre-survey visit of Sangage peninsula, aborted because of bad road conditions.
- 8 October 97 second attempt, again aborted
- 8 December 1997 Ada Lyndon - interview and wordlist with Jorge Nlapa
- 20 December 1997 Sebastian Floor and Christopher Lyndon interview Jorge Nlapa
- 3 July 99 third attempt to reach Sangage via the beach road, unsuccessful
- 17 December 1999 One day visit to Xaramatane for data collection.
- 26 May 2000 visit to Sangage and a group interview in Amisse Xaramatane  
On 17 December 1999 Christopher Lyndon visited Xaramatane together with Mr Mussa Amade, (an Enatthembo speaker), Mr. Nunes de Sousa and Mr. Isidini Ibraimo Ussene, both native Ekoti speakers and participants of the SIL project in Angoche. Setting off from Angoche, the main road to Nampula was taken for 35 km followed by a turn-off to the east just before Namaoponda. The journey of roughly 50 km took 4 hrs during which the four-wheel drive car got stuck four times - there had been one week of heavy rainfall the week before.

On 26 May 2000 Christopher Lyndon and Mr. Nunes de Sousa reached the tip of the Sangage pensinsula by car. Mr. de Sousa then crossed the Nlocanhama River by boat and visited Amisse Xaramatane where he met elders and conducted a group interview.

Apart from quotes from Prata and Schadeberg, findings in section 3 are based on the following:

08-12-97	Ada Lyndon	Jorge Nlapa (M, 45)	wordlist 1
20-12-97	C. Lyndon/Sebastian Floor	Jorge Nlapa	general interview
17-12-99	C. Lyndon	Mussa Momade (M, 56)	wordlist 2
17-12-99	C. Lyndon et al	local leaders	general interview
17-12-99	Isidini Ussene	Anastácio Amisse (M, 45)	soc ling interview
17-12-99	Isidini Ussene	Samao Mussa Baid (M, 39)	soc ling interview
17-12-99	Nunes de Sousa	Muanaeka Chame (F, 35)	soc ling interview
17-12-99	Isidini Ussene	4 men (older and middle age)	group interview
17-12-99	Nunes de Sousa	8 women (all ages)	group interview
17-12-99	Isidini Ussene	8 men (all ages)	intelligibility test
26-05-00	Nunes de Sousa	5 men, 2 women (all ages)	group interview

### 3 Findings

#### 3.1 Number of speakers:

Prata in his 1982 Tempo article writes “*Today, one estimates the number of speakers of the language of Sangage at fifteen thousand*”.<sup>2</sup> And Thilo Schadeberg (1997: p65) writes “*The place where I did one week of fieldwork in June 1995 is situated on the inside of the long bay and there live about 1000 speakers. The only publication about Shangaji is a small article by Pires Prata from 1987. He estimated the number of speakers at 15.000 and said that the language is in a situation of acute decline.*”

The Inserv report mentions five thousand speakers (1995). Jorge Nlapa refers to a total of 600 houses in Amisse Xaramatane and 30 houses in Xaramatane in his interview with Sebastian Floor and Christopher Lyndon (appendix 2). During our visit to Xaramatane we could confirm the estimate of about 30 houses. According to local elders and the Frelimo party secretary, about 2400 people presently reside in Amisse Xaramatane. From these estimates we conclude that the total number of speakers in the area probably lies between 3000 and 5000.

We do not know the number of Enatthembo speakers outside the language area. There are speakers living in Angoche, but we do not know how many. These people consider themselves Natthembo and speak Enatthembo among themselves. Angoche town is the district capital and as such consists of a majority of Koti people with a good number of Emakhuwa speakers as well (with different variants of Makhuwa being represented). As a result language mixture is common in Angoche.

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<sup>2</sup> “*Calcula-se hoje em cerca de quinze mil os falantes da língua de Sangage*”

## 3.2 Linguistic comparison

### 3.2.1 Grammatical observations

Professor Thilo Schadeberg writes (personal comment): *“Sangaji has some really interesting grammatical features that distinguish it from Koti as well as from (other) varieties of Makhuwa. Lexicostatistics is not very helpful or relevant, in my opinion (at least not in this particular case). I had the impression that there were no (or very few, if any) monolingual speakers; Koti and Makhuwa are “widely” known. I like to think of Sangaji as a separate language. (NB. I am not saying “it is” nor am I saying “it is not”—I don’t believe there are valid criteria for such statements.)”*

Prata’s article states: *“ Also this language, of Swahili affiliation, is not Swahili. Like Ekoti, it distinguishes itself [from Swahili] for various reasons. It is very nasalised and possesses an Arabic and Makhuwa lexicon. It has similarities with Ekoti in the number of noun classes and its division, in its nominal prefixes and locatives, in the locative without the suffix -ni etc”*.<sup>3</sup> Prata then mentions the occurrence of vowel harmony in the perfect tense. He worked on a Grammar of the language of Sangage; a small Portuguese - Sankaji Dictionary and a small Sankaji - Portuguese Dictionary. As far as we know, these were never published.

### 3.2.2 Wordlist

Keeping in mind that Lexicostatistics have limited value, particularly when samples are small, we nevertheless believe that the following findings have some significance. All wordlists were elicited with the use of Portuguese and with good bilingual informants.

Note: we will use the term ‘cognate’ for convenience, realising that ‘shared vocabulary percentage’ would be a more accurate term since no historical linguistic comparison has been made. We eliminated item 108 ‘tocar’ (to touch; to feel; to play an instrument; to ring [bell]) because of ambiguity, leaving a total number of 114.

#### **Comparison of the two Enatthembo wordlists:**

The informant of wordlist 1 tended to nasalise more vowels (14 times) and voice more consonants (3 times). Informant 2 three times gave the plural form of the requested item. Once a different final vowel was recorded (o and u). Five times a difference between the dental and post-alveolar t was recorded, but this is probably investigator error (as the first word list was done early on when the investigator was less tuned in to hearing the post-alveolar t.) None of these differences affect the final word count for comparison between Ekoti and Enlai.

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<sup>3</sup> *“Também este língua, de filiação suahili, não é suahili. Deste, como do ekoti, se distingue por variados motivos. É muito mais nasalada e possuidora de léxico árabe e macua. Do ekoti tem semelhança no número das classes nominais e na sua divisão, nos seus prefixos nominais e locativos, no locativo sem o sufixo -ni etc”*.

### **Ekoti-Enatthembo**

Cognate	104	104:113 = 92%
Non-cognate	7	7:113 = 6%
Marginal	2	2:113 = 2%
Double cognate	1	eliminated
Total	114	100%

### **Ekoti-Enlai**

Cognate	57	57:114 = 50%
Non-cognate	54	54:114 = 47%
Marginal	3	3:114 = 3%
Total	114	100%

### **Enatthembo-Enlai**

Cognate	56	56:114 = 49%
Non-cognate	55	55:114 = 48%
Marginal	3	3:114 = 3%
Total	114	100%

Averaging the marginal items we can construct the following matrix of cognate percentages:

EKO

93	NAT	
52	51	LAI

### **3.2.3 Intelligibility test**

To measure how well Enatthembo speakers understand Ekoti, a previously recorded 5 minute Ekoti text of a traditional folktale was played in front of a group of 8 Natthembo men, followed by a list of 10 questions, prepared beforehand. The Natthembo people were not familiar with the content of the text. The questions were answered without difficulty by individuals from the group, leading to the conclusion that there is very high intelligibility and or a very high level of bilingualism. The fact that much of the data gathering by Isidini Ussene and Nunes de Sousa was conducted in Ekoti without difficulty somewhat confirms this conclusion. Isidini Ussene and Nunes de Sousa (native Ekoti speakers) reported having very little difficulty understanding Enatthembo; they called it a '*nasal accent*'. But it is said that Enatthembo is harder to understand for a person who learned Ekoti as a second language, it is then considered '*uma língua muito nasal e pesada (a very nasal and heavy language)*'. Emakhuwa speakers without exposure to Enatthembo understand little. The test was administered without in-depth study and preparation; the method did not distinguish between bilingualism and intelligibility.

### 3.3 Language use and attitudes

The following observations are based on the socio-linguistic interviews.

Enatthembo is a homogeneous language (no variants); there are no publications in the language; and no one attempts to write it ('too difficult').

The languages most easily understood by an Enatthembo speaker are Ekoti and Encikhwaare, the language of Mociqual, further up the coast.

Bilingualism and multilingualism seem to be very high. We did not meet any monolinguals (taking the term here to refer to people who speak only Enatthembo), but local people say they do exist in all age groups and of both sexes. These monolinguals are said to understand both Ekoti and Enlai with ease. The fact that Enlai is said to be well understood is unexpected because of the cognate percentage of just over 50%, it might be the result of exposure to Enlai, but if they understand it well, one might expect them to also speak Enlai to some extent and thus no longer be monolinguals. Thilo Schadeberg wrote after his 1-week stay in the area: "*I had the impression that there were no (or very few, if any) monolingual speakers; Koti and Makhuwa are 'widely' known... for the women the knowledge of Makhuwa is clearly less*". The majority of our interviewees stated that they spoke both Emakhuwa and Ekoti, and some Portuguese (more men than women). Most people listen to Emakhuwa radio programs. The women reported that no outsiders learn to speak Enatthembo because it is too difficult (note: of the 8 women in the group interview, 2 were Makhuwa), but men were of the opinion that some people do learn to speak Enatthembo.

Language preservation: All interviews showed that Enatthembo is still the first language used in daily life, among all ages and in all the regular places (home, market, shops, work, clinic, mosque) All interviewees like their children to learn other languages, first of all Emakhuwa and Ekoti, people with some education expressed the desire for their children to learn Portuguese and English, one man mentioned Arabic. All adults had a positive attitude about learning other languages and would like to see literacy developed both in local languages and in Portuguese; the latter desire was expressed particularly by people who had some education. Both men and women have contact with other languages, particularly with the surrounding Emakhuwa variant Enlai, but the men may have more outside contacts due to travel and trade. The group of men expressed different opinions about language use compared to the group of women. The women said they did not know of people who had stopped speaking Enatthembo, and would consider it a bad thing if it would happen. They also said that language mixture does not occur. The men said people do stop speaking Enatthembo and language mixture does occur, mostly with Ekoti and Emakhuwa; mixing languages was considered a good thing, there is more mixture in Xaramatane than in Amisse Xaramatane. The following quotes are from the group interview with the men in Xaramatane "*We think the language is disappearing. Today there are children of 5-10 years old that try to speak Emakhuwa, which didn't happen 25 years ago. That time, it was difficult to find children that age speaking Emakhuwa. This makes us think that the Makhuwa language is entering the Natthembo area*".<sup>4</sup> The men in Xaramatane believe that in the future Enatthembo will not be spoken and considered this 'not good'. In the larger village Amisse Xaramatane there was less concern or awareness about the decline of the language. In general the Natthembo people consider themselves 'forgotten' by the outside world.

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<sup>4</sup> "*Pensamos que a língua está desaparecimento. Agora existem crianças de 5-10 anos, que tentam falar Emakhuwa, o que não acontecia há 25 anos atrás. Esse tempo, era difícil encontrar crianças daquele idade a falarem o Emakhuwa. Isto faz-nos entender que a Língua Emakhuwa está entrar na zona de Natthembo.*"



### **3.4 Literacy**

The overall impression was that the level of literacy is very low. Two out of the three informants from the individual interviews were illiterate. A minority of the children attend primary school and rarely longer than a few years. Levels of Portuguese were low. Yet in all interviews a positive attitude towards literacy and literacy materials was expressed, particularly in Enatthembo, Ekoti and Portuguese (Emakhuwa wasn't mentioned); some mentioned interest in English and Arabic literature. Languages they would like to learn to speak are Arabic, Portuguese and English (all interviewees already spoke Ekoti and Emakhuwa to some degree). During the leave taking it was asked once more whether literacy materials in Ekoti would be welcomed and people were unanimously positive.

### **3.5 General observations of local situation and culture**

**Accessibility:** by car Amisse Xaramatane (Natthembo) can only be reached via the Namaponda turn-off with a 4-wheel drive vehicle in the dry season. One can also travel via the Sangage peninsula and then cross the Nlokanhama River by boat; this river is tidal.

**Religion:** close to 100% of the Anathambo is Muslim, most practice folk-Islam. There are 2 mosques in Amisse Xaramatane. An estimated 10-15% of the boys attend the Madrassa. There are no churches in the Enatthembo speaking area. The Catholic Church has a núcleo (cell group) in Gelo; protestant churches are not represented.

**Health:** The nearest clinic is outside the language area in Gelo, manned by a nurse. Malaria and conjunctivitis are common; diarrhoea and bilharzia are not uncommon. It is a tsetse fly area, so people do not keep cattle. But their diet does contain protein from fish. No use of latrines. Drinking water comes from local streams and wells and is easy to get throughout the year.

**Schools:** Xaramatane does not have a school; local children do not go to school. Amisse Xaramatane has 2 primary school teachers; still many children do not attend school, or leave at an early age to be involved in fishery and home tasks. Literacy levels are low and very low for women.

**Economics:** In Xaramatane people farm manioc, rice, maize and peanuts. They keep chickens, ducks and some goats. Amisse Xaramatane has a peninsular feel to it and is surrounded by mangroves; the women have fields more inland and most of the men are involved in fishing both in the river and in the sea. Throughout the year fish is traded as far inland as Namaponda. In the dry season fish is dried.

**Culture:** The Muslim culture is adhered to. Natthembo culture is very similar to the Koti culture in their celebrations, initiations, music and dance. Cultural identity is still strong and very distinct from the surrounding Makhuwa.

## **4. Evaluation**

The intelligibility test was not performed with monolinguals since we did not encounter any, so it did not clearly distinguish between bilingualism and intelligibility.

To get a more complete picture, a survey in Mogincual could be done, but findings there are not expected to influence conclusions about the Enatthembo language.

## 5. Conclusion

Observing the low and seemingly decreasing number of speakers, the high level of bilingualism (Ekoti and Enlai) and the close linguistic relationship with Ekoti, we consider Enatthembo to be an endangered language. However, the Anatthembo do have a distinct cultural identity, despite similarities with the Koti language and culture. Even though the literacy level is very low, people expressed interest in literacy activities and literature, preferably in the Natthembo language, but even in the Koti language.

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## 7. Appendices

**Appendix 1** - Translation (from Dutch) of the relevant section of 'Schadeberg T.S. 1997. The Swahili-languages from Mozambique. Publication of the Dutch Royal Academy of Sciences 1997, part 60 no. 2'

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*"(3) Shangaji or Eshangaji is spoken ca. 40 km. north of Angoche in a small village, but not as one would expect in the community around the Sangage posto at the tip of the peninsula, which is known for its light house. The place where I did one week of fieldwork in June 1995 is situated on the inside of the long bay and there live about 1000 speakers. But between Sangage and Ilha de Mocambique, about 100 km further north are probably more coastal villages [Quinga, Mogincual and possibly Lunga] that speak the same language. Alternative names and spellings are Sangage, Sakatchi and Tteittei or Dheidhei. The only publication about Shangaji is a small article by Pires Prata from 1987. He estimated the number of speakers at 15.000 and said that the language is in a situation of acute decline. During my visit I got the impression that the men also speak Makhuwa and usually also Koti: for the women the knowledge of Makhuwa is clearly less."*

## Appendix 2

By Sebastian Floor: NOTES ON SANGAGE AND NATTHEMBO LANGUAGES

Angoche, 20 Dec 1997

Christopher Lyndon and I met with Sr. Jorge Inlapa, a Natthembo man living now in Angoche, for two hours. This was a follow-up of a meeting Christopher and Ada had with him, where a most interesting piece of information about the language situation originally came to the fore.

Sr. Jorge is a Nátthembo, speaking Enátthembo as mother tongue. He has the colonial 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and his father was a 'Shehe'. With the authority he spoke, one might guess he seemed to be member of the elite.

The most important issue that came out of the two meetings with him is that Esankaji and Enatthembo are not two languages, but ONE. Across the creek from the peninsula with the Sangage lighthouse, is a large village called Amisse Xaramatane, with round about 600 houses. This is the main Natthembo village. There is another Natthembo village 10km NW, called Xaramatene (called after the 'régulo' nephew of the Sheikh Amisse), but this is a small agricultural village with only about 30 houses. That area is also called Nthámala, and adversely affected by the recent civil war. Next to the Amisse Xaramatane village is a small river called the Sangage river, where the lighthouse got its name from (pronounced Shangaji.) Around the lighthouse only live Enlai-speaking Makhuwa people, not a people group distinct from the Enlai nor the Natthembo. It seems that Enatthembo IS the Esankaji language.

### History

According to Sr. Jorge, a certain Sheikh Mussa came from the north (he thought the Sheikh was a Mwani, but he probably was a Swahili) and settled in Mpasha, 6 km from Amisse Xaramatane, on the MAINLAND, not at the lighthouse on the peninsula, where he built a large Swahili-style house, which is still to be seen there as a ruin. (His spirit is believed to still live there, and Natthembos will not enter or try to live in the old ruins. It is rumoured to be full of vipers.)

### Sociolinguistics

According to Sr Jorge, the language is not dying, in spite of so few speakers. Enatthembo is spoken at home, and children only speak that at first. The first second language all, including the women, acquire, is Enlai (Makhuwa) spoken on the peninsula. Many, especially those who have moved to Inguri in Angoche, are also bilingual in Ekoti. Portuguese is poorly known in Amisse, but in Angoche most Natthembo have also acquired some Portuguese. Some people from the peninsula learn Enátthembo, though said to be not many.

The Anátthembo in Angoche, which he said there are lots (whatever that means), maintain Enátthembo at home and when speaking to one another. There is pressure to maintain it, ones who refuse to speak Enatthembo to another Nátthembo is being reported on in Amisse Xaramatane. There seems to be still some language pride. Angoche Anatthembo acquire both Ekoti and Makhuwa (probably Enlai.)

Earlier there was no intermarriage between Koti and Makhuwa, but that is now changing.

A primary school came to 15 km from Amisse about 1958, then closed again. Only during 1997 was it reopened.

The Natthembo are Muslim, and Enátthembo is used in the mosque in Amisse Xaramatane.

## Linguistics

Another name for the language is Theithei, which seems to be a derogative designation (like Kimwajamwaja is for Kimwani.) Related forms of the language are spoken at Quinga and as far as Mogincual. Alternative name is Etthwani, or Emaka, this last one being the general designation for all coastal Makhuwa- and Swahili-related languages in Nampula province.

In response to Sr. Jorge's insistence that Natthembo is related to Kimwani, I gave him the first story in 'Hadisi Ngema za Kimwani, Buku ra Nne' to read. He read the Kimwani orthography surprisingly well for someone who does not know Kimwani and never visited Pemba. From the 95 words in this very simple folk tale, he could figure out 58 as cognates, 37 he did not recognise at all. He could vaguely follow the theme of the story, but only after a lot of re-reading and considering, reading and analysing word for word.

## Further proof

After talking to Sr. Jorge, we looked again at Padre A. Pires Prata's 1982 "Tempo" article covering Sangage as well. I never noticed it, but he gives 'Enatthembo' as an alternative name to Esakaji, and also included Amisse Xaramatane and Xaramatane as Sangage-speaking villages, over and above the peninsula. He also mentioned the fact that there are Esakaji-related variants further up the coast called Ekkinga (at Quinga probably) and Emwikwari (at Mogincual probably). Etthwani (meaning language of the coast (SF)) is also offered as an alternative name by Prata. Sr. Jorge confirmed that Enatthembo is also called Etthwani.

A second proof of the Sankaji-Natthembo identity is a publication by Prof. Thilo Schadeberg recently sent to me. I took it with me to Angoche to read, and on looking for something on Sankaji he mentioned a personal visit to the village of Amisse Xaramatane in 1992, and that the Sangage people are living only there and not also on the peninsula as originally Pires Prata let us to believe.

With this data we can now be quite certain that Esankaji and Enatthembo is one language, not two.

*(Appendices 3 – 5 not attached for the purposes of this report as appendix 3 is a phonetically transcribed list of 115 words, and appendices 4 and 5 are blank questionnaires. Available on request).*

## Appendix 3

Wordlist 115, SIL Mozambique

## Appendix 4

Questionário Socio-linguístico. Entrevista individual com falante da língua Enatthembo (Portuguese socio-linguistic individual questionnaire for Enatthembo speakers).

## Appendix 5

Questionário para Grupos (Portuguese socio-linguistic group questionnaire).

