From Borneo to Bantu: How the Malagasy third person genitive pronoun
*-ni may have become a locative suffix in Swahili

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Abstract
The Proto Malayo-Polynesian 3rd person singular genitive pronoun *-ni=a evolved into *-n(i)ε in Southeast Barito languages (South Borneo and Madagascar), where it has maintained the functions of possessive and agent pronoun and is also used after prepositions. In Maanyan and Malagasy reflexes of *-n(i)ε also frequently occur in locative adverbial constructions. These constructions as a rule have a locative prefix, but in some cases the latter was deleted. This situation might have paved the way for *-n(i)ε to be borrowed as a locative suffix in Swahili and other Bantu languages.

1. Introduction

In this paper[1] I show how the locative suffix –*ni* in Swahili and other Bantu languages in eastern and southern Africa may have evolved from the Southeast Barito 3rd person singular genitive pronoun *-n(i)ε (Adelaar and Kikusawa 2014:513). This pronoun in turn derives from the Proto Malayo-Polynesian 3rd person singular genitive pronoun *-ni=a.[2] It became -*ni* or -*nε* in various languages belonging to the Southeast Barito language group[3], the members of which are spoken in South Borneo and Madagascar (see maps 1 and 2). In Maanyan and in the Merina dialect of Malagasy[4], -*ni* has maintained the functions that are generally ascribed to *-ni=a and its reflexes in contemporaneous Austronesian languages, namely those of possessive and agent pronoun as well as pronoun after prepositions. Maanyan and Malagasy -*ni* also frequently occurs in locative adverbial constructions. These constructions as a rule have a locative prefix, but in some cases the latter does not surface. When that happens, a situation arises in which the role of -*ni* becomes ambiguous and

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[2] See Blust (2013:443), who derives this pronoun from a genitive linker *ni and a 3rd person singular pronominal clitic *a.

[3] Maanyan, Samihim (in South Borneo) and many Malagasy dialects have -*ni*; other Malagasy dialects (especially in the Southwest and South of Madagascar) have -*e*; Dusun Witu (in South Borneo) has -*ε* after final consonants and -*nε* after final vowels.

[4] Merina Malagasy is spoken in the Merina highlands of central Madagascar. It has been the dialect of central government for the last two centuries and became the basis for the standardization of Malagasy. It is the best described Malagasy dialect and the source for the Malagasy data presented in this paper unless indicated otherwise.

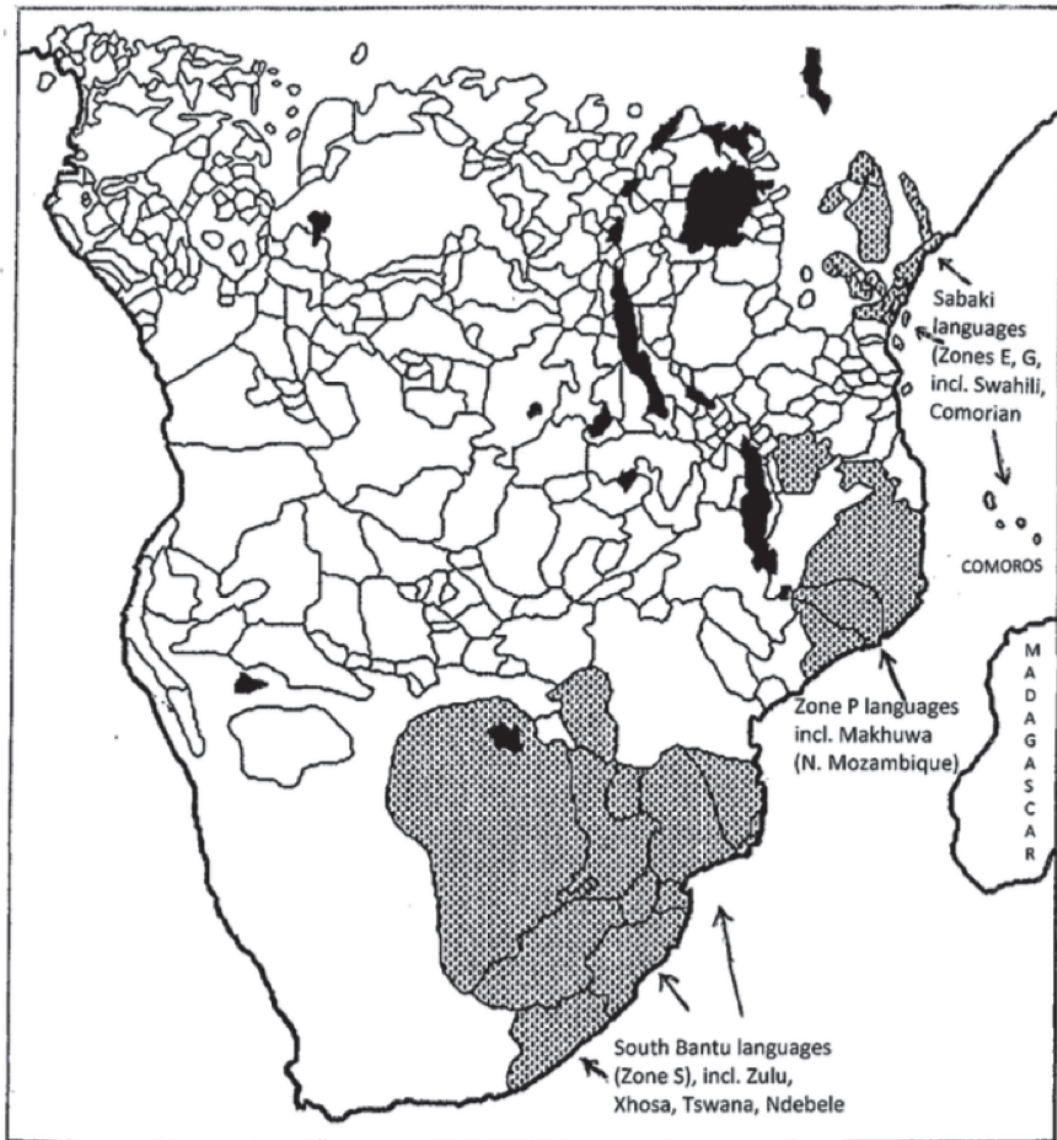could potentially be re-interpreted as a locative marker. That it has not reached that point in any of the Southeast Barito languages (as far as I know) is most

likely due to the well-established position of -*ni* and its cognates as a personal pronoun. However, the occurrence of *-n(i)ɛ in locative adverbs might have confused outsiders who came in contact with Southeast Barito speakers, a situation which arose when the early Malagasy encountered Bantu speakers in coastal East Africa. This contact might have paved the way for *-n(i)ɛ to change into a locative suffix in Swahili and other Bantu languages (see Map 2). (In this context, the reader is reminded of the likelihood that the first Malagasy migrants stayed on the East African mainland and mixed with Bantu speakers before they finally settled in Madagascar (Deschamps 1960, Adelaar 2007, 2010).

In the pages to follow I draw a scenario in which a change from the Southeast Barito genitive pronoun *-n(i)ɛ into the Bantu locative marker -*ni* or a related form might have taken place. In Section 2 I give an overview of the use of -*ni* in some Southeast Barito languages, and in Section 3, of the use of -*ni* and its related form in Bantu languages. In Section 4 I give arguments for the assumed relationship between Southeast Barito *-n(i)ɛ and Bantu *-inɪ (see below). I make some concluding remarks in Section 5.
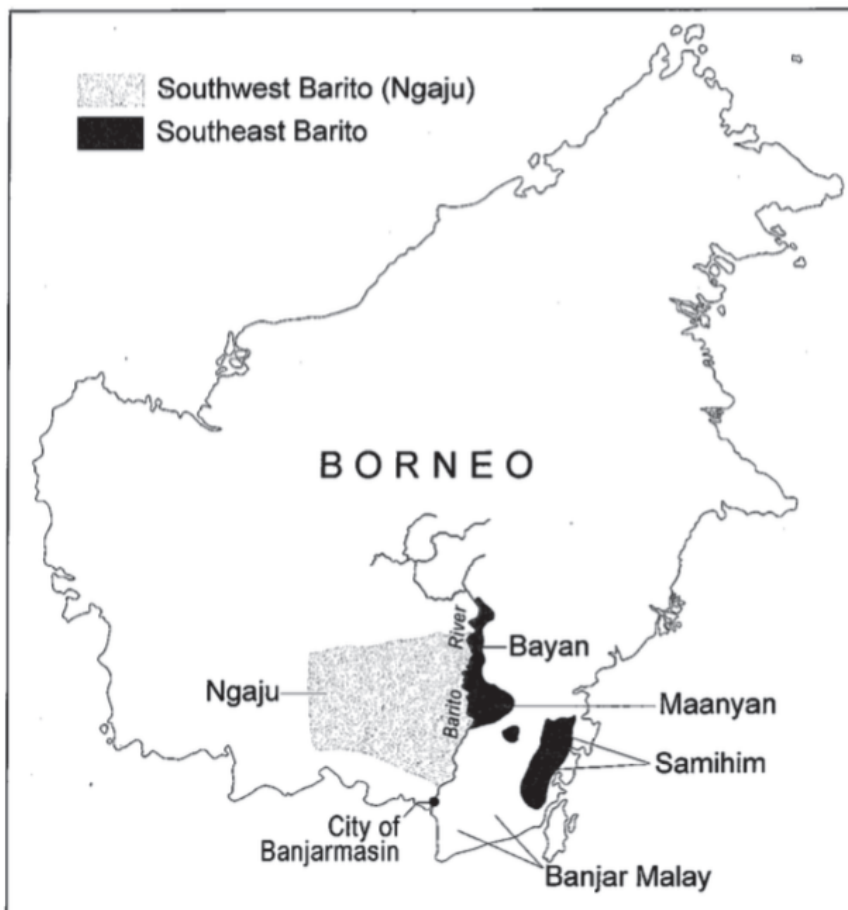
**MAP1 Borneo Island showing areas where Maanyan and Samihim are
    spoken**

Sabaki
languages
(Zones E, G,
incl. Swahili,
Comorian

COMOROS

M
A
D
A
G
A
S
C
A
R

Zone P languages
incl. Makhuwa
(N. Mozambique)

South Bantu languages
(Zone S), incl. Zulu,
Xhosa, Tswana, Ndebele

MAP 2 The distributeon of the locative suffix *-ini in sub-saharan Africa (Adapted from Schadeberg 2003)

2. The use of *-ni* in Southeast Barito languages

As indicated in the footnote 1, Proto South East Barito: *-n(i)ɛ became Maanyan and Samihim *-ni*. It also became *-ni* in Malagasy; however, since the southern and southwestern dialects of Malagasy[5] have a corresponding *-e*, it is very likely that Proto Malagasy still had a mid-vowel in this suffix. This is also in accordance with the phonological rule that southern and southwestern Malagasy dialects still distinguish between Proto Malayo-Polynesian *-a and *-ay (reflected in them as -e) and *-i (reflected as *-i), whereas standard Malagasy merged all these final vowels to -i.

Proto Malayo-Polynesian *-ni=a →
             Proto South East Barito: *-n(i)ɛ →
                         Proto-Malagasy *-ne   →
                                 (Merina) Malagasy *-ni*, Sakalava Malagasy *-ne*

The roles performed by Maanyan, Samihim[6] and (Merina) Malagasy *-ni* are comparable to those of the Malay/Indonesian cognate *-ña*. Below I give examples of the use of *-ni* in Maanyan and Malagasy.

2.1 *-ni* in Maanyan (and Samihim)

In Maanyan, *-ni* has the following roles:

It is a possessive pronoun, e.g.

    (1) *tenga-ni* 'her/his/their body'
       uruwawa-ni 'his/her/their face'

It is an agent pronoun, as in *kuta-ni* 'eaten by him' in the following sentence:

(2) Dami	*mandru*	*palus*	*kuta-ni*	*re-era-e*	*dahulu*
after	cook	right-away	eat-3GEN	alone	all

puang	*ka-andrei*	*ineh-ni*	*teka*	*ume*
not	N.VOL-wait	mother-3GEN	come.from	field

'After cooking it he ate it all straight away without waiting for his Mum to come back from the field'

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[5] These seem to form a first-order branch within the classification of Malagasy dialects (Adelaar 2013).

[6] Samihim is very similar to Maanyan. It is also very poorly documented, and the only Samihim prose available are actually liturgical texts prepared by Protestant missionaries around the turn of the 20th century. Therefore, apart from presenting the occasional example, I will give not discuss this speech form extensively.

It can be an adverbial suffix, e.g.

(3) *jujur* 'honest, straight'   *sabujur-ni* 'in fact, really'
   akhir 'end'   *akhir-ni* 'in the end, finally'
   ma 'LOC'; *andraw ka-telu* '3rd day'   *ma andraw katelu-ni* 'on the 3rd day'
   hampe 'until'; *ka-pitu* '7th'   *hampe andrau kapitu-ni* 'up to 7 days;
                                        until day 7'

Compare also the following example, in which the possessive role of *-ni* is not particularly obvious:

(4) *Hu-an*   *hampe*   *lawit*   *kia-ni*
   not.yet   until   far   road;walk-3GEN
   'he hadn't yet gone far [along the road], ...', 'not far on the way, ...'

Finally, in the following two instances, -ni is an object pronoun. (The number of instances with -ni assuming this role is small):

(5) *Bagamat*   *hi*   *Gayuhan*   *nyan-ri'et-ni*   *dan*
                                              N-saN-near-ni
   quickly   ART   G.   AV-APPL-near-3GEN   and (=Indonesian)

   nawut   *gayung*   *hang*   *tandruk*   *kawawe*
   n-tawut
   AV-throw   bucket   LOC   horn   deer
   'Gayuhan quickly ran to the deer and threw a bucket over its horns'

In the following Samihim instances (taken from *Soerat Pangajaran* n.d.), the adverb ha-huang-ni has a locative preposition, whereas huang-ni, which is otherwise identical, lacks it:

(6) *Hi*   *Noah*   *kaluar*   *hengka*   *banawa*   *andi*
   ART   Noah   come-out   from   boat   and

   sagala   *eha*   *he*   *ha-huang-ni*
   all   animals REL   LOC-in(side)-3GEN
   'Noah came out of the boat with all the animals that were inside'

(7) (About the Garden of Eden):
   Hi   *Adam* *hire* *rueh* *Hawa* *na-huyu*   *muneng huang-ni*
   ART   Adam   they   two   Eve   UV-order, tell   stay   in(side)-3GEN
   'Adam and Eve were told to live in it'

2.1 *-ni* in Malagasy

The Malagasy 3rd person genitive pronominal suffix is used in the following ways:

As a possessive pronoun :

(8) *tena* 'body'   *tena-ni* 'her/his/their/its body'
    satruka 'hairdo'   *satru-ni* 'his/her/their/its hairdo'
    lakana 'boat'   *laka-ni* 'his/her/their boat' (Dez 1982:38)

As an agent pronoun:

(9) Gaga   *ami-ni*   *n-a-tau-ni*
surprised   PREP-ART   PST-UV-do-3GEN
    'I'm surprised by what he did' (Malzac 1960:108)

(10) N-an-datsah-a-ni   *irai-m-bilanja*   *ni*   *karama-ku*
PST-CIRC-fall-CIRC-3GEN   one-LNK-franc   ART   wages-1s.GEN
    'He shortened my pay by one franc' (Malzac 1960:73)

In conjunction with prepositions:

(11) *ami-ni* 'with her/him, at his/her place, among them' etc. (*ami(n)-* is a multipurpose preposition).

In adverbs, especially ones indicating location in space and time. These adverbs usually also have one of the locative prefixes i- or a(N)- :

(12) *i-vela-ni* [LOC-leaving,abandoning+3GEN] 'outside, exterior, foreign'
    an-dani-ni [LOC-end-3GEN] 'on one side, on the one hand'
    an-ivu-ni [LOC-centre-3GEN] 'in the middle'
    ara-kevi-ni 'approximately' [following-thinking-3GEN]
    aman'-etsi-ni 'by the hundreds of thousands' [*aman'* 'with', *hetsi* 'hunderd thousand']
    *ambu-n*i 'above, on top' (there is no *ambu but compare *avu* 'elevated')
    *amba-n*i 'below, beneath' (no *amba, but compare *ava* 'downstream')
    fara-ni [posterity;final,last-3GEN] 'last; finally, in the end, at last'
    eu akaiki-ni 'next to' [*eu* 'here (in sight)', *akaiki* 'near']

Notice that the genitive (possessive) notion of *-ni* in locative adverbs is not very prominent, especially in the last four examples, which do not have a locative prefix (in *fara-ni* and *eu akaiki-ni*) or in which the locative prefix has become lexicalized (as in *ambu-ni* and *amba-ni*).

3. The use of -(i)ni in East and South Bantu languages

3.1 Swahili -ni

In Swahili, *-ni* indicates location in general. For this language to have a single locative marker which is suffixed is remarkable because Bantu languages generally agree in using three prefixes to indicate location, namely *pa-* (for definite location), *ku-* (for indefinite location), and *mu-* (for location inside).[7] (These forms and their associated notions still exist in Swahili locative adverbs,

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[7] Referred to as Class 16, 17 and 18 prefixes respectively in Bantu linguistic literature.

compare *pale* 'there, in that place' and *kule* 'there, in that direction'). In Schadeberg's (2003:158) words, "its etymological history is a bit of a mystery". In contrast to *pa-*, *ku-* and *mu-*, *-ni* can be affixed to nouns of any class, although it cannot usually be tacked on to proper nouns and nouns referring to persons and animals. Here follow some examples of Swahili *-ni* taken from Wilson (1970:28):

(13)   *mfereji* 'ditch'   *mfereji-ni* 'in the ditch'
         mguu 'leg'   *mguu-ni* 'on the leg'
         mwisho 'end'   *mwisho-ni* 'at the end'
         mlima 'mountain'   *mlima-ni* 'on the mountain'
         soko 'market'   *soko-ni* 'on/at the market'
         nyumba 'house'   *nyumba-ni* 'in the house; at home'
         meza 'table'   *meza-ni* 'on the table'

In the following instance *-ni* derives temporal adverbs from nouns referring to time (Martin Walsh p.c.):

(14)   *mwaka* 'year'   *mwaka-ni* 'next year'

There are several adverbs formed with *-ni* for which the corresponding root is no longer extant as a free form in Standard Swahili (Martin Walsh p.c.):

(15)   *jio   *jioni* 'at evening'
         *nda   *ndani* 'inside' (but cf. *unda* 'womb')
         *chi   *chini* 'below' (cf. *nchi* 'country, land')

       Toponyms normally do not receive *-ni*. For instance, in the contrastive sentences below, *-ni* is suffixed to the noun *mji* 'town' but not to the toponym *Nairobi* (Wilson 1970:28):

(16)   *Mzee*   *yule*   *a-na-kaa*   *mji-ni*
         Old man   that   3s-PROG-reside   town-LOC
         'That old man lives in the town'

(17)   *Mzee*   *yule*   *a-na-kaa*   *Nairobi* (*Nairobi-ni)
         Old man   that   3s-PROG-reside   Nairobi
         'That old man lives in Nairobi'

       Nevertheless, as Samsom and Schadeberg (1994:135) point out, *-ni* does occur as a fossilized suffix in some place names. It still occurs in *Quelimani*, the name of a seaport in Mozambique, which stands for *kilima-ni* and literally means 'on/at the hill'. It also shows up in *Moroni*, the name of the capital of the Comorian Island republic, which is derived from Comorian *moro-ni* 'in the fire' (possibly in reference to the location of the city nearby a volcano). Other such examples are current toponyms like *Mbuyuni* (literally 'at the baobab tree') and *Maweni* ('at the rocks; a stony place') (Martin Walsh p.c.). Although in sentence (17) -ni cannot be combined with Nairobi, there is no such embargo on its application in sentence (18), in which Uzunguni 'the European quarter' is derived with -ni:

(18)   *Mzee*   *yule*   *a-na-kaa*   *U-zungu*-ni
            Old man   that   3s-PROG-reside ABSTRACT.NOM-European-LOC
        'That old man lives in the European quarter' (M. Walsh p.c.)

3.2 Reflexes of *-ını elsewhere

As already apparent in the Comorian *moro-ni* instance, Swahili is not the only Bantu language to exhibit this locative suffix or a form related to it. It is also found elsewhere in the Bantu language family, especially in members of the Sabaki group, which are spoken in Guthrie's Zones E and G and include Swahili and Comorian languages[8]. It is furthermore attested in some languages neighbouring the Sabaki group including Gikuyu (in Kenya). Finally, it features in Bantu languages further south: in northern Mozambique it occurs in languages in the P Zone, such as Makhuwa, once the major lingua franca among slaves in Madagascar. In southern Africa, it is present in languages in the S Zone, a rather large area including Botswana, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, southern Mozambique and the eastern half of South Africa. Major languages in this zone are (among others) Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Tswana and Sotho (Gowlett 2003;609-611).

In many of the languages in which the suffix occurs it has an additional initial *i* and is disyllabic (e.g. Zulu *-ini*), one of the reasons why Samsom and Schadeberg (1994) derive it from an original *-ını. The Zulu reflex is applied in conjunction with the prefix *e- ~ o-*, which also marks location[9], and when a host noun is suffixed with *-ini*, the following morphophonemic changes take place:

(19)   final *-/i + -ini* → *-/ini*
        final *-/e,a + -ini* → *-/eni*
        final *-/o + -ini* → *-/weni*

This is shown in the following examples:

(20)   *sikebhe* 'ship'   *e-sikekbheni*   'on the ship'
        nyama 'meat'   *e-nyameni* 'in the meat'
        mfula 'river'   *e-mfuleni* 'from the river'
        nyoni 'bird'   *e-nyonini* 'to the bird'
        cingo 'telephone'   *o-cingweni* 'on the telephone'

Note that *-ını still occurs with one of the original prefixes (c.q. *ku-*) in the Sabaki languages Elwena and Lower Pokomo (Nurse and Hinnebusch 1993:364).

3.3 Previous explanations for the origin and spread of *-ını

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[8] Sabaki languages form a well-established genetic subgroup within the coastal East Bantu subgroup (Nuse and Hinnebusch 1993). They have their traditional homeland mainly in Kenya and Tanzania in the so-called Bantu E and G Zones. However, their current spread is much wider, and Swahili is gaining considerable terrain in other eastern and central Africa states. The division into geographical zones referred to by a letter is a widespread Bantuist convention to locate Bantu languages introduced by Malcolm Guthrie (1948).

[9] This is the Class 25 prefix, which has a much more limited occurrence than *pa-, *mu- and *mu-. The distribution of the *-e and -o* allophones is not made explicit in Spuy (1995): one could speculate that *o-* is triggered when the host has a final *o* (as in *cingo*).

How did locative *-inɪ spread among such a disparate selection of Bantu languages? It is noteworthy that neither all Sabaki languages nor all languages in Zone P or Zone S have a reflex of it. For instance, it is missing in Mwani (a Sabaki language) and Shona (a language in Zone S) (Schadeberg 2003:158). In other words, in so far as Sabaki languages and Zone S languages constitute genetic subgroups, neither of these seem to be defined as such by *-inɪ. According to Samsom and Schadeberg, this suggests that the current spread of *-inɪ reflexes must be due to diffusion through contact rather than to inheritance from a remote proto-stage. They believe that *-inɪ was originally borrowed into Swahili from a language outside the Bantu group and from there on spread to neighbouring Bantu languages (Samsom and Schadeberg 1994:136). In their estimate, this is more convincing than tracing it back to Proto Sabaki, or, as Meinhof (1941-42) did before, deriving it from the locative prefix *mu-. Nurse and Hinnebusch (1993:349, 364, 474) also generally believe in an areal spread of *-inɪ; however, in contrast to Samsom and Schadeberg (1994), they also consider the suffix critical for the definition of Sabaki as a genetic subgroup.[10]

As to the original source of *-inɪ, Samsom and Schadeberg (1994) support Sacleux, who argued that it is a grammaticalised form of the noun *inɪ which means 'liver', an organ traditionally considered to be the centre of senses and feelings in Bantu languages. This etymology is also endorsed by Güldemann (1990). However, Schadeberg (2003) no longer refers to this hypothesis.

Güldemann (1999) made the most comprehensive study on the development of nominal suffixes in Bantu languages so far. He tries to understand how some Bantu languages ended up with nominal suffixes while belonging to a language family that is so obviously head-initial and prefix-prone. In so doing he approaches the issue from a typological perspective, treating the development of *-inɪ together with that of a diminutive suffix (derived from *-yana 'child') and a gender/ associative suffix (derived from *-kadi 'wife, female'). The latter two occur exclusively in southern Bantu languages. Significantly, while he is able to explain convincingly that they are the result of contact with Khoisan languages, he is left with no real answer as to how *-inɪ could have become a suffix. There is no precedent for it in the Khoisan languages (which moreover would not have provided an explanation for its occurrence in Bantu languages outside Zone S). He also observes that as derivational suffixes, *-yana and *-kadi syntactically different from the locative suffix *-inɪ. Although "[t]here is no evidence that there has ever existed a productive head-final nominal syntagm in the Bantu family" (pp62-62), *-yana and *-kadi can still be interpreted as "having developed out of modifiers in associative or compound-like structures". This makes them more adaptable to the structure of Bantu, in which modifiers follow the nominal head. However, such an interpretation does not work for *-inɪ because its lexical source was a head. Apart from Khoisan languages, Güldemann also considered other non-Bantu languages adjacent to the Bantu region as a possible source for *-inɪ. He discounted Malagasy on account of the fact that in this language the locative prepositions (*i-* and *aN-*) are prefixed. An obvious conclusion, but it is not the only one possible, as will be demonstrated below.

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[10] Nurse and Hinnebusch believe that Mwani has maintained some traces of the suffix and therefore must have had it at some earlier stage. It must have become obsolete under the influence of Makonde and/or Maviha, which are nearby Bantu languages in northern Mozambique (Nurse and Hinnebusch 1993:526).

4.   Scenario for a borrowing from Malagasy

4.1 Paving the way: the presence of -ni in South East Barito locatives

The Maanyan, Samihim and Malagasy examples above show that *-ni* often occurs in locative adverbs. In some of these adverbs the original locative prefixes have become opaque through lexicalization, as in Malagasy *ambu-ni* 'above, on top' (< *aN-wau + *-n(i)e) or have been lost altogether, as in Samihim *huang-ni* 'inside', and Malagasy *fara-ni* 'last; finally'. It seems that in these languages the way has been prepared for a semantic shift from a genitive (possessive) pronoun to a locative postposition.

The shift itself admittedly never took place in South East Barito languages, where *-ni* has not ceased to be a genitive pronoun. This is not surprising given the high functional load of 3rd person genitive pronouns in general and the fact that *-ni* in its capacity as a pronoun has never been threatened by lexical replacement in these languages.

On the other hand, such a shift may have become possible in the process of borrowing in a contact situation involving speakers of non-Austronesian languages, who would have perceived *-ni* as a locative suffix. Several of the Maanyan examples above allow a locative interpretation of *-ni*. Compare:

(21)   *Panan tane ngaworiong-ni*
       lit. 'all land surrounding it'   →   'all land in the surroundings'

       ruampulu taun lawah-ni
       lit. 'of twenty years length'   →   'twenty years long', 'in twenty years'

       sabujur-ni
       lit. 'the truth of it'   →   'in truth'

A possible association of *-ni* with location is even more obvious in the Samihim examples involving *ha-huang-ni* and *huang-ni*. Both literally mean 'at-inside-of.it'; however, while the former still has a locative prefix, the latter has lost it.

The implied shift is also clear in the Malagasy locative adverbs shown above. Although in these adverbs location is primarily indicated with *aN-*, *i-* or Ø, they all have the suffix *-ni* in common, creating a situation in which the latter can easily be mistaken for a locative suffix. Compare:

(22)   *i-vela-ni* (*lit. 'at-outside-of.it'*   →   *'outside, exterior, foreign'*
       an-dani-ni (lit. at-one.side-of.it'   →   'on one side, on the one hand'
       Ø-fara-ni (lit. 'last-of.it')   →   'at last, in the end, finally'

If *-inı was indeed borrowed from Malagasy, Samsom and Schadeberg's assumption that Swahili became the point of its dispersal into other Bantu languages makes good sense, as there is more evidence that this language was in contact with Malagasy in the past (see Section 4.4).

Furthermore, in the history of Swahili in particular, the borrowing of *-ni* as a locative suffix into an early form of Swahili (or a late form of Proto Sabaki?) might have facilitated its evolution into a lingua franca.[11] Being used by L2 speakers, linguae francae tend towards morphological simplification, and it is easy to see how in the case of Swahili L2 speakers might have preferred the use of a single suffix over maintaining the original Bantu prefixes *pa-*, *ku-* and *mu-*, the distribution of which is complementary, and therefore bound to rules.

4.2 A possible explanation for the evolution of *-inɩ

The explanations proposed in this section remain speculative at best.[12]

While Malagasy (Maanyan and Samihim) have -ni, it should be kept in mind that this suffix evolved from a Proto Malayo-Polynesian pronominal suffix *-ni=a. As can be expected, this suffix became reduced to *-ña in various Austronesian daughter languages (including Malay/Indonesian). In modern Malagasy dialects, *n and *ñ have merged to n. The same might have happened in Maanyan and other Proto South East Barito languages, although this is not obvious because ñ was often re-introduced in these languages through influence from Malay. (As noted above, the corresponding Proto South East Barito form must have been *-n(i)ɛ). Whether or not South East Barito languages developed a corresponding palatal ñ remains unclear. But whatever the case may have been, it does not exclude the possibility that it was still present in Proto South East Barito and in early Malagasy. An early Malagasy *niɛ, (*nyɛ) or *-ñɛ is totally conceivable. Nowadays most Malagasy dialects have *-ni*, but some phonologically conservative dialects in the south and west of Madagascar have retained a mid-vowel in this suffix.[13]

From that vantage point, early Swahili *-inɩ can be derived from early Malagasy *-niɛ, with subsequent vowel metathesis and vowel height leveling, as follows:

early Malagasy *-niɛ > early Swahili *-inɛ > Bantu *-inɩ

It could possibly even be derived from an early eastern Malagasy *-nii, provided that an eastern Malagasy variant had already began to diverge in the earliest stages of the language after its speakers had left Borneo island:

early eastern Malagasy *-nii > > early Swahili *-inɩ

In case early Malagasy had *-ñɛ instead, Sabaki *-inɩ can be explained as the result of vowel epenthesis with concomitant feature metathesis (in this case, metathesis of the feature +palatal) and vowel height leveling, causing the emergence of a high-front vowel *i:

early Malagasy *-ñɛ (> early Merina Malagasy *-ñi?)

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[11] Swahili has been a trade language on the East African coast (and in islands off that coast) since the 9th century AD (Mufwene 2003:205).

[12] For tracing phonological changes in Bantu languages I am totally dependent on the expertise of Bantu comparative-historical linguists. Their input will be highly appreciated.

[13] See fn1. Note that the final high vowel in Merina Malagasy *-ni* is no evidence for the presence of a preceding palatal nasal, as word-final *ɛ and *i as a rule merged to *-i* in this dialect.

> early Swahili *-Vñı > *-inı

If vowel metathesis took place, this may have been motivated by stress which in Sabaki languages as a rule falls on the penultimate syllable: this pattern might have disallowed the development of a (*-niε >) *-nii suffix. Being disyllabic, the latter would have caused stress to shift across two syllables, and hence from the root to a suffix.

4.3 A possible explanation for the spread of *-inı in Zone S languages

Contact between Sabaki languages (originally in Kenya and Tanzania) and Bantu languages in southern Africa may seem far-fetched, given the distance involved. However, only about 1200 years ago these languages were spread very differently, and they may have been in contact.

On the one hand, Swahili settlements originally extended much further south along the Indian Ocean than they do today, as noted by Nurse and Hinnebusch (1993:527). They refer to Sinclair (1982), who found an archaeological site nearby Chibwene in southern Mozambique[14] exhibiting cultural traits very similar to those found in coastal Swahili sites. Sinclair estimates this site to be from the late 8th or early 9th century AD. Today different Bantu languages are spoken in this area.[15]

On the other hand, the migration of speakers of Bantu languages to southern Africa is a relatively late phenomenon, and their languages generally show great mutual similarity. For instance, the settlement of Zulus and Xhosas probably does not date further back in time than the 12th century AD. Equally important is that the migration route that they followed over the centuries first must have taken them from the Bantu homeland in Cameroon to eastern Africa before they finally moved downwards into southern Africa. Grollemund et al. (2015) argue for a route initially going in southeastern direction from the homeland in Cameroon to East Africa via a corridor of Savannah land (the so-called Sangha River Interval) through the forest occupying the Congo Basin; according to them this corridor opened up a number of times in the past. Blench (2012) also assumes a migration route to via East Africa, but he speculates that

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[14] This is a coastal city halfway between the estuaries of the Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers.

[15] Swahili culture and society have a strong Islamic signature and is heavily overlaid with Arab and (later) Portuguese influence. The assumptions used to be (and have not entirely been put to rest) that Swahili culture is basically the result of contacts between Bantus and Arabs in coastal East Africa, and that the Swahili maritime disposition, which is a-typical of Bantu societies in general, was due to Arab influence. However, in the last three decades or so it has become obvious that these assumptions are not justified (compare Nurse and Spear [1985]). Arabs came relatively late to the Indian Ocean scene. Greek sources predating Islam mention the existence of a thriving culture along Africa's east coast all the way to Mozambique in the first half of the first millennium. Mahdi (1999:161-163) argues that Arabs were preceded by insular South East Asians. Arab authors from the 10th and 12th century A.D. refer to the presence of traders and pirates from (presumably) insular South East Asia and the lack of maritime skills among coastal East Africans. Mahdi 1999 calls attention to the use of double outriggers and the occurrence of oculi fore and aft on some East African boat constructions, particularly the Swahili *mtepe*. Blench (2012) believes that the Swahili acquired the skills for long-distance sailing from South East Asians, enabling them to expand in various directions, including southwards to Sofala and Chibwene in Mozambique, and eastwards to the Comoros in the Indian Ocean. While the initially much wider spread of Swahili societies along Africa's east Coast is now largely obliterated by later influences, it can still be traced through archaeological research (Blench 2012).

the route initially went due south along Africa's west coast; it then turned eastwards towards coastal east Africa (northern Mozambique), before reaching southern Africa. If southern Bantu speakers were still in coastal East Africa before the 12th century AD, they must have been in contact with speakers of Swahili[16], especially if at that time Swahili settlements stretched all the way to Chibwene, as suggested by Sinclair (see Map 3). Swahili had presumably already become a lingua franca in the 8th century AD Nurse and Hinnebusch (1993:2).

MAP 3 Spread of Swahili and South Bantu languages in the past

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[16] Samsom and Schadeberg (1993:136) note the occurrence of Swahili loanwords in Zulu.

4.4 Other evidence for Austronesian influence

As far as Austronesian influence on Bantu languages is concerned, the borrowing of Malagasy *-ni* into Swahili does not stand in isolation, as there are many Malay and Malagasy loanwords that have been identified in Swahili. An extensive collection of Malay loanwords is Walsh[17]; other sources (for Malay and Malagasy loanwords) are Adelaar (2007) and Hoogervorst (2013). These loanwords clearly illustrate historical contacts between Sabaki speakers and speakers of Malay and Malagasy, which must have persisted over a long period of time. While part of the proposed loanwords cannot be dated or are demonstrably recent, other loanwords are definitely old. Among the latter we find the following ones:

From Malay:
Malay *tuba* 'fish poison', Swahili *u-tupa* 'id.' (Walsh)
Malay *kəladi* 'taro (colocasia)', Swahili *kiazi* 'tuber' (Walsh)
Malay *kota* 'fortified place, town', Swahili *u-kuta* 'stone walls of a house'
    (ultimately < Dravidian; Adelaar, Hoogervorst)

From Malagasy or Malay:
Malagasy *sàmbu* 'ship', Maanyan *samᵇaw* 'celestial ship', Malay (7th century
    inscription) *sambaw*, 'ship', dialectal Swahili *sambo* 'id.' (Walsh);
Malagasy *farìhi* 'lake', Malay *pərigi* 'well, spring', and Swahili *m-fereji* 'ditch,
    furrow' (ultimately < Dravidian)
Malagasy *sùratră*, Malay *surat* 'writing; letter, document', Swahili *chora* 'to
    carve, draw'

From Malagasy:
Malagasy *èvukă* 'steam, gas, vapour', Swahili *m-vuke* 'vapour, steam'[18]
Malagasy *tùrakă* 'to launch (spear, etc.), throw', Swahili *tora* 'fishing speer'
Malagasy *vàri* 'rice (in general)', Swahili *wali* 'cooked rice' (ultimately <
    Dravidian)
Malagasy *vuài* (Malay *buaya*) 'crocodile', Swahili *m-buai* 'savage, rapacious'

That there existed a contact situation involving Bantu languages and Austronesian languages has become increasingly obvious with the awareness that the Southeast Barito speakers who settled Madagascar must first have sailed to mainland East Africa (and stayed there long enough to mix with local Bantu speakers) before they ended up on the island (Deschamps 1960); Adelaar 2007; Blench 2007, 2008). It has also become more obvious given the nature and extent of Bantu influence in Malagasy (Adelaar 2010; 2012). The awareness is based on the fact that both Bantu linguistic influence on Malagasy dialects and Bantu and Asian DNA in the Malagasy population turn out to be spread much more evenly over the entire island than hitherto assumed (Hurles et al. 2005; Adelaar 2013). Such a linguistic unity and even spread of Asian and Bantu DNA strands suggests the formation of a mixed Austronesian-Bantu population prior

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[17] Walsh (unpublished); this is the source of items listed in Blench 2012, Table 3).
[18] The retention of *-k(e)* in *m-vuke* is unexpected and needs further explanation.

to the settlement of Madagascar (and hence most likely in coastal East Africa), rather than in Madagascar itself.

5. Concluding remarks

Deriving the eastern and southern Bantu reflexes of the locative suffix *-inɪ via Swahili from early Malagasy *-n(i)ɛ or *-ñɛ provides an attractive explanation.

The occurrence of *-inɪ remains an unresolved problem in Bantu linguistic literature. As a suffix, it is unusual in the Bantu family as a whole, in which the locative is typically expressed by a set of prefixes. It is also odd from a morphotactic viewpoint. If it was initially a noun, as is often assumed in Bantu linguistics, it would have been the nominal head in a genitive construction. However, for a head to come at the end of a noun phrase is rather counter-intuitive in Bantu languages, which are overwhelmingly head-initial.

Although Malagasy lacks a locative suffix as such, it does have a 3rd person genitive suffix -ni (< early Malagasy *-n(i)ɛ, *-ñɛ) which matches *-inɪ to a significant extent (synchronically as well as diachronically). The extended use of this suffix in Malagasy provides a clear context in which it could have been re-interpreted as a locative suffix by L2 speakers in a language contact situation.

As to the historical conditions for an encounter between Austronesian and Bantu speakers on the East African mainland, the evidence of Malay and Malagasy loanwords in Swahili leaves no doubt that contact took place. Furthermore, recent multidisciplinary research in East Africa and Madagascar has provided an increasingly clear context for such contact. It is essential to acknowledge this in both African and South East Asian studies.

Explaining *-inɪ as an ultimately non-Bantu borrowing might help to solve some crucial problems in the classification of eastern and southern Bantu languages. Provided that this suffix was originally a loan morpheme and that Nurse and Hinnebusch (1993) are correct in their assessment that Mwani once did share it, it might turn out to be critical for the establishment of Sabaki as a lower-order genetic subgroup. Conversely, its elimination from the inventory of inherited morphemes in the case of P languages and S languages might help to establish affiliations among these languages that are genuinely genetic.

Furthermore, tracing Bantu *-inɪ to early Malagasy *-n(i)ɛ or *-ñɛ does in fact not disqualify Sacleux's proposition that it derived from *inɪ ('liver') in its notional meaning as the centre of one's senses and feelings. The acceptance of early Malagasy *-n(i)ɛ or *-ñɛ into Swahili was conceivably facilitated by the similarity in form and meaning that exists between this suffix and Sabaki *inɪ.[19]

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[19] Incidentally, in Malagasy the liver is also the centre of the senses and feelings, and its signifier is also used in a locative adverbial construction: *àti* 'liver' in combination with the locative preposition *aN*- yields *an-àti* 'inside'.

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