

The SWAHILI Ethnic Group

Overview

The Swahili people (Waswahili) are an East African ethnic and cultural group whose origins lie in the Bantu-speaking populations of the East African coast, with later influences from Arab, Persian, Indian, and Portuguese traders. The name Swahili literally means "coast," and is the name given to several people groups that share a common culture (Uswahili) and language (Kiswahili).

They are descended from groups known as Cushitic Herdsmen who used to live in the coastal areas before later being joined by the Bantu tribal peoples, including the Mijikenda, with whom they intermarried. Beginning around AD 700, groups of people migrating from other areas such as the Persian Gulf also joined these coastal people, adopting parts of their culture and language. Between the 9th and 12th Centuries AD, the Somalian Benaadir coast and Jubba River Valley became major settlement areas for all of these peoples which were increasingly coming together and intermarrying. Later, Indonesian, Hindi, and Portuguese traders settled on the coast. Soon, they too began adopting Swahili traits and became a part of the larger group.

The Swahili language has many different dialects. A number of its words were borrowed from Arabic, the second language for many Swahili. While outsiders often refer to them as "Swahili," many prefer to identify by their local settlement or clan name. Since that time, groups of Swahili have migrated to different parts of the coast, forming their own dialects and cultural variations. They are most likely to be living up and down the East African coast, and their highest populations are in Somalia and Tanzania, with lesser numbers in Kenya. Many live in the countries of southern Africa such as northern Mozambique and the islands of Zanzibar, Lamu, and the Comoros. A smaller number have gone inland to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Swahili ethnic group can be divided into two distinct groups: Swahili Arabs and Swahili-Bantu.

The Swahili Arabs

The Swahili Arabs (population +/- 90,000) live along the coasts of Tanzania and Kenya in an area commonly known as the Coastal Belt. They are concentrated in some of the ancient settlements along the coast and in cities such as Dar es Salaam, Tanga, and Mombasa. They can also be found throughout Zanzibar and Kenya's Lamu Islands. The Swahili Arabs refer to their ancestors as the "old" or "true" Arabs. The group arose from intermarriage between traders from Arabia and local Bantu and Cushitic peoples. Slaves and mangrove poles were the main commodities sent to Arabia and South Asia. Even today, many Arab Swahili aspire to work in the Gulf States and families frequently intermarry between Yemen and Oman. Culturally and theologically, the Swahili Arabs proudly align themselves with Arabia rather than Africa.

Their lifestyle is suited to the environment in which they live. Most of the Swahili Arabs live in rural villages. They are primarily farmers and fishermen, although some who live in the cities may have other professions. The farmers grow cereal grains, vegetables, spices, and raise livestock. Some may have special skills as carpenters, shipwrights, or religious leaders; a few have become teachers or doctors.

Coastal Arab villages consist of houses that are situated closely together often with several generations living in the same house. There are many female-headed households as a man is expected to provide a house for each of his wives and their children. Many women never leave the home. Family honor is very important, and each family member has a defined role according to Arab tradition. The family unit provides security during times of economic hardship and in old age. When young people leave their villages to find jobs in the towns or cities, the family socio-economic system is often weakened. Drug use among the youth is an increasing problem in society, especially in urban port cities.

As soon as a baby is born, the name "Allah" is whispered in its ear so that this will be the first word the child hears. Boys and girls are raised together during early childhood; however, they receive very different treatment. While boys may be sent to school and madrassa (an Islamic school where they are taught to read and recite the

Quran in Arabic), girls are often only sent to the madrassa and so may never learn to read and write their mother tongue.

Among the Coastal Arab Swahili, marriages take place as a way to continue a family lineage or as a means of meeting a family's needs. The Swahili Arabs tend to marry other Swahili Arabs and Somalis or Arabs, because they are proud of their Muslim and Arab heritage and desire to remain a closed group. Polygyny (having multiple wives) is normal in Muslim Arab Swahili society and divorce and remarriage is very common.

The Swahili Arabs are virtually all Sunni Muslim. Many follow the teachings of the Quran because it provides hope for a better life after death. Like other Muslims, the Swahili Arabs adhere to the "five pillars" of Islam. These include reciting prayers five times a day while facing Mecca, affirming that Allah is the only god and Mohammed is his prophet, observing the prescribed fasts, giving alms to the poor, and making at least one pilgrimage to Mecca. They are increasingly moving towards Wahhabi Islam due to the influence of the Gulf States and as a reaction against secular national governments which they perceive as persecuting them. Some of their cities boast centers of advanced Islamic learning and pilgrimage that attract students and teachers from all over Africa and beyond. These madrassas train Muslim imams who then move to other parts of Africa.

In a strong contrast to most of sub-Saharan Africa, many ordinary laypeople, both men and women, are theologically literate and articulate. They know their Quran and Hadith and are well versed in Islamic apologetics. The mosque is the center of worship and society. Men regularly attend the mosque for prayer, but women rarely attend, making their prayers in the home. While men worship at the mosques, women usually attend ceremonies conducted at home by female religious leaders.

In addition to their Islamic beliefs, some of the Coastal Arabs also believe in spirits and possession is not uncommon, especially among women. They may try to appease these spirits during times of crisis or sickness by enlisting a specialist to recite appropriate Quranic verses.

The Coastal Swahili Arabs are almost 100% Muslim, with very few believers reported.

The Swahili-Bantu

The Swahili-Bantu, numbering about 720,000, are located along the Indian Ocean coast of Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique. They practice folk Islam and less than 1% of the Swahili are Christian.

The Swahili-Bantu people came into existence after Bantu tribes along the coast of East Africa were invaded by and intermarried with Arab traders who settled permanently along the coast around the 11th century. The Swahili-Bantu developed their own trade language which was a mixture of Bantu tribal languages and Arabic. The name Swahili even comes from the Arabic word meaning "coast." The Swahili refer to themselves as the "Waswahili" – People of the coast. The Swahili seamlessly syncretized their traditional animistic beliefs when they converted to Islam, creating their own unique culture.

The Swahili-Bantu are predominately small-scale fishermen, subsistent farmers, and tradesmen. Although the Swahili-Bantu identify primarily as the "Waswahili" (the people of the coast), a majority still know their traditional Bantu tribal ancestry. All Swahili speak Kiswahili as their primary language, but a few of the older generation know some of their traditional tribal language as well.

What remains of their ancestral Bantu ceremonies, rites and rituals has been syncretized with Islam and is performed in Swahili and/or Arabic. They are known throughout East Africa for their witchcraft and witchdoctors who have incorporated Arabic and the Koran into their rituals and incantations. They live in fear of their Islamic leaders and being cursed by one another.

Many spend their meager incomes to ward off the evil spirits and the curses they bring. Women and girls are quite vulnerable and are seen predominately as objects to be possessed or traded by men. Although there are

Christian resources (including the *Jesus* Film) and multiple Bible translations available in the Swahili language, the Swahili are known for their strong resistance to churches, missionaries, and traditional ways of sharing the gospel. There are churches throughout the Swahili coast, especially in towns and cities, but their membership consists of a high majority of non-local Christians from reached tribes who have sojourned into the area for business or government work. These churches have been mostly ineffective in reaching the lost Swahili around them.



Geographic Distribution

There are 1,196,000 Swahili people in the world and they are found in 20 countries. The people group stretches from the Tana River in Kenya to the Somalian region known as Webi Shebelle. They reside in the Great Lakes Region, and also cover the areas of the Zanzibar Archipelago, the Tanzanian seaboard, the northern area of Mozambique, and the main inland areas near the Kenyan coast. The other areas occupied by the Swahili are the Indian Ocean Islands, as well as the Pate and Lamu island areas off of the Kenyan coast.

Some of the bigger populations are:

- Tanzania – largest population, especially in Zanzibar and coastal regions (approx. 996,000)
- Kenya – coastal towns and islands (approx. 56,074)
- Mozambique – northern coastal areas (approx. 22,000)
- Comoros – small coastal communities (approx. 4,000)
- Democratic Republic of the Congo – mainly Maniema and Kisangani regions (20,000–68,000)
- Somalia – southern coastal areas

Diaspora Populations

The Swahili language and culture have spread far beyond the coast due to trade, migration, and urbanization.

Significant diaspora communities exist in:

- Saudi Arabia – ~400,000
- Oman – ~100,000
- United States – ~90,000
- Madagascar – ~113,000
- Zambia – smaller communities

Country	Population ▼	Scale
Saudi Arabia	373,000	
Somalia	326,000	
Tanzania	93,000	
Congo, Democratic Republic of	68,000	
United States	63,000	
Zambia	55,000	
Kenya	50,000	
Sudan	29,000	
Reunion	25,000	
Mozambique	24,000	
Burundi	16,000	
United Kingdom	16,000	
Australia	12,000	
Mayotte	11,000	
Rwanda	6,700	
Madagascar	6,600	
United Arab Emirates	6,200	
Uganda	5,700	
Greece	5,500	
Malawi	4,300	
Totals: 20	1,196,000	



Ethnic Composition

The Swahili identity is multicultural:

Core – Bantu-speaking ancestors from the East African coast

Influences – Afro-Arab, Comorian, Shirazi, Bajuni, and other mixed heritage groups

Language – Kiswahili (Bantu base with some Arabic loanwords)

Religion – Predominantly Muslim (Sunni, Shia, Sufi, Ibadi)

What Is Their culture?

Swahili culture is the culture of the Swahili people inhabiting the East African Coast, which is found in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Mozambique, as well as the adjacent islands of Zanzibar and Comoros and some parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Malawi. Their native language, Swahili, belongs to the Niger-Congo family.

As with the Swahili language, Swahili culture has a Bantu core and has also borrowed from foreign influences. Around 3,000 years ago, speakers of the proto-Bantu language group began a millennia-long series of migrations eastward from their homeland between West Africa and Central Africa, at the border of eastern Nigeria and Cameroon. This Bantu expansion first introduced Bantu peoples to central, southern, and southeastern Africa, regions they had previously been absent from. The Swahili people are mainly united under the mother tongue of Kiswahili. This also extends to Arab, Persian, and other migrants who reached the coast around the 7th and 8th centuries, providing cultural infusion and many loan words from Arabic and Persian.

Around the 8th century, the Swahili people began trading with the Arab, Persian, Indian, Chinese, and Southeast Asian peoples—a process known as the Indian Ocean trade. As a consequence of long-distance trading routes crossing the Indian Ocean, the Swahili were influenced by all of these cultures. During the 10th

century, several city-states flourished along the Swahili Coast and adjacent islands, including Kilwa, Malindi, Gedi, Pate, Comoros, and Zanzibar.

The Bantu Swahili people served as intermediaries and facilitators to local, Arab, Persian, Indonesian, Malaysian, Indian, and Chinese merchants. They all competed against one another for the best of the Great Lakes region's trade business, and their chief exports were salt, ebony, gold, ivory, and sandalwood. They were also involved in the slave trade. These city-states began to decline towards the 16th century, mainly as a consequence of the arrival of the Portuguese. Eventually, Swahili trading centers went out of business, and commerce between Africa and Asia on the Indian Ocean collapsed.

The Kilwa Sultanate, centered at Kilwa (an island off modern-day Tanzania), stretched over much of the East African Coast. Despite its origin as a Persian colony, extensive inter-marriage and conversion of local Bantu inhabitants and later Arab immigration turned the Kilwa Sultanate into a diverse state not ethnically different from the mainland. It is the mixture of Perso-Arab and Bantu cultures in Kilwa that created Swahili as a distinct East African culture and language. The Muslims of Kilwa would often refer to themselves generally as *Shirazi* or *Arabs*, and to the unconverted Bantu peoples of the mainland as *Zanj* or *Khaffirs* (infidels).

The Kilwa Sultanate was almost wholly dependent on external commerce. There was little or no agriculture carried on within the boundaries of the sultanate. Grains (principally millet and rice), meats (cattle and poultry), and other supplies necessary to feed the large city populations had to be purchased from the Bantu peoples of the interior. Kilwan traders from the coast encouraged the development of market towns in the Bantu-dominated highlands of what are now Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. The Kilwan mode of living was as middlemen traders, importing manufactured goods from Arabia and India, which were then traded in the highland market towns for Bantu-produced agricultural commodities (grain, meats) for their own subsistence, and precious raw materials (gold, ivory) that they would export back to Asia.

The diverse history of the East African Coast has also resulted in multicultural influences on Swahili arts, including furniture and architecture. The Swahili do not often use designs with images of living beings due to the Muslim influence. Instead, Swahili designs are primarily geometric. The most typical musical genre of Swahili culture is taarab (or tarabu), sung in the Swahili language. Its melodies and orchestration have Arab and Indian influences, although Western instruments, such as guitars, are sometimes used.

What Are Their Lives Like?

For about 2,000 years, the backbone of the Swahili economy has been commerce no matter what part of Africa they live in. They worked as cross-national merchants trading spices, slaves, ivory, gold, and grain. Today, international commerce is still important to the Swahili but to a lesser degree. Many of the upper-class Swahili now manage small businesses, do clerical work, and teach school. Those living in cities sometimes own plantations that provide both their income and their food supply.

Most lower-class Swahili are farmers. Their principal crops include rice, sorghum, millet, and maize. Since the Swahili are predominantly Muslim, Islamic practices play a large role in their daily activities. Dietary laws, rules of dress, social etiquette, marriage ceremonies, laws concerning divorce, and rituals at birth and death are all governed by Islamic tradition. Boys go to Islamic schools where they study the Koran. The central building in each town is the mosque.

In summary, the Swahili are a Bantu-origin ethnic group with strong Afro-Arab and Comorian influences, concentrated along the East African coast and islands, with a diaspora of over 1.2 million people worldwide.

Notable Swahili individuals include:

- Salim Ahmed Salim of Zanzibar, former Sixth Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity
- Abeid Karume, first President of Zanzibar
- Zakia Meghji, former Minister of Finance of Tanzania

- Najib Balala, current Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Tourism

The early Swahili inhabitants of Kilwa were described as "Zanj, jet-black in color, and with tattoo marks on their faces." Architecture included arches, courtyards, isolated women's quarters, the mihrab, towers, and decorative elements on the buildings themselves. Many ruins may still be observed near the southern Kenyan port of Malindi in the Gede ruins (the lost city of Gede/Gedi).

The staple foods are rice and sorghum; the most important of the many other crops and trees are the coconut, banana, tamarind, mango, and cloves. Fishing is important everywhere, and few livestock are kept. Men have the heavier work—as contract laborers on clove plantations and in the largest towns such as Mombasa, Zanzibar, and Dar es Salaam.



Economy

For centuries the Swahili depended greatly on trade from the Indian Ocean. The Swahili have played a vital role as middle man between east, central and South Africa, and the outside world. Trade contacts have been noted as early as 100 AD. by early Roman writers who visited the East African coast in the 1st century.

Trade routes extended from Somalia to Tanzania and into the DRC, along which goods were brought to the coasts and were sold to Arab, Indian, and Portuguese traders. Historical and archaeological records attest to Swahilis being maritime merchants who sailed the East African coastline to lands as far away as Arabia, Persia, Madagascar, India and even China. Chinese pottery and Arabian beads have been found in the ruins of Great Zimbabwe.

During the Middle Ages, ivory and slaves became a substantial source of revenue. Many slaves sold in Zanzibar ended up in Brazil, which was then a Portuguese colony. Swahili fishermen of today still rely on the ocean to supply their primary source of income. Fish is sold to their inland neighbors in exchange for products of the interior.

Sociopolitical Organization

The Swahili kept and traded in slaves. Slaves, numbering between 25 percent and 50 percent of the total population, were obtained from the interior from indigenous rulers and used as trade commodities, for house- and fieldwork, and as concubines. Slavery was abolished under the British in 1897 in Zanzibar and Tanganyika and in 1907 in Kenya. Its abolition brought the traditional mercantile economy largely to an end.

Kinship, Marriage, and Family

Traditionally, Swahili settlements are governed through kin groups. Communities are divided into moieties, and these are further divided into wards or quarters. Marriage is preferred between cross and parallel cousins, largely done as a way to retain rights over land within the small kin group. Authority is held by senior men and women.

The main social groups are patrilineal subclans and lineages. For firstborn daughters, their marriages should be between close paternal parallel cousins. Bride-wealth and dowry are both transferred for the daughter in her lineage house. This kind of marriage is called uxorilocal. Marriages of later-born daughters are more usually with cross cousins.

Divorce is permitted under Islamic law: it is easy for husbands but extremely difficult for wives. The marriages of firstborn patrician daughters are monogamous, and divorce is rare. All other marriages are often polygamous, and divorce is extremely common, as high as 90 percent in some areas.

Swahili women undergo initiation (without physical operation) at puberty, in order to be permitted to marry. Boys are not initiated but are circumcised in infancy; in the past there was more elaborate male initiation. Both boys' and girls' socialization after infancy takes the form of Islamic education in the Quranic schools attached to mosques. Today most children also attend nonreligious schools in order to acquire "Western" education, but religious education retains its central place, and overtly Christian schools are totally avoided.

Crafts and Hobbies

Swahili artisans on the island of Lamu are famous for their intricately carved wooden furniture and doors. They also construct miniature, painted replicas of the boats (dhows) used for fishing. Women use brown colored henna to paint complex flower designs on their hands and feet (up to the knees) as preparation for attending a wedding.

Clothing

Traditionally, women wear brightly colored cotton cloths (*kanga* or *leso*). These are wrapped around their waists and upper bodies and draped over their shoulders and heads. Men wear a striped cloth (*kikoi*) around the waist that hangs to the knees. As a mark of being Muslim some men wear small white caps with elaborate tan embroidery.

Today, women wear Western-style dresses in many colors, patterns, and fabrics. Outside the house, women wear a black, floor-length cloak with an attached veil, called a *buibui*. Men wear Western-style trousers and shirts. On Fridays (the Muslim day of rest), or other religious occasions, they wear long, white caftans. Shorts are worn only by children.

Food

Rice is the staple. Meals include local vegetables (eggplant, okra, spinach), fruits (mangoes, coconuts, pineapples), and spices (cloves, cardamon, hot pepper). Fish is also central to the diet. Chicken and goat meat are popular for holiday meals. Sweet tea with milk is served several times a day. The Swahili are prohibited from eating pork or drinking alcohol. The members of one clan from northern Kenya observe a taboo on eating fish.

Major Holidays

The Swahili people celebrate national public holidays in addition to typical Muslim holidays.

What Are Their Beliefs?

Nearly all of the Swahili profess to be Muslims; however, many of their traditional pre-Islamic beliefs and practices still exist. For example, they believe in many spirits, both good and evil. They also believe in the supernatural power of witches and sorcerers. The Swahili often have folk explanations for natural occurrences. For example, some believe that a cow is supporting the earth and that earthquakes are caused when the cow moves its horns. They believe that thunder is the sound of God speaking with the angels and that lightning occurs when God is pleased. To the Swahili, lightning is a good sign because it means that God will send plentiful rain and food that year. In addition to orthodox beliefs in djinn, many Swahili men wear protective amulets around their necks, which contain verses from the Koran.

Divination is often practiced through Koranic readings. Often the diviner incorporates verses from the Qu'ran into treatments for certain diseases. On occasion, he instructs a patient to soak a piece of paper containing verses of the Qu'ran in water. With this ink infused water supposedly containing the word of Allah, the patient will then wash his body or drink it to cure himself of his affliction.

Traditional Islamic dress such as the *jilbab* and *thob* are popular. Their lifestyle is similar to that of Arab cultures in that they do not generally allow women and men to mix with each other. The men can be usually

seen working and roaming in the public areas, whereas women live in their houses only, and can mainly speak only to other women. Men are generally the ones who make decisions regarding women and youth.

However, the Swahili, particularly those in diaspora, have recently demonstrated an interest in Western culture. For example, in addition to attending Islamic schools, most children also attend non-religious schools to acquire a Western-style education. Also, traditional Swahili folk medicines are no longer the only means of treating those with illnesses. In some areas there are modern medical clinics. Many of the Swahili people who live in large cities now own televisions through which they are constantly being exposed to Western ideas. Swahili women may be more independent today than in times past and are becoming more involved in the economic and social realms of society.

Swahili culture has not only been influenced by the Islamic religion and Western ideas but also by the Northeast Bantu (from Sub-Saharan Africa) and Arab cultures, as well as Asian, Persian, and Indian cultures. This has made their culture quite unique, and they can easily be distinguished from their neighbors.

What Are Their Needs?

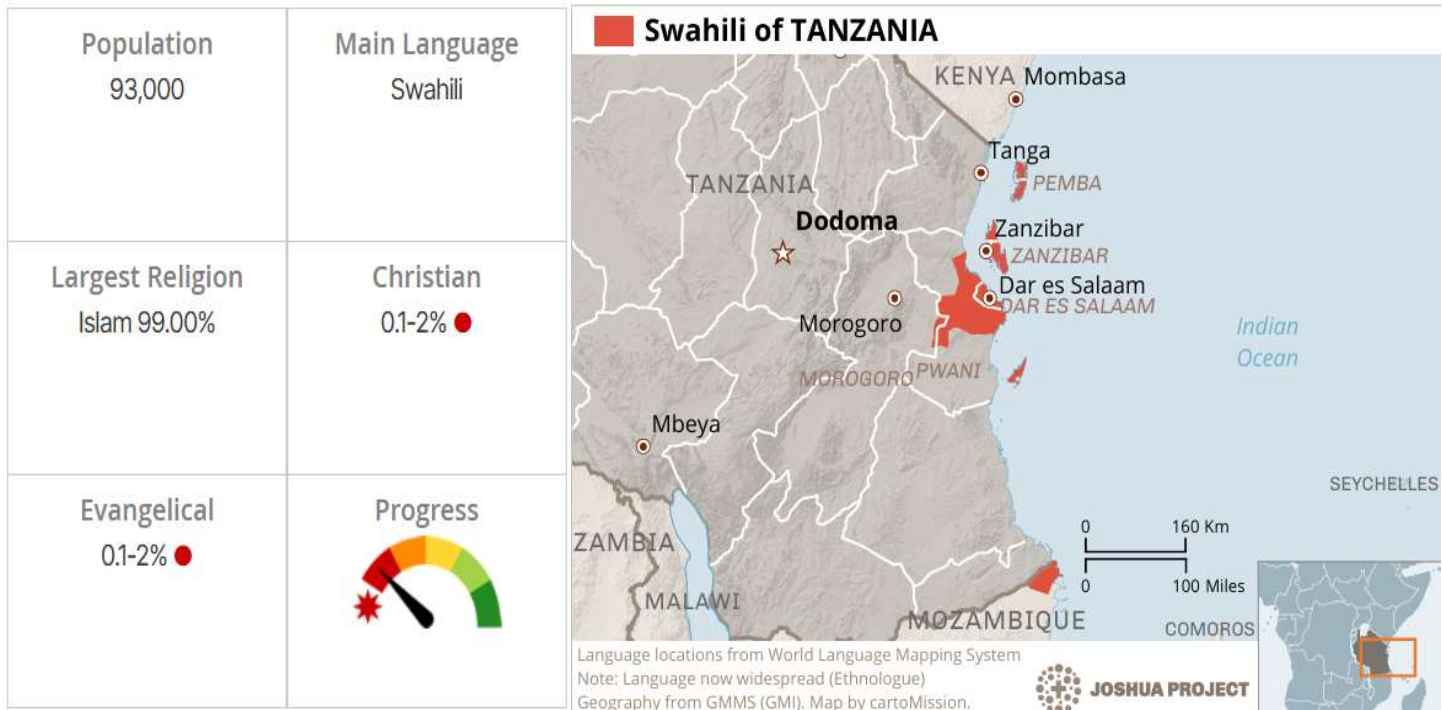
The Swahili people have had increasing sectarian conflicts with the Somali people. This has posed a threat to the regional community, people's lives, and the culture at large. The danger is also seen along the Banadir coast of Somalia around Mogadishu, which has been looted by militant groups and individuals, causing people to flee the towns.

By African standards, the Swahili are economically prosperous. But like the church in Laodicea that was economically rich but spiritually needy, the Swahili need the only Savior.

The Swahili of the Tanzania

The Swahili of Tanzania were formerly mainly found in Zanzibar and coastal areas but are now quite widespread throughout the country, though they are still focused near the coast. They number from 93,000 – 1,085,000 and have a very small evangelical presence.

https://peoplesgroups.org/people_groups/PG015047/



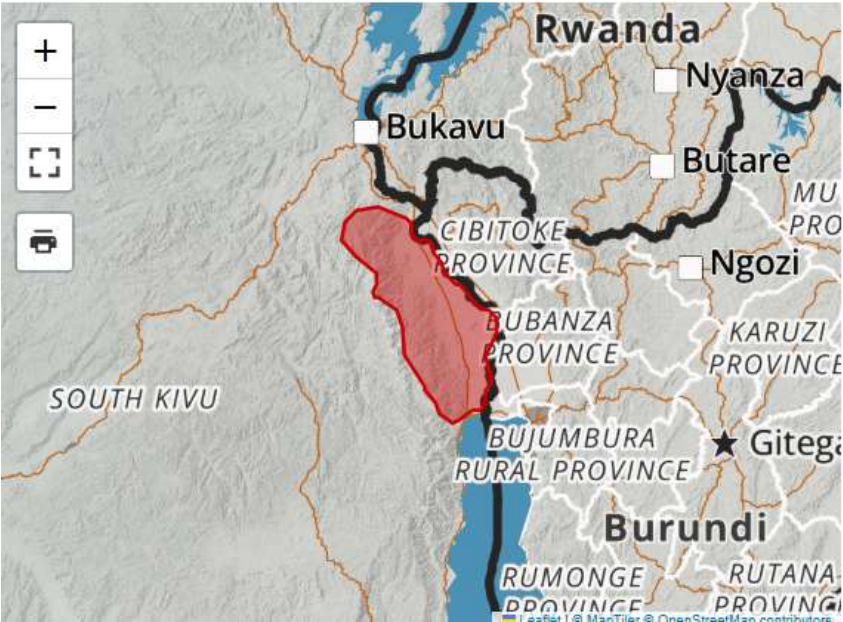
The Swahili of the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Swahili in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are found mainly in Maniema and Kisangani, and other areas along the Tanganyika region and near Lake Tanganyika.

Swahili influence in the DRC dates back to the 12th–14th centuries, when coastal Swahili traders and settlers moved inland via trade routes. Their expansion was linked to the Arab slave and ivory trade, with figures like Tippu Tib—a Swahili-Arab trader from Zanzibar—establishing trading posts and networks in the DRC, Uganda, and Tanzania. These networks facilitated both commerce and cultural exchange.

https://peoplegroups.org/people_groups/PG014535/

Population 68,000	Main Language Swahili
Largest Religion Islam (Sunni) 92.58%	Christian 2-5% ●
Evangelical 0.1-2% ●	Progress 

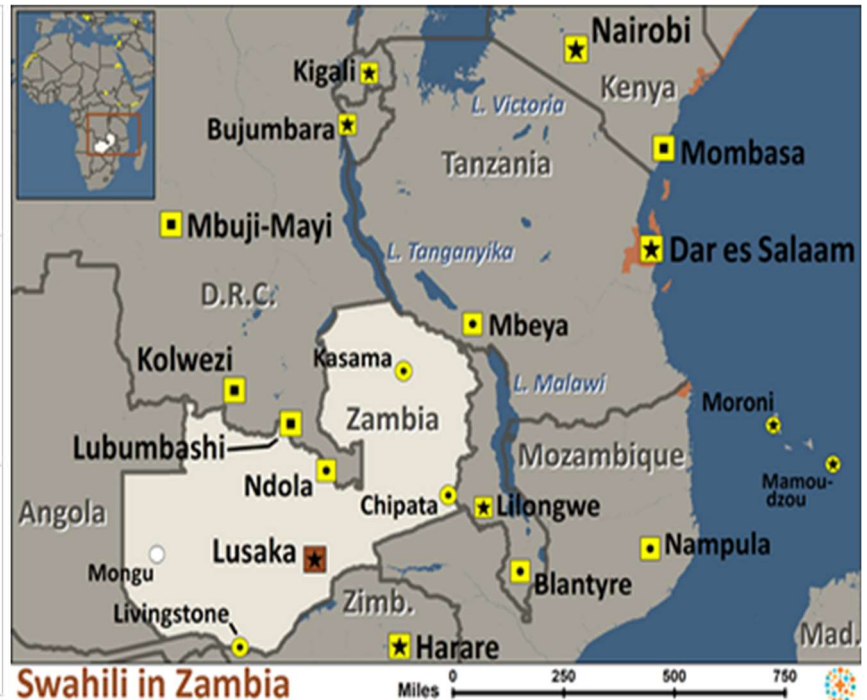


The Swahili of Zambia

The Swahili of Zambia are mainly located around Lusaka and number 39,000 – 55,000. They may also refer to themselves as Waungwana, Baraawe, Barwaani, Mrima, Shirazi, Siddi, Swahili Shamba, or Zanzibari. Some reports suggest this is now a reached group but other reports, like Joshua Project, maintain that there are no known Christians among them.

https://peoplesgroups.org/people_groups/PG015634/

Population 55,000	Main Language Swahili
Largest Religion Islam 100.00%	Christian 0-0.1% ●
Evangelical 0-0.1% ●	Progress 



The Swahili of Kenya

The Swahili of Kenya are primarily found in Lamu and Garissa counties and along the Somali border to the Tana River mouth, all along the coast and inland from there. There are approximately 50,000 – 60,000 Swahili in Kenya and a very small evangelical presence.

https://peoplegroups.org/people_groups/PG033493/

Population 50,000	Main Language Swahili
Largest Religion Islam 84.47%	Christian 0.1-2% ●
Evangelical 0.1-2% ●	Progress 



The Swahili of Mozambique

The Swahili of Mozambique are primarily found on the north east coast in Cabo Delgado Province. Their population is 18,500 – 24,000. They practice folk Islam.

https://peoplegroups.org/people_groups/PG015420/

Population 24,000	Main Language Swahili
Largest Religion Islam 100.00%	Christian 0-0.1% ●
Evangelical 0-0.1% ●	Progress 



The Swahili of Burundi

The Swahili (Waungwana) diaspora community of Burundi are widely spread around the capital of Bujumbura. They are noted in the Buyenzi quarter and in Muslim and Congolese neighborhoods. Swahili is known to be spoken around Gitega so there may be Swahili people located there as well.

https://peoplegroups.org/people_groups/PG014471/

Population 16,000	Main Language Swahili
Largest Religion Islam (Sunni) 100.00%	Christian 0-0.1%
Evangelical 0-0.1%	Progress



The Swahili of Uganda

The Swahili in Uganda are a small group who live around the Kampala metro area. According to Joshua Project, they have been reached with the gospel as statistics suggest around 13% are Christian. However, other sources suggest that they remain unengaged and unreached with the gospel. Efforts should be made to mobilize any believers among them to reach Swahili Muslims.

https://peoplegroups.org/people_groups/PG015141/; https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15145/UG

Population 5,700	Main Language Swahili
Largest Religion Islam 87.00%	Christian 10-50% ●
Evangelical 10-50% ●	Progress 



The Swahili of the USA

The Swahili are scattered all around the world, mainly along Eastern Africa and the Persian Gulf. There is a small number of Swahili (approximately 63,000 – 82,000) living in the US. They are most likely to be found in New York City, Washington DC, Dallas Ft. Worth, Houston, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and Atlanta.

In the United States, there is a discrepancy between the African-Americans who were brought as slaves centuries ago and more recent immigrants from Africa. The recent African immigrants, like the Swahili, are generally prosperous. They often own businesses. These new "African-Americans" are increasing in number and have been since the 2010s. African immigrants to the United States form their own cultural associations and hold cultural events in American urban centers. Since the Swahili people straddle many countries along the coast of East Africa, they do not fit in as well as Somalis or Ethiopians for example. They are most likely involved with Pan African events. If someone were going to lead them to Christ, they would probably be likely to attend churches that are culturally Pan African. Data suggests that 25% of Swahili in the US identify as Christian.

https://peoplegroups.org/people_groups/PG047306/

Population 63,000	Main Language Swahili
Largest Religion Islam 75.00%	Christian 10-50% ●
Evangelical 10-50% ●	Progress 

The Swahili of the Indian Ocean Islands (Seychelles, Comoros, Mayotte, Reunion, Madagascar)

The Swahili of the Indian Ocean Islands (Madagascar, Mayotte, Reunion, Comoros, Seychelles) number approximately 45,000 people. They are considered engaged with the gospel but still unreached. They have migrated to these islands and follow strict Sunni Islam. There are a around 25,000 living in Reunion, 11,000 in Mayotte, 6,700 in Madagascar, 1,200 in the Comoros and mainly on the island of Grand Comore, and around 600 in Victoria, the capital of Seychelles.

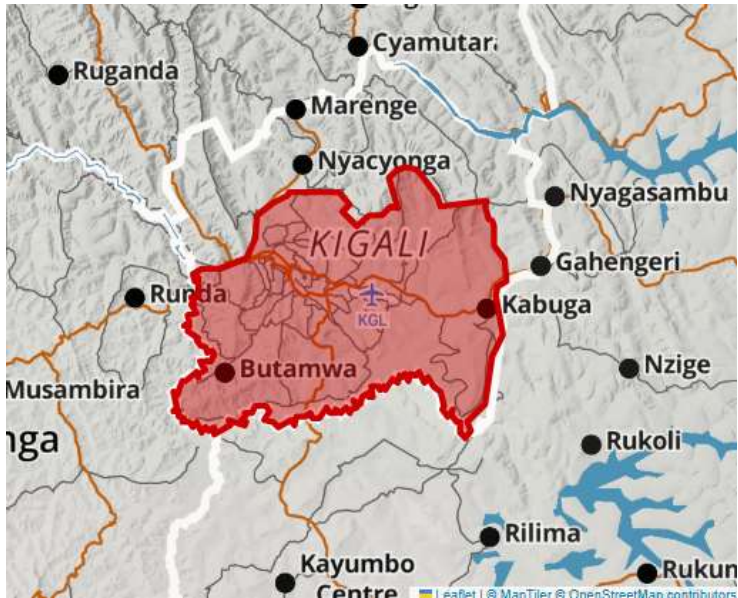
Population 11,000	Main Language Swahili
Largest Religion Islam 100.0%	Christian 0-0.1% ●
Evangelical 0-0.1% ●	Progress 



The Swahili of Rwanda

The Swahili of Rwanda, numbering anywhere between 7,000 to 20,500 people, are unreached and do not have a church or missionary working among them. Their location is around the capital of Kigali. They are a diaspora group, meaning they are not native to Rwanda. Their primary language is Swahili and their primary religion is Sunni Islam.

Population 6,800	Main Language Swahili
Largest Religion Islam 100.0%	Christian 0-0.1% ●
Evangelical 0-0.1% ●	Progress 



The Swahili of Sudan

There are approximately 30,000 Swahili people living in the area around Khartoum, Sudan. They are Sunni Muslim and there are no known believers among them.

Population 30,000	Main Language Swahili
Largest Religion Islam 100.0%	Christian 0-0.1% ●
Evangelical 0-0.1% ●	Progress 



The Swahili of Somalia

The Bantu Swahili of Somalia, numbering anywhere from 54,000 to 337,000 people, are considered unengaged with the gospel and unreached and are located along the southeast coast. They are an indigenous community of Somalia. Their primary language is Swahili and their primary religion is Sunni Islam.

Population 337,000	Main Language Swahili Dialect Mwini
Largest Religion Islam 100.0%	Christian 0-0.1% ●
Evangelical 0-0.1% ●	Progress 



The Swahili of United Arab Emirates

The Swahili people of the United Arab Emirates are about 6,300 in population and are scattered through the Dubai urban area.

https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15145/AE

Population 6,300	Main Language Swahili
Largest Religion Islam 100.0%	Christian 0-0.1% ●
Evangelical 0-0.1% ●	Progress 



The Swahili of Saudi Arabia

There is a large group of Swahili living in diaspora in Saudi Arabia – approximately 380,000. Many of them conduct business deals with Saudi corporations and there might be some who work as oil workers or other less-prestigious jobs. Saudi Arabia is a theocracy, and the Swahili have few if any chances to hear and respond to the gospel.

https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15145/SA

Population 380,000	Main Language Swahili
Largest Religion Islam 100.0%	Christian 0-0.1% ●
Evangelical 0-0.1% ●	Progress 

