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DIPARTIMENTO ASIA, AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO

*Series Minor*

LXXXV

## LUGHA NA FASIHI

Scritti in onore e memoria di

*Essays in honour and memory of*

ELENA BERTONCINI ZÚBKOVÁ

a cura di

*editors*

Flavia Aiello and Roberto Gaudio



UniorPress

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Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo  
Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”  
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## INTRODUZIONE

Questo volume è stato raccolto per esprimere un sentito tributo alla carriera per molti versi pionieristica di Elena Bertoncini Zúbková, studiosa di lingua e letteratura swahili, critica, traduttrice e infaticabile docente in Italia e in diverse università europee. Purtroppo, poco prima della pubblicazione, Elena è venuta a mancare; dedichiamo quindi i nostri lavori alla sua memoria.

Questa raccolta non poteva che nascere presso l'Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale" dove, dopo una prima esperienza di docenza presso la Charles University di Praga, ha fondato l'insegnamento di Lingua e Letteratura Swahili nel 1968, insegnando fino al 2009. Durante gli anni di insegnamento ha generosamente preparato a fine didattico ottimi materiali per gli studenti italiani, tuttora in uso, relativi alla lingua, ai dialetti e alla letteratura swahili classica e moderna. Queste opere, che coprono l'intero arco di studi triennali e magistrali, hanno permesso a generazioni di studenti (compresi alcuni attuali ricercatori) di apprendere la lingua e la letteratura swahili utilizzando la loro lingua madre e sulla base di una metodologia fondata sull'analisi di testi originali e non su regole prescrittive. Notevole anche il suo lavoro di raccolta di pubblicazioni, sia scientifiche sia creative, spesso difficilmente reperibili. Queste, oltre ad arricchire la biblioteca dell'Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale", sono state da lei catalogate in bibliografie apparse in riviste e volumi, costituendo un prezioso strumento di consultazione.

Nel corso di quarant'anni, inoltre, Elena Bertoncini Zúbková ha svolto assiduamente ricerche nell'ambito della lingua e letteratura swahili, producendo opere generali, saggi e numerosissimi articoli che sono diventati un riferimento imprescindibile per tutti gli studiosi in campo nazionale e internazionale. Si è distinta, anche, per le numerose traduzioni di opere letterarie (principalmente racconti e poesie), volte sia nella sua lingua madre, lo slovacco, sia nella sua lingua d'elezione, l'italiano, svolgendo in quest'ultimo caso un importante ruolo di divulgazione della letteratura swahili in Italia. La scelta dell'italiano è stata, allora come oggi, controcorrente rispetto al più diffuso orientamento verso un pubblico internazionale, soprattutto anglofono o francofono, che lei, versatile poliglotta, avrebbe potuto seguire con altrettanta qualità. La Bertoncini Zúbková, proprio grazie a questa sua capacità, ha da sempre curato l'aspetto dell'internazionalizzazione della didattica e della

ricerca. Anticipando la mobilità che oggi contraddistingue le università dell'Unione Europea, ha intrattenuto, infatti, rapporti costanti e duraturi col mondo accademico, insegnando letteratura swahili all'estero e collaborando attivamente con studiosi in Europa e Africa. In particolare, ha insegnato per un decennio (1989-1999) all'Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales di Parigi (come ricorda anche Lutz Diegner nel suo contributo) e tra il 1989 e il 1995 ha tenuto corsi intensivi presso alcune università in Germania, Olanda e Finlandia. È stata membro di varie associazioni internazionali, quali l'Association Pour l'Étude des Littératures Africaines e l'African Literature Association, e ha frequentato assiduamente convegni di linguistica e di letteratura africana, in special modo il Swahili Colloquium in Germania, a cui ha partecipato dalla sua fondazione nel 1987 per i successivi trent'anni (si veda a proposito il contributo di Gudrun Mieke nel presente volume).

Per sottolineare il plurilinguismo che ha caratterizzato la quarantennale attività di didattica e ricerca della Bertoncini Zúbková, i saggi raccolti in questo volume sono in diverse lingue: francese, inglese, italiano e swahili. Cifra della sua attività accademica è anche l'interdisciplinarietà, evidenziata dalle sue analisi testuali legate alla lingua e dagli studi linguistici e di didattica del swahili fondati su un corpus letterario. Questo lavoro, in particolare la sua scelta innovativa di occuparsi della letteratura moderna, ha aperto la strada a nuovi sviluppi nell'ambito degli studi swahili, qui testimoniati dalla varietà disciplinare dei contributi ad opera di ex-allievi, colleghi, critici, giovani ricercatori e scrittori con cui ha condiviso l'amore per la lingua e letteratura swahili. Per tale ragione abbiamo incluso, oltre ai contributi di natura scientifica, un suo ritratto ad opera di Alena Rettová, presentato nel 2014 a Bayreuth durante il simposio *New Dynamics in Swahili Studies*, e una sezione dedicata agli scritti creativi. Il poeta swahili Ustadh Mau e l'italiano Enrico D'Angelo le hanno dedicato entrambi una poesia. Abdilatif Abdalla, Kulikoyela Kahigi, Farouk Topan e Kithaka wa Mberia hanno inteso omaggiarla con degli scritti inediti. Inediti sono anche i racconti brevi (a illustrazione di proverbi swahili) di Abedi Tandika, primo lettore di swahili all'Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale", che qui appaiono grazie alla volontà dell'attuale lettrice, moglie di Abedi, Fatuma Tandika.

I contributi accademici sono raggruppati in base alle materie, ai generi e/o alle metodologie comuni. Le prime due sezioni sono dedicate a prospettive storico-critiche di ampio respiro. Nella prima Mugyabuso Mulokozi, Clarissa Vierke e Serena Talento offrono una ricostruzione storica rispettivamente della

didattica della letteratura presso l'Università di Dar es Salaam, della concettualizzazione e della presentazione editoriale dell'*utenzi* (pl. *tenzi*, forma prosodica di carattere narrativo e religioso) da parte dei primi studiosi europei, e della traduzione letteraria in swahili.

Il focus della seconda sezione è la narrativa swahili. Qui Xavier Garnier propone una lettura che ricollega la narrazione swahili dai primi *tenzi* al romanzo contemporaneo alla luce di una sua dimensione mistica, mentre Lutz Diegner presenta una panoramica e un tentativo di classificazione delle varie tendenze letterarie nei decenni del romanzo post-indipendenza. Gli sviluppi più recenti del romanzo swahili in Kenya, incluse forme di post-modernismo e distopia, sono esposti da Mikhail Gromov. I contributi che seguono sono dedicati a un'opera scelta o a un singolo autore, evidenziandone la dimensione sociologica. Il saggio di Uta Reuster-Jahn delinea il profilo letterario di Alex Banzi, uno degli autori degli anni '70 e '80 più prolifici, focalizzandosi sulle opportunità di formazione e sul ruolo della stampa nello sviluppo e diffusione della letteratura swahili. Ridder Samsom e Sauda Barwani, combinando un approccio stilistico (ispirato ai lavori di E. Bertoncini Zúbková) con la sociologia della letteratura, analizzano il romanzo *Kipimo cha Mizani* (Unità di misura, 2004) di Bi Zainab Burhani.

La sezione successiva è dedicata all'interpretazione e alla traduzione della poesia swahili. Flavia Aiello propone un'analisi traduttologica delle poesie di Abdilatif Abdalla, sottolineando le principali criticità e le soluzioni adottate nel recente lavoro, curato con Gaudio, *Ushairi na Uhuru. Poesie scelte di Abdilatif Abdalla e Euphrase Kezilahabi* (2017). Roberto Gaudio confronta i testi di Ebrahim Hussein e Euphrase Kezilahabi sulla base della loro estetica, facendo emergere le posizioni filosofiche e politiche dei due autori. Annachiara Raia traccia il profilo di un autore contemporaneo, Mahmoud Ahmed Abdulkadir, in arte Ustadh Mau, mostrando il legame simbiotico tra la sua poesia e l'ambiente geo-culturale da cui trae ispirazione. Ugualmente basato su delle ricerche in Kenya, nella città di Mombasa, è il contributo di Rose Marie Beck sulla funzione comunicativa di alcuni oggetti d'uso quotidiano nell'area swahili. Il saggio di Irene Brunotti ci trasporta in uno spazio pubblico digitale (*cyberbaraza*) in cui analizza le trasformazioni e ridefinizioni delle identità culturali e politiche con speciale attenzione al contesto delle recenti elezioni a Zanzibar. Alena Rettová riflette sulla medialità e l'intermedialità del sapere filosofico in Africa, con particolare riferimento alle produzioni in lingue autoctone. Questi tre ultimi contributi costituiscono la sezione intorno alla



dimensione mediale, mentre i tre successivi costituiscono quella seguente su storia e cultura di aree swahili. Odile Racine dedica il suo lavoro ai riti d'iniziazione a scopo terapeutico nella regione a sud dell'isola di Zanzibar, inclusa la documentazione e traduzione di alcune performance (*ngoma*) da lei registrate. Questo intervento è seguito da quello di Nelli Gromova sulla storia di Pate, basato sulle cronache (*habari*) e sull'esperienza etnografica dell'autrice. Conclude la sezione il contributo di Maria Suriano che, attraverso la sua intervista a Mama Daisy, un'attivista del TANU (Tanganyika African National Union), delinea il ruolo dei movimenti femminili, della musica e della performance nella politica a cavallo dell'indipendenza.

Le restanti due sezioni sono dedicate agli studi su linguistica storica, morfologia, sintassi, semantica e lessicografia swahili. Il saggio di Gudrun Mieke propone una ricostruzione storica del processo di grammaticalizzazione tramite il quale potrebbero essersi formati gli attuali marcatori verbali del passato (*-li-*) e del condizionale (*-nge-* e *-ngali-*) utilizzati nel swahili standard. Edith Lyimo presenta un'analisi morfosintattica delle forme *-ki-*, *endapo*, *ikiwa*, *iwapo*, *-nge-*, *-ngeli-*, *-ngali-* e *kama* nell'ambito del periodo ipotetico, utilizzando sia studi scientifici sia informanti di lingua swahili. Sergio Baldi, nel suo contributo, sviluppa alcune riflessioni metodologiche riguardo i dizionari swahili bilingui, mentre Maddalena Toscano e Antonio Leva propongono alcune considerazioni sull'uso di *-taka* (volere) e *-penda* (amare) in alcuni passi selezionati da testi religiosi swahili. Il saggio di Rosanna Tramutoli presenta degli esempi di espressioni metaforiche riferite al cuore (*moyo*) in swahili e in italiano, mettendone in luce alcuni aspetti linguistici e concettuali. Completano il volume la bibliografia della produzione scientifica della Bertoni Zúbková e l'elenco aggiornato delle traduzioni letterarie da lei svolte.

Flavia Aiello & Roberto Gaudio

Napoli, 23 marzo 2019

## INTRODUCTION

This volume was composed in order to give a heart-felt tribute to the, in many ways pioneering, career of Elena Bertoncini Zúbková, scholar of Swahili language and literature, critic, translator and untiring teacher, both in Italy and at various universities around Europe. Regretfully, shortly before the publication of the book, Elena passed away; we therefore dedicate our contributions to her memory.

This work could not have been produced anywhere but the University of Naples “L’Orientale”, where, after initially working at the Charles University in Prague, Bertoncini Zúbková founded the teaching of Swahili Language and Literature in 1968 and taught until 2009. In the course of her years of teaching, Bertoncini Zúbková generously prepared fine quality didactic material, still in use today, on Swahili language, dialects and literature, both modern and classical, for her Italian students. These works, which cover the entire span of the three-year and Master’s degree courses, have permitted a generation of students, including some who are researchers at present, to study and learn Swahili language and literature by using their own language and through a methodology based on the analysis of original texts and not on prescriptive rules. Another noteworthy contribution by Bertoncini Zúbková is that of her work in collecting, often very difficult to find, creative and scientific publications. Besides enriching the library at the University of Naples “L’Orientale”, these collections have been catalogued by Bertoncini Zúbková into bibliographies which have appeared in journals and volumes and represent a priceless resource for consultation.

What is more, over the course of forty years, Elena Bertoncini Zúbková has carried out assiduous research within the field of Swahili language and literature, producing general works, essays and numerous articles which have become an essential point of reference for all scholars of the field, be they in Italy or abroad. She has also distinguished herself through her numerous translations of literary works (principally novels and poetry), both into her native tongue, Slovak, and her adopted language, Italian, through which she has performed an important role in making Swahili literature available in Italy. Her choice of Italian conflicted somewhat, as it still does today, with the more common inclination towards an international audience through writing in English or

French, something that, as a versatile polyglot, she could have done with equal quality. Indeed, thanks to this very linguistic capacity, Bertoncini Zúbková has always given great attention to the international aspects of teaching and research and, ahead of that mobility that is today a characteristic of universities in the European Union, she established constant, lasting relationships with the academic world, teaching Swahili literature abroad and actively collaborating with scholars in Europe and Africa. In particular, she taught at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales in Paris (as Lutz Diegner also recalls in his contribution) and, between 1989 and 1995, gave intensive courses at universities in Germany, the Netherlands and Finland. Bertoncini Zúbková was a member of various international associations, such as the Association Pour l'Étude des Littératures Africaines and the African Literature Association, and has regularly attended conferences on African linguistics and literature, particularly the Swahili Colloquium in Germany, which she participated in at its foundation in 1987 and for the next thirty years (regarding this, see the contribution to this volume by Gudrun Mieke).

The essays collected in this volume are in a variety of languages, French, English, Italian and Swahili, underlining the multilingualism that has distinguished Bertoncini Zúbková's forty years of didactic and research activity. Another side to her academic activity is interdisciplinarity, as is demonstrated by her textual analyses relating to language and the study of Swahili linguistics and didactics founded upon a body of written literary works. This work, and particularly her innovative choice to focus on modern literature, opened up the way for new developments within the field of Swahili studies, as is testified to here by the disciplinary variety of the contributions by ex-students, colleagues, critics, young researchers and writers with whom she has shared a love of Swahili language and literature. This is the reason why we have included in the present volume a written portrait of Bertoncini Zúbková by Alena Rettová which was presented during the *New Dynamics in Swahili Studies* symposium in Bayreuth in 2014, and a section devoted to creative works. The Swahili poet Ustadh Mau and the Italian, Enrico D'Angelo have both dedicated a poem to her. Abdilatif Abdalla, Kulikoyela Kahigi, Farouk Topan and Kithaka wa Mberia have chosen to honour her with some of their unpublished writings. The short stories (illustrating Swahili proverbs) by Abedi Tandika, the first Swahili lector at the University of Naples "L'Orientale", are also unpublished and appear here due to the wishes of the present lector, Fatuma Tandika, Abedi's wife.

The academic contributions are grouped together on the basis of a common subject, genre and/or methodology. The first two sections are devoted to wide ranging historical and critical perspectives. In the first, Mugyabuso Mulokozi, Clarissa Vierke and Serena Talento offer, respectively, a historical reconstruction of literature teaching at the University of Dar es Salaam, of the conceptualising and the editorial presentation of the *utenzi* (pl. *tenzi*, prosodic form of a narrative or religious character) by early European scholars of the field, and of the Swahili literary tradition. The focus of the second section is on the Swahili narrative. Xavier Garnier here suggests a reading that reconnects Swahili narration of the first *tenzis* to the contemporary novel in the light of its mystical dimension, while Lutz Diegner presents a panorama and an attempt at classification of the various literary tendencies over the decades of the post-independence novel. The most recent developments in the Swahili novel in Kenya, including post-modern and dystopian forms, are presented by Mikhail Gromov. The contributions that follow are dedicated to a chosen work or a single author, highlighting the sociological dimension. The essay by Uta Reuster-Jahn lays out the profile of Alex Banzi, one of the most prolific writers of the nineteen seventies and eighties, focussing upon education opportunities and the role of the press in the development and promotion of Swahili literature. By combining a stylistic approach (inspired by E. Bertoncini Zúbková) with the sociology of literature, Sauda Barwani and Ridder Samsom analyse the novel *Kipimo cha Mizani* (2004) by Bi Zainab Burhani.

The following section is dedicated to the interpretation and translation of Swahili poetry. Flavia Aiello proposes a traductological analysis of the poetry of Abdilatif Abdalla, underlining the principal difficulties and the solutions adopted in the recent work, *Ushairi na Uhuru. Poesie scelte di Abdilatif Abdalla e Euphrase Kezilahabi*, edited with Gaudioso (2017). Roberto Gaudioso compares texts by Ebrahim Hussein and Euphrase Kezilahabi on an aesthetic basis, bringing out the philosophical and political positions of the two writers. Annachiara Raia draws a profile of the contemporary author, Mahmoud Ahmed Abdulkadir, known as Ustadh Mau, showing the symbiotic links between his poetry and the geo-cultural context from which he draws inspiration. Rose Marie Beck's contribution on the communicative function of certain objects in daily use in the Swahili area is also based on fieldwork in Kenya. Irene Brunotti's essay takes us to a digital public space (*cyberbaraza*) where she analyses transformations and redefinitions of cultural and political identity, with special attention to the context of the recent elections in

Zanzibar. Alena Rettová reflects upon the mediality and intermediality of philosophical knowledge in Africa, with particular attention to production in indigenous languages. These last three contributions constitute the section dealing with the dimension of mediality, whereas the subsequent three look at the history and culture of Swahili areas. Odile Racine dedicates her work to initiation rites practised for therapeutic reasons in the region to the South of the island of Zanzibar, including documentation and translation of some performances (*ngoma*) she recorded. This piece is followed by that of Nelli Gromova on the history of Pate, based on chronicles (*habari*) and the author's ethnographic experience. The section ends with the contribution of Maria Suriano. Through her interview with Mama Daisy, an activist with TANU (Tanganyika African National Union), she outlines the role of women's movements, music and dance in politics around the time that independence was achieved.

The remaining two sections are dedicated to the study of Swahili morphology, syntax, semantics, lexicography and historical linguistics. Gudrun Mieke's essay proposes a historical reconstruction of the grammaticalisation process through which the actual verbal markers used in standard Swahili for the past (*-li-*) and the conditional (*-nge-* and *-ngali-*) might have been formed. Edith Lyimo presents a morphosyntactic analysis of the *-ki-*, *endapo*, *ikiwa*, *iwapo*, *-nge-*, *-ngeli-*, *-ngali-* and *kama* forms in the context of conditional sentences, using both scientific studies and information by Swahili language speakers. In his contribution, Sergio Baldi develops certain methodological reflections on bilingual Swahili dictionaries, while Maddalena Toscano and Antonio Leva present some considerations on the use of the verbs *-taka* (to want) and *-penda* (to love) in a number of passages selected from Swahili religious texts. Rosanna Tramutoli's essay proposes some examples of metaphorical expressions regarding the heart (*moyo*) in Swahili and in Italian, highlighting a number of linguistic and conceptual aspects. The volume is completed with the bibliography of Bertonicini Zúbková's scientific production and an up-to-date list of the literary translations she has produced.

*Flavia Aiello & Roberto Gaudio*

*Naples, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2019*

**PROSPETTIVE STORICO-CRITICHE**

***HISTORICAL - CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES***



PAMBAZUKO LA TAALUMA YA FASIHI YA KISWAHILI AFRIKA MASHARIKI:  
1968-1980

MUGYABUSO MLINZI MULOKOZI  
(University of Dar es Salaam)

Mwanzoni mwa miaka ya 1970, labda mwaka 1970 au 1971, sikumbuki vizuri, wakati nikijisomea gazeti la *Kiongozi* (gazeti la Kanisa Katoliki ambalo bado linachapishwa leo), niliona tangazo dogo la mwanamke mmoja wa Italia, Ulaya, likiomba “urafiki wa kalamu” na mtu yeyote wa Afrika Mashariki anayefahamu Kiswahili. Mwandishi wa tangazo hilo alijieleza kuwa alikuwa anajifunza Kiswahili, na alitaka apate mtu ambaye angekuwa anawasiliana na kujadiliana naye, kwa njia ya barua, masuala yahasuyo lugha na fasihi ya Kiswahili. Nilivutiwa na tangazo hilo na bila kusita nilimwandikia mama huyo kumweleza kuwa nilikuwa niko tayari kuwa naandikiana naye kuhusu masuala hayo. Mtu huyo hakuwa mwingine bali Bi Elena Bertoncini. Sikumfahamu na wala yeye hakunifahamu, bali tulianzisha urafiki wa kuandikiana kuhusu Kiswahili tangu wakati huo hadi leo, takriban miaka hamsini baadaye. Ilipita miaka kama 15 kabla hatujapata fursa ya kukutana na kuonana ana kwa ana, na hatimaye kujenga ushirikiano wa kudumu katika harakati za kuendeleza Kiswahili. Miaka ya 1990 Prof. Bertoncini alifasiri baadhi ya mashairi yangu katika lugha ya Kiitaliano. Kwa muda wote wa miaka kama hamsini niliofahamiana na Prof. Elena Bertoncini, nimejifunza mengi kutoka kwake, kitaaluma na kibinadamu, na ni heshima na furaha kubwa kwangu kuandika maelezo haya yakiwa ni mchango wangu mdogo katika kumuenzi.

Katika kipindi hicho cha takriban miaka 50, Prof. Bertoncini alichangia vikubwa katika maendeleo ya taaluma ya fasihi ya Kiswahili. Si lengo la andiko hili kuelezea au kutathmini mchango wake; hilo lahitaji makala tofauti. Ila sina budi kutaja hapa kuwa miongoni mwa kazi zake za kiutafiti zenye manufaa ya kudumu na ambazo nilizipenda sana ni kitabu chake cha *Outline of Swahili Literature: Prose Fiction and Drama* (1989). Kitabu hicho, na toleo lake la mwaka 2009 lililopanuliwa, na ambalo liliwashirikisha pia M. D.



Gromov, S. A. M. Khamis na K. W. Wamitila ni zana muhimu kwa kila mtafiti wa fasihi ya Kiswahili.

Naandika maelezo haya (nasita kuyaita makala), ili kumuenzi Profesa Elena Bertoncini Zúbková, anapoadhimisha miaka 50 ya kujishughulisha na taaluma za Kiswahili. Maelezo haya yanapitia historia ya kuibuka kwa taaluma ya fasihi ya Kiswahili katika Tanzania kuanzia miaka ya 1960 hadi takriban 1980. Ni katika kipindi hicho ambapo somo la fasihi ya Kiswahili liliingizwa katika mitaala ya shule za sekondari, vyuo na vyuo vikuu nchini Tanzania, na baadaye nchini Kenya; na wataalamu wa mwanzo wenyeji wa taaluma hiyo walijitokeza. Wanafunzi waliosoma kipindi hicho ndio baadaye walikuja kuwa mabingwa – walimu, watafiti, watunzi, wahadhiri, maprofesa, wa fasihi ya Kiswahili katika vyuo vikuu mbalimbali Afrika Mashariki na hata Ughaibuni.

Maelezo haya yana sehemu tano: Sehemu ya Kwanza ni Usuli unaoelezea namna hali ilivyokuwa kabla ya miaka ya 1960; Sehemu ya Pili inaelezea kipindi cha mwanzo cha miaka ya 1965 hadi 1970, kipindi ambacho kilipanda mbegu ya taaluma ya fasihi ambayo matunda yake yalianza kuvunwa miaka ya 1970; Sehemu ya Tatu inazungumzia kipindi cha 1970-1980 ambapo misingi ya taaluma ya Fasihi ya Kiswahili iliwekwa, wataalamu kuandaliwa na machapisho ya mwanzo kutolewa. Sehemu ya Nne inazungumzia kwa ufupi sana taathira ya maendeleo hayo tuliyoyaelezea, hususan kuchipuka kwa kishindo kwa uanazuoni wa fasihi ya Kiswahili nchini Tanzania na baadaye Kenya na kwingineko. Sehemu ya Tano ni Hitimisho. Maelezo yameandikwa kama kumbukumbu za binafsi kutokana na namna nilivyoona na kushiriki katika mchakato ninaousimulia. Lengo ni kuwapa wasomaji, hasa vijana wa kizazi kipya cha wanataaluma, picha ya wapi tulikotoka, na changamoto zipi tulizokutana nazo ili waweze kutumia tajiriba hiyo kujiwekea mikakati bora zaidi ya kuendeleza taaluma ya fasihi ya Kiswahili siku zijazo.

## **Usuli**

Fasihi ya Kiswahili ilianza kutafitiwa na Wazungu katikati ya karne ya 19 (rej. Krapf 1860; Steere 1870). Lengo la wataalamu hao (wengi wakiwa ni wamisionari), lilikuwa ni kuchunguza ontolojia, mitazamo na imani za wenyeji ili watumie maarifa hayo kubuni mbinu mwafaka za kuingiza fikra na imani za Ulaya katika jamii na akili za Waafrika (Raum 1930; Tempels 1959). Uchunguzi huo ulikuwa ni sehemu ya harakati za “kumstaarabisha mshenzi”.

Sababu ya pili, ambayo ilifungamana na hiyo, ilikuwa ni kuwawezesha Wazungu, hasa wamisionari, watumishi wa serikali na wafanyabiashara waliotarajia kuja kuishi na kufanya kazi Afrika Mashariki, kujifunza lugha ya Kiswahili ili waweze kuwasiliana na wenyeji. Hadithi na mashairi ya Kiswahili yalifundishwa kama matini ya mfano ya namna lugha ya Kiswahili inavyotumika katika fasihi, na yaliwasaidia wanafunzi hao kupata msamiati na ladha ya Kiswahili kama kilivyokuwa kinatumiwa na wenyeji. Bila shaka palikuwa na sababu nyinginezo, kwa mfano udadisi wa kawaida wa kisomi, lakini hizo hatutazijadili hapa kwa kuwa si mahali pake. La muhimu kufahamu ni kwamba muktadha huo ndio uliwasukuma Wajerumani kuanzisha mafunzo ya kwanza duniani ya Kiswahili na fasihi yake ya ngazi ya chuo kikuu katika taa-sisi ya *Seminar für orientalische Sprachen* Berlin mwaka 1887. Walimu kadha Waswahili walichukuliwa kutoka Afrika Mashariki (k.m. Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari wa Bagamoyo) kwenda Ujerumani kufundisha Kiswahili (Wimmelbücher 2009). Mafunzo ya aina hiyo yaliibua wataalamu wa mwanzo wa lugha na fasihi ya Kiswahili huko Ulaya.

Wajerumani waliwashawishi wenyeji kutunga mashairi na kuwapatia ili wayachapishe vitabuni Ujerumani (Büttner 1894; Velten 1907), lakini hakuna ushahidi kuwa fasihi ilifundishwa katika shule walizozianzisha hapa nchini kwa ajili ya wenyeji. Machapisho yaliyotolewa yalisambazwa Ulaya kwa ajili ya Wazungu na wataalamu wa huko, na aghalabu yaliandikwa katika lugha za Ulaya (hadithi na mashairi yalifasiriwa kwa lugha za Kiingereza na Kidachi, na maelezo kuandikwa kwa lugha hizo). Wakati wa utawala wa Waingereza, hasa baada ya Vita Vikuu I, uchapishaji wa vitabu vya kifasihi vya Kiswahili ulianzishwa; kadhalika tafsiri za vitabu vya fasihi ya Ulaya zilifanywa (*Mashimo ya Mfalme Sulemani, Jamaa Hodari Kisiwani, Kisiwa chenye Hazina, Pinokyo: Hadithi ya Mwanasesere*, n.k.) ili zitumike shuleni. Magazeti na majarida machache yaliyokuwapo (k.m. *Mambo Leo* lililoanzishwa 1923) pia yalichapisha mashairi, insha na hadithi kwa ajili ya wasomaji wa kawaida. Mwaka 1947 Shirika la Uchapishaji Vitabu la Afrika Mashariki (EALB) lilianzishwa na serikali nne za Afrika Mashariki. Juhudi hizo ziliweka msingi wa kuibuka kwa fasihi mpya ya kisasa ya Kiswahili, lakini hazikuzaa matunda mapema kwa sababu fasihi ya Kiswahili kama somo haikufundishwa shuleni (hapa tunazungumzia shule za msingi na za kati, maana hapakuwa na shule za juu au vyo vikiu isipokuwa Makerere); fasihi ya Kiswahili ilifundishwa kama matini ya kujadili darasani kama sehemu ya somo la lugha. Mbali na tafsiri za vitabu vya Ulaya, matini zilizosomwa ni pamoja na hadithi za *Alfu-*

*Lela-Ulela, Hekaya za Abunuwasi*, tafsiri za visa vya kale vya Kiarabu, hadithi na mashairi ya Shaaban Robert na watunzi wengine wachache, na tamthilia za Kenya, hasa zile za Graham Hyslop, Henry Kuria na Gerson Ngugi. Hali hii iliendelea hadi miaka ya 1960.

## **Miaka ya 1960-1970**

Maendeleo ya taaluma ya fasihi ya Kiswahili nchini Tanzania miaka ya 1960 hayawezi kutenganishwa na vuguvugu la kisiasa-kiuchumi la kipindi hicho.

Nchi za Afrika Mashariki zilipata uhuru kati ya 1961 na 1964. Serikali mpya zilikuwa na mitazamo iliyotofautiana kuhusu hadhi na nafasi ya lugha ya Kiswahili. Serikali ya Tanganyika (baadaye Tanzania) ilikitangaza Kiswahili kuwa lugha ya taifa mwaka 1962, na kuanzia mwaka 1968 ilikitangaza kuwa lugha ya elimu ya msingi na lugha rasmi ya serikali pamoja na Kiingereza. Serikali ya Kenya vilevile ilitambua nafasi ya Kiswahili kama “lugha ya taifa” pamoja na Kiingereza, japo kwa wakati huo haikuchukua hatua thabiti kutekeleza azima hiyo. Serikali ya Uganda ilikuwa na mtazamo hasi kuhusu Kiswahili kutokana na upinzani wa wananchi wake wengi dhidi ya lugha hiyo. Katika kipindi hicho, Kamati ya Kiswahili ya Afrika Mashariki (KKAM) iliyokuwa na makao yake Makerere iliamishwa Chuo Kikuu Kishiriki cha Dar es Salaam (CKKD), Tanzania, mwaka 1964 na kuwa Chuo cha Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili. Makatibu wa chuo hicho walikuwa ni J. Knappert (1961-64), W. H. Whiteley (1965-67) na J. A. Tejani (1968-70). Kuanzia mwaka 1970 cheo cha Ukatibu kilifutwa, badala yake pakawa na Wakurugenzi. Mkurugenzi wa kwanza akawa G. Mhina. Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa (BAKITA) lilianzishwa mwaka 1967, na baadhi ya shughuli za KKAM, hasa zile za Usanifishaji, zikachukuliwa na Baraza hilo (Mulokozi 2005).

Kutangazwa kwa Azimio la Arusha mwaka 1967 kulibadilisha mwelekeo kuhusu lugha na fasihi. Suala la utaiifa na utambulisho lilipewa uzito zaidi, na Kiswahili kuchukuliwa kuwa lugha ya utambulisho huo. Ujenzi wa Ujamaa ulihitaji kuunganisha nguvu na hamasa za Taifa zima kwa kutumia lugha iliyofahamika kwa walio wengi. Sera mpya ya Elimu ya Kujitegemea ilihitaji lugha mpya ya kufundishia elimu ya msingi, na lugha hiyo ikawa ni Kiswahili. Mpango wa kukiandaa Kiswahili kuwa lugha ya kufundishia hadi chuo kikuu nchini Tanzania ulitangazwa mwaka 1969 (Tanzania 1969) japo haukutekelezwa, na haujatekelezwa hadi leo.

Kipindi hicho, na katika mazingira hayo, ndipo taaluma ya fasihi ya Kiswahili ilipoingizwa rasmi katika mfumo wa elimu katika sekondari na vyuo.

### *Hali ilivyokuwa kabla ya 1968*

Miaka ya 1960 Kiswahili kilifundishwa kama somo na kutahiniwa katika mtihamu wa Cambridge ambao ulifanywa na wanafunzi wote wa sekondari katika Afrika Mashariki. Kazi teule za hadithi na ushairi zilifundishwa darasani hadi kidato cha 4. Mifano:

- Hadithi: F. Katalambula, M. S. Abdulla, S. Robert, J. Mbotela
- Tamthilia: H. Kuria, G. Hyslop, G. Ngugi, na baadaye E. Hussein (*Wakati Ukuta*) na J. Nyerere (tafsiri ya *Juliasi Kaizari*)
- Ushairi: S. Robert; A. Abedi; M. Mnyampala; K. H. A. Akilimali; Z. Zani, H. Cory na washairi wengine
- Hapakuwa na somo la Kiswahili (lugha au fasihi) kidato cha 5 na 6
- Hadi 1967 Kiswahili hakikufundishwa ngazi ya chuo kikuu.

Kamati ya Kiswahili ya Afrika Mashariki (ambayo sasa ilikwishakuwa Chuo cha Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili) ilishughulikia ukusanyaji na unukuzi wa miswada ya kale ya hati ya Kiarabu (k.m. *Utenzi wa Vita vya Wadachi Kutamalaki Mrima*), uchunguzi wa fasihi simulizi, ukuzaji wa uandishi wa hadithi na insha (mashindano ya utunzi na usomaji wa miswada), istilahi na tafsiri. Haikuhusika na ufundishaji, japo baada ya 1967 baadhi ya waajiriwa wake walitumiwa na Idara ya Lugha na Isimu ya CKD kufundisha kozi chache za Kiswahili.

### *Kuanzishwa kwa Taaluma ya Fasihi Chuo Kikuu Kishiriki cha Dar es Salaam 1967*

Historia ya kuanzishwa kwa taaluma halisi ya lugha na fasihi ya Kiswahili nchini Tanzania (na Afrika Mashariki) itakapoandikwa, majina ya Prof. Mohamed Abdulaziz na Profesa Farouk Topan sharti yatajwe kwa adhama. Wataalamu hao, mmoja kutoka Kenya (Abdulaziz) na mwingine kutoka Zanzibar (Topan) ndio waanzilishi wa taaluma za Kiswahili katika CKD katika mwaka wa masomo 1967/68. Mwanzoni kozi za Kiswahili zilizofundishwa zilikuwa za hitiari.

Prof. Abdulaziz, alifanya utafiti wake London na Dar es Salaam kuhusu ushairi wa Muyaka (1962-65). Jarida la Swahili (baadaye Kiswahili) la mwaka 1965 liliandika:

By the time this journal appears, I hope it will have been possible... to appoint one Research Fellow to work full time on a new Dictionary and a second to continue the collection and editing of literature. There are already, in the United Republic, three graduate students working on Swahili: one, Mr Mohamed Abdulaziz of Mombasa is working on a critical study of the poetry of the 19th century Swahili poet Muyaka bin Haji; the second, Miss Joan Maw of the School of Oriental and African Students (sic), University of London, is working on the structure of Swahili sentences; and a third, Mr Carol Scotton of the University of Wisconsin, USA, is working on problems of meaning with reference to modern terminology and definition in dictionaries. These are exciting developments. (Whiteley 1965: 2)

Mbali na kufundisha, Abdulaziz alikuwa Mhariri wa *Swahili* kuanzia mwaka 1968, baada ya J.W.T. Allen kuondoka. Katika toleo la Septemba 1968 aliandika:

At this stage in the development of Swahili as a modern language, the journal very much welcomes contributions of articles from its readers. Demand made on this language has been greater than it is at present. In Tanzania it is the medium of teaching in primary schools, and likely to be the medium in the lower levels of secondary school in the near future. At the University level and (sic) optional BA course in Swahili on Swahili literature conducted in Swahili was offered last academic year, at Dar es Salaam University College, and examined in the finals. From July this year a full B.A. Course in Swahili Linguistics (one of the options in the final examination) is to be offered. This course will include the study of Swahili structure, usage, literature, dialects and the historical development of the language... (Abdulaziz 1968: 2)

Baadaye iliundwa Idara iliyojumuisha kozi hizo anazozitaja Abdulaziz, yaani Lugha na Fasihi ya Kiswahili pamoja na Lugha za Kigeni, Abdulaziz akawa Kaimu Mkuu wa Idara hiyo kwa muda mfupi mwaka 1969. Topan alikuwa Mkuu wa Idara hiyo na baadaye Mudiri wa kwanza wa Idara ya Kiswahili ilipoanzishwa mwaka 1970. Abdulaziz angekuwa Mudiri, lakini aliondoka

wakati huo kwenda kuwa mkuu wa Idara ya Lugha na Isimu Nairobi. Hivyo Topan akawa Mudiri, na baadaye akapokewa na hayati Clement Maganga.

Mwanzoni Fasihi ilifundishwa kama matini (*texts*), si kama somo kamili lenye nadharia zake; na palikuwa na changamoto nyingi, ikiwamo changamoto ya istilahi:

As Swahili equivalents of some words have not as yet been agreed upon, some concept terms like “literature” and “non-literature”, and also others, like “characterization”, have been retained in English. There are others “kipeo” for climax. The word *muundo* is used for both “structure” and “plot”, but the latter could also be *mtiririko wa vitendo*. We hope to collect such literary terms, give them our equivalents, and thus send them on to the National Swahili Council for its ruling. We shall use the approved terms in our subsequent lectures, and thus add new terms to our vocabulary year by year. (Topan 1968: 163)

Pamoja na changamoto hizo, mwanzo huo mgumu ulifanikiwa kutoa wa-hitimu mashuhuri ambao tunaweza pia kuwaita wataalamu wa mwanzo wa fasihi ya Kiswahili wa kiwango hicho. Wataalamu hao ni:

- Ebrahim Hussein
- Euphrase Kezilahabi
- Ndyanao Balisidya (Matteru)
- Penina Muhando (Mlama)

Aidha, mijadala ya kitaaluma kuhusu fasihi ya Kiswahili ilianza kujitokeza katika vitabu na majarida. Majarida yaliyotumika sana katika mijadala hiyo ni *Kiswahili na Mulika* (yote ya TUKI), *Kioo cha Lugha na Zinduko* (Idara ya Kiswahili) na *Lugha Yetu* (BAKITA). Vitabu vya mwanzo vya uchambuzi wa fasihi ya Kiswahili kitaaluma, kwa lugha ya Kiswahili, pia viliandaliwa wakati huo. Vitabu hivyo ni vile vilivyohaririwa na Topan (1971 & 1976) vya *Uchambuzi wa Maandishi ya Kiswahili I & II*. Baadaye vilifuata vitabu vya T. S. Y. Sengo na S. D. Kiango vya *Hisi Zetu I & II* na *Ndimi Zetu I & II* (1973 na 1974).

## **Kuweka Misingi 1970-1980**

Matukio makuu ya kipindi hiki ni: Kuanzishwa kwa masomo ya Kiswahili ya Kidato cha 5 na 6; kuimarishwa kwa masomo ya Kiswahili ya chuo

kikuu; kujitokeza kwa matunda ya mwanzo ya mchakato huo na mijadala kuhusu fasihi.

*Kuanzishwa kwa Masomo ya Kiswahili Kidato cha 5 na 6 katika Shule za Sekondari nchini Tanzania*

Mchakato wa kuasisi masomo ya Kiswahili CKD (1967-70) ulidhihirisha haja ya kuwa na somo la Kiswahili Kidato cha 5 na 6 ili kupata wanafunzi wa kusoma Kiswahili ngazi ya chuo kikuu. Wanafunzi walikuwa wanachukuliwa kusoma Kiswahili chuo kikuu bila ya kuwa wamesoma Kiswahili katika ngazi ya chini, yaani kidato cha 5 na 6. Hivyo mwaka 1970 masomo ya Kiswahili ya Kidato cha 5 na 6 yalianzishwa katika shule za Mkwawa (wavulana) na Koro-gwe (wasichana) katika mkondo uliojulikana kama SHE (*Swahili, History and English*). Mwandishi wa maelezo haya alikuwa katika mkupuo wa kwanza wa wanafunzi wa mkondo huo, ambao walipelekwa kusoma katika shule ya Mkwawa, Iringa. Baadhi ya wanafunzi wenzake wa kundi hilo la kwanza, na wa kundi la pili lililofuata mwaka 1971, ambao wamechangia sana maendeleo ya taaluma ya Kiswahili baadaye ni Fikeni E. M. K. Senkoro, Joshua S. Madumulla, Kulikoyela K. Kahigi na hayati Mbunda Msokile. Kwa upande wa wanawake waliokuwa Korogwe, tunaweza kuwataja wafuatao: Zubeida Tumbo (Masabo), Lamberta Ndunguru, Rehema Kawawa na Hayati Mary-Margret Salum (Kumbuka) miongoni mwa wengi.

Mwalimu wetu wa kwanza pale Mkwawa alikuwa John Mwakipesile. Ali-shikilia somo la Kiswahili kwa muda wakati tukiwasubiri walimu wateule, Euphrase Kezilahabi na Barnabas Katigula, ambao kwa wakati huo walikuwa katika mafunzo ya Jeshi la Kujenga Taifa. Kezilahabi na Katigula walikuwa wamesoma kozi zilizofundishwa na Topan na Abdulaziz CKD. Huko Koro-gwe mwalimu alikuwa ni Ndyanao May Balisidya. Baadaye Balisidya na Kezilahabi walipelekwa kufundisha Idara ya Kiswahili, CKD, ambako tuliwa-kuta tulipoanza masomo ya digrii ya kwanza mwaka 1972.

*Changamoto za Masomo ya Kiswahili Sekondari Kidato cha 5 na 6*

Masomo ya Kiswahili Kidato cha 5 na 6 yalikuwa na changamoto zake. Changamoto ya kwanza ilikuwa ni mtazamo na matarajio ya wanafunzi wa masomo hayo. Baadhi walikuwa na wasiwasi kuwa masomo hayo hayangewasaidia baadaye kuweza kupata ajira nzuri na kujiendeleza kimaisha. Ili kuondoa

wasiwasi huo, wataalamu na wakuzaji wa Kiswahili, Prof. George Mhina, aliyekuwa Mkurugenzi wa TUKI wakati huo, na Mwalimu John Ramadhan wa Taasisi ya Elimu Tanzania (TET) walikwenda Mkwawa kungea na wanafunzi na kuwaondolea hofu kuhusu mustakabali wao watakapohitimu masomo ya Kiswahili. Bado naikumbuka kauli ya Bw. Ramadhan ya “Kiswahili kina kesho!” aliyoirudiarudia wakati wa hotuba yake.

Changamoto ya pili ilikuwa ni walimu. Hapakuwa na walimu waliosoma na kubobea katika Kiswahili hadi chuo kikuu ambao wangeweza kufundisha sekondari kidato cha 5 na 6. Walimu waliopatikana ama walikuwa wamebobebea katika masomo ya lugha na fasihi ya Kiingereza (Katigula) ama walikuwa wamesoma *Swahili Texts* kama kozi ya hitiari (Kezilahabi).

Changamoto ya tatu ilihusu vitabu. Hapakuwa na vitabu vya kutosha, vya kitaaluma na vya kifasihi, ambavyo vilifaa kusomwa ngazi hiyo. Kwa upande wa nadharia na uchambuzi wa fasihi, hapakuwa na kitabu hata kimoja; walimu na wanafunzi walitumia makala ya *Mulika* na *Kiswahili*. Upande wa kazi za fasihi, palikuwa na riwaya za Shaaban Robert na “riwaya pendwa” za M. S. Abdulla, F. Katalambula, L. O. Omolo na waandishi wengine wachache. Tamthilia zilizotumika ni tafsiri za Shakespeare za J.K. Nyerere na tamthilia za Kiswahili kutoka Kenya (*Nakupenda Lakini...*, *Mgeni Karibu*, *Afadhali Mchawi* n.k.). Vitabu vya ushairi vilikuwapo vya kutosha.

Changamoto ya nne ilikuwa istilahi: Kiswahili kilikuwa na istilahi za ushairi, lakini istilahi za nathari na fasihi kwa jumla zilikuwa chache. Topan na wenzake walianzisha mchakato wa kubuni istilahi za kufundishia fasihi na lugha. Mchakato huo uliendelezwa na walimu na wanafunzi wa Mkwawa na Korogwe. Mifano ya istilahi tulizoziibua au kuzijadili wakati huo, na ambazo hivi sasa zimekwishakubalika ni (maneno yaliyojadiliwa yametiwa katika mabano):

- *Fasihi* (sanaa ya lugha/adabu ya lugha)
- *Dhamira* (mawazo, wazo kuu, lengo)
- *Riwaya* (hadithi ndefu, hadithi ya kubuni)
- *Riwaya pendwa* (pop novel)
- *Riwaya dhiti* (serious novel)
- *Tamthilia* (mchezo wa kuigiza, igo)
- *Fani na maudhui* (fani na yaliyomo, umbo na yaliyomo)
- *Fasihi simulizi* (fasihi ya mdomo, fasihi ya kunenwa)
- *Fasihi andishi* (maandiko ya kisanaa)
- *Mhusika* (mtendaji, kiumbe wa hadithini)



- *Msuko wa matukio* (mtiririko wa vituko/vitendo)
- *Kipeo/kilele* (turning point vs climax)
- *Ushairi huru* (guni, masivina, mapingiti, mtiririko)

Ili kukabiliana na changamoto ya istilahi, palikuwa na ushirikiano wa karibu kati ya shule za Mkwawa na Korogwe, Wizara, TET, TUKI, Idara ya Kiswahili Chuo Kikuu na BAKITA. Mkuza Mitaala wa TET aliyechangia sana katika hatua hizi za mwanzo ni John Ramadhan (kabla hajakawa Baba Askofu).

### **Kuimarishwa kwa Masomo ya Chuo Kikuu**

Idara ya Kiswahili ilianzishwa mwaka 1970 na ikaanzisha programu ya taaluma za Kiswahili iliyohusisha lugha, isimu na fasihi. Wanafunzi waliohitimu Mkwawa na Korogwe waliingizwa moja kwa moja kwenye programu hiyo kuanzia mwaka 1972. Baada ya Topan na Abdulaziz kuondoka, walimu wa fasihi Idarani walikuwa ni:

- Euphrase Kezilahabi
- Ndyanao Balisidya (Matteru)

Walisaidiwa na walimu wafuatao kutoka TUKI:

- Abdilatif Abdalla
- Muhsin Aldina
- Joseph K. Kiimbila

Baadaye, kuanzia 1973, wakaja:

- Saifu Kiango
- Tigiti Sengo

Mbali na kuwa walimu, baadhi ya wataalamu hawa walijipambanua pia katika utunzi na uhakiki wa fasihi. Wataalamu wengine ambao hawakuwa walimu wa darasani lakini walichangia sana katika mijadala ya kipindi hicho ni: Peter Kirumbi, John Ramadhan, Felician Nkwera na Prof. Rajmund Ohly.

Baadaye ndipo likaingia kundi la kina F. E. M. K. Senkoro, K. K. Kahigi, J. S. Madumulla, Z. Tumbo-Masabo na M. M. Mulokozi. Kundi

hili lilikuja na mtazamo tofauti kuhusu masuala ya fasihi na kuibua mijadala ambayo ilisaidia kuikomaza taaluma ya fasihi ya Kiswahili. Mjadala uliokuwa mashuhuri zaidi ni ule uliohusu “Ushairi ni Nini?” kati ya “wanamapokeo” na “wanausasa” ambao ulidumu kwa zaidi ya miaka kumi kuanzia 1973 (rej. Mulokozi na Kahigi 1982; Mayoka 1986). Kwa sababu ya mtazamo wao, zilifanywa njama za kuwazuia Mulokozi, Senkoro na Zubeida Tumbo wasiajiriwe katika TUKI au Idara ya Kiswahili mara baada ya kuhitimu mwaka 1975, licha ya kuwa na sifa zote za kitaaluma zilizohitajika. Njama hizo zilifanikiwa kwa muda tu; Senkoro na Tumbo waliajiriwa katika Kitivo cha Taaluma za Maendeleo, na kutokea huko hatimaye wakahamia Idara ya Kiswahili. Mulokozi alikwenda kufanya kazi mjini katika Shirika la Uchapishaji la Tanzania (TPH) hadi 1979 alipokubaliwa kuajiriwa katika TUKI.

## **Taathira**

Mchakato wa kuasisiwa kwa taaluma ya Fasihi nchini Tanzania ambao tumeelezea ulikuwa na taathira au matokeo makubwa katika maendeleo ya fasihi ya Kiswahili na taaluma yake. Athari kubwa kuliko zote ilikuwa ni kuwezesha kupanuka na kuenea kwa taaluma ya fasihi ya Kiswahili ndani na nje ya Tanzania. Taaluma hiyo iliendelezwa kwa njia ya mijadala, machapisho na wataalamu.

Tumekwishataja mjadala wa ushairi wa miaka ya 1970 uliokuja kujulikana kama mgogoro wa ushairi. Mjadala huo uliwalazimisha watunzi na wataalamu wa ushairi wa Kiswahili kutafakari kwa kina suala zima la ushairi. Matunda ya tafakuri hizo yalikuwa ni utitiri wa semina, mihadhara na machapisho, yakiwamo makala na vitabu, kuhusu ushairi, ambayo bila shaka yameitajirisha taaluma ya fasihi ya Kiswahili. Hatuwezi kuorodhesha hapa machapisho yote, lakini mifano ya vitabu ni: Kandoro (1978); Mulokozi na Kahigi (1982); Nabhany na Shariff (1985); Mayoka (1986); Shariff (1988); Mulokozi na Sengo (1995) na Andanenga (2002).

Athari nyingine ilikuwa ni kuibuka kwa kizazi kipya cha wataalamu na wasanii wa fasihi ya Kiswahili Tanzania na baadaye Afrika Mashariki. Abdulaziz na Topan walifundisha wataalamu wa mwanzo wa lugha na fasihi ya Kiswahili (k.m. E. Hussein, E. Kezilahabi, P. Muhando, N. Balisidya); wataalamu hao wakafundisha “kizazi” cha pili (Sengo, Kiango, Senkoro, Mulokozi, Kahigi, Madumulla). Hawa walifundisha “kizazi” cha tatu cha kina

S. A. Mohamed, E. Mbogo, A. Gibbe, M. S. Khatib, I. Ngozi, n.k. Kizazi hiki cha tatu ndicho kwa kiasi kikubwa kilikwenda kuanzisha au kuendeleza masomo ya Kiswahili katika vyuo vikuu vingi nje ya Tanzania, hususani nchini Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, Sudan, Libya, China, Korea, Japan, Amerika na Ulaya miaka ya 1980 na kuendelea.

## Hitimisho

Lengo la maelezo haya mafupi lilikuwa ni kuhifadhi kumbukumbu ya kuchipuka kwa taaluma ya fasihi ya Kiswahili nchini Tanzania miaka ya 1960-1980 kwa ajili ya vizazi vijavyo ambavyo havikushuhudia matukio hayo. Tumeeleza namna Abdulaziz na Topan walivyofanikiwa kuasisi taaluma ya lugha na fasihi ya Kiswahili Afrika Mashariki, wakianzia katika CKKD miaka ya 1960. Juhudi zao ziliwezesha taaluma ya fasihi ya Kiswahili kuchipuka miaka ya 1960 na hatimaye kuchanua miaka ya 1970. Wataalamu wa nje ya Tanzania, kama kina Prof. Elena Bertoncini, bila shaka walinufaika na pia kuchangia katika mzinduko huu wa taaluma ya fasihi ya Kiswahili.

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THE MAKING OF THE “CLASSICAL” UTENZI:  
A CONSIDERATION OF THE EARLY EDITORIAL HISTORY OF TENZI  
IN 19<sup>TH</sup>-20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY EUROPE

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The *utenzi* (pl. *tenzi*) is probably the best documented Swahili poetic genre with the longest history of research. Though there are still numerous manuscripts in the archives in London, Hamburg, Berlin and Dar es Salaam which await publication, and reflections on methodology are still a lacuna (Biersteker and Plane 1989), compared to other genres in Africa a comparatively large number of editions and also overview works have been published. Already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fascination with a poetic manuscript tradition unexpectedly found in Africa, made a number of prolific European scholars delve into the study of *tenzi*. Thus, quite early on the *utenzi* became part of a European academic tradition as well and, at least until independence, editions, documentations and overview works were mostly organised and produced by Western researchers in cooperation with local East African scholars. Thus, besides the development that the *utenzi* went through in Eastern Africa, the genre has also been shaped by a second line of tradition, namely its history of research in Western academia.

Western research has not left the “object under research” unaffected. Through its editions of the texts, the West has *volens nolens* shaped and reshaped the idea of what an *utenzi* is. Furthermore, given that European scholars paid less attention to other genres which belonged exclusively to the oral sphere or whose content was not accessible without more contextual data, the *utenzi* became the best studied Swahili poetic genre in

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the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Regarded as the Swahili poem *par excellence*, it largely shaped the (Western) understanding of Swahili poetry – a situation which caused much protest in East Africa from the 1970s onwards.

This article falls into two parts: firstly, I will sketch out the chronology of early research on the *utenzi*, concentrating on European contributions, and secondly, I will consider some key concepts that have recurrently influenced descriptions of the *utenzi*. As I will try to show, a number of characteristics echo the background of the scholars and their bourgeois concept of “classical literature”, this being reflected in their editorial practices. It needs to be added that though I only use the term *utenzi* in this article, I do not mean to talk about the genre as a whole, but about a very specific group of texts within the genre, which have often been called “Islamic *tenzi*” narrating Islamic history tinged with legendary features. The reason why I concentrate on these *tenzi* is firstly necessity: the genre *utenzi*, which still exists as a poetic category in Eastern Africa, has undergone such tremendous change and development in terms of content and style that considerations of the whole genre would go beyond the scope of this article. Secondly, however, and more importantly, my use of the term is conditioned by the focus of this article, which concentrates on *tenzi* editions and overview works produced by Europeans in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: narrative *tenzi* based on Islamic popular hagiography were the texts that European scholars in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries mostly focused on. For a large part, these editions are still used today as the basis for analysis and study, and hence still have a bearing on our understanding of the genre.

## An overview of the history of research

### *Krapf, Büttner, Meinhof, Dammann: a German line of descent*

The German missionary Johann Ludwig Krapf (1810-1881), who came to the Swahili coast in 1844, was the first to send manuscripts of *tenzi* to Europe.<sup>1</sup> The manuscripts of the *Chuo cha Herkal*<sup>2</sup> and the *Chuo cha Utenzi* reached

<sup>1</sup> On the life and work of Johann Ludwig Krapf, see Frankl 1992, 2005a, Vierke 2009

<sup>2</sup> *Chuo cha Herkal* (in Krapf’s spelling *júo ja Herkal*) is a title given to the poem by Krapf (cf. Dammann 1993: 216). On the Swahili coast the poem is known under the title *Utenzi wa Tambuka*.

the German Oriental Society (*Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft*) in Halle in 1854 accompanied by a letter in which Krapf briefly stressed the value of the two manuscripts as testimonies of an older variety of Swahili, since the two manuscripts contained the “dialect of Patta and Lamu”, from where Swahili originated.<sup>3</sup>

While Krapf had already started to transliterate the *Chuo cha Utenzi*, it was Carl Büttner, the first Swahili teacher at the Department of Oriental Languages (*Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen*) in Berlin, who published the text in 1887/88 – the first edition of a complete *utenzi* to appear. Six years later, in 1894, a meticulously revised version of this edition of the *Chuo cha Utenzi* was published (under the title *Utenzi wa Shufaka*) in *Eine Anthologie aus der Suaheli-Litteratur*. The *Anthologie*, for which Büttner heavily benefited from the support of Sulaiman bin Said bin Ahmed as-Surami and Amur bin Nasur al-Omari, the two “Native” Swahili teaching assistants in Berlin (cf. Bromber 2003), comprised various Swahili texts of different genres, among them two other *tenzi*, the *Utenzi wa Mi'iraji* and the *Utenzi wa Kutawafu Muhamadi*, together with a translation into German aimed at academic and non-academic circles. His introduction bespeaks his appreciation of the *tenzi*, describing them as works of high aesthetic appeal and intellectual depth whose thematic orientation and sophistication in terms of style and beauty classify them and the culture from which they emanate as anything but crude or primitive (Büttner 1894: X, XIV). Against all European stereotypes, Büttner, whom the renowned Bantuist Carl Meinhof called “the founder of German Swahili literature” (Meinhof 1911/12: 3 and 1911: 79), became a pioneer in promoting Swahili literature whose existence had been denied even by those who had been to East Africa and “who should have known better” (Meinhof 1895: 331).

Due to his untimely death in 1893, Büttner could not complete the edition of the *Chuo cha Herkal* (also called *Utenzi wa Tambuka*) that he had already announced in his anthology (1894: XIII). Carl Meinhof (1857-1944) took up the task, as he had an interest in “Swahili in Arabic script, the dialect of Mombasa and the special poetic form of language” (Meinhof 1911/12: 2).<sup>4</sup> With the

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem. Both manuscripts are still kept in the library of the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft in Halle (Halle, DMG Fd. 500 = B. 196 and Halle, DMG Fd. 510 = B. 197).

<sup>4</sup> For this edition, Meinhof relied on a second fragmentary manuscript of the *Chuo cha Herkal* from the library of the German Oriental Society. This version followed the *Chuo cha Utenzi* in the



help of Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari (cf. Bromber 2003: 44), he completed and published the edition in 1911/1912.

Apart from implicitly establishing standards for the editing of Swahili manuscripts by following the principles of critical editing common in other long-established fields of philology, Meinhof also played an important role in fostering comparative research on the *utenzi*. The renowned Arabist Rudi Paret examined the Arabic source of the Swahili poem *Chuo cha Herkal*, as he had retrieved four Arabic manuscripts from the Prussian State Library in Berlin that came close to the *Chuo cha Herkal* with respect to their overall content (cf. Paret 1926/27) (cf. also Abel 1938).<sup>5</sup> In 1930 Paret published an extensive treatise on *maghazi* literature, Islamic popular literature found throughout the whole sphere of Muslim influence. Making reference to Swahili *tenzi*, Paret accredits Swahili a position as a literary language and a language with a literary tradition comparable to Turkish or Persian, which, unlike African languages, were established fields of oriental philological research. The fact that Arabists put themselves in the service of the young branch of philological study known in Germany as *Afrikanistik* not only shows the influence of Carl Meinhof, but also indicates the establishment of Swahili as a recognised literary language and subject of literary comparative analysis at that time.

For its language and its *Stoffgeschichte*, the *Utenzi wa Tambuka* became the best studied Swahili text, acquiring the status of a reference text. It was and sometimes still is viewed as the prototype of an *utenzi* – which is particularly evident in works by Jan Knappert, who edited the text in 1958, and for whom the *Utenzi wa Tambuka* was “the most typical epic of Swahili literature” (1967: 7) (cf. also Knappert 1999: 52).<sup>6</sup> The twin role of the *Chuo cha Herkal*,

same manuscript without bearing a title of its own (cf. Meinhof 1911/12: 128; cf. also Dammann 1993: 218). Neither Dammann (1993) nor Meinhof (1911/12) nor Knappert (1958) seem to have noticed that Büttner had already published the shorter manuscript in 1888/89, as a printed version in Arabic script in his *Zeitschrift für afrikanische Sprachen*. Obviously, Büttner, who published it under *Chuo cha Utenzi*, had not identified it as *Chuo cha Herkal*.

<sup>5</sup> In fact, the first to point out that Ahlwardt’s catalogue of Arabic manuscripts in Berlin contained manuscripts that came close to the *Chuo cha Herkal* was the Islamic scholar Carl Heinrich Becker (1911: 403).

<sup>6</sup> In his *Epic Poetry in Swahili and other African Languages* Knappert praises it as the exemplary epic, “the finest epic ever written in Swahili” (1983: 47). All subsequent *tenzi* were merely imitations of the *Utenzi wa Tambuka*, for instance the *Utenzi wa Katirifu* which, however, does not “reach the height of poetic imagination and expression of the Herekali”, as

which became part of a Western tradition of academic research and continued to play a role in Swahili society, is likewise reflected by its two names, *Utenzi wa Tambuka* and *Chuo cha Herkal* – while the latter prevailed in academic research the former was mostly used on the Swahili coast.

Encouraged by Carl Meinhof, his mentor, the Protestant pastor and linguist Ernst Dammann (1904-2003) came to Lamu in 1936 with the aim of working on a new edition of the *Chuo cha Herkal*.<sup>7</sup> Armed with a letter of reference from Alice Werner, he made contact with Muhamadi Kijuma, who became his principal informant, supplied him with manuscripts – even after his departure in 1937 – and helped him to work through them (cf. Miehe and Vierke 2010). Even though the plan to publish an edition of the *Chuo cha Herkal* did not work out (see below), Dammann managed to edit a large number of Swahili texts due to this fruitful cooperation, becoming the most productive German scholar in the field of Swahili text editions. He was also the first to publish scholarly overview articles in German on Swahili poetry, in which he focused on *tenzi* and other poems, mostly of a religious nature (cf. Dammann 1937, 1942a, 1942b, 1958). His *opus magnum Dichtungen in der Lamu-Mundart des Suaheli*, including nine poems, seven *tenzi* and two *kawafi*, appeared in 1940.<sup>8</sup>

In diction and intention, Dammann's editions clearly resemble those by Meinhof and Büttner, so that it is possible to delineate a German line of tradition with a specific, historically oriented philological perspective of Swahili poetry, especially *tenzi*, that translated into thorough and detailed manuscript studies and a comparative focus, linking the Swahili coast not only with the rest of the Bantu area but also with Arabia, Persia and India. In its inclination, its historical and comparative method, and its preoccupation with origin, Dammann's work clearly echoes concepts based in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

he writes in his edition of the *Katirifu*, and concludes by saying that the “Herekali, the oldest African epic, remains once and for all the most powerful in language and poetic élan” (cf. Knappert 1968/69: 85).

<sup>7</sup> The edition of the *Chuo cha Herkal* suggested by Meinhof was in the end not produced by Dammann, whose focus changed (cf. Dammann 1999: 91).

<sup>8</sup> The *tenzi* dealt with in his oeuvre are the following: *Miraji* (Die Himmelfahrt des Muhammed), *Utenzi wa Mwana Esha* (Die hochgeborene Esha), *Utenzi wa Fatuma* (Fatuma), *Utenzi wa Abdurrahman* (Abdurrahman), *Utenzi wa Anzaruni* (Das Geheimnis der Geheimnisse. Das Amulett des Anzarun), *Utenzi wa Ngamia na Paa* (Kamel und Gazelle) and *Dua* (Ein Bittgebet).

*Alice Werner and those who followed in her footsteps*

One of the most important researchers in the field of Swahili classical poetry, who was much respected by Carl Meinhof, was Alice Werner (1859-1935).<sup>9</sup> Before becoming a lecturer at the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London), she collected manuscripts – among them many *tenzi* – and conducted fieldwork in Eastern Africa between 1911 and 1913. She gathered information on texts and contexts, which greatly influenced the nature of her *tenzi* editions (e.g. Werner 1917, 1921-23, 1930/31, 1932, 1934) as well as her insightful overview works (Werner 1917-20, 1920, 1926/27). For instance, differently from other scholars, she starts her first edition, *The Utenzi wa Mwana Kupona* published in 1917 (re-edited in 1934), by giving biographical information that she was able to collect on the authoress, striving in particular for recognition of women’s contribution to Swahili poetry and its transmission. As a woman, Werner had the advantage of being granted access to the female sphere of Swahili society and she readily profited from it, countering and complementing the (Western) male-dominated view of Swahili literature. Enthusiastically, she closes her preface to the later edition of *Mwana Kupona*’s poem with the following words: “It is the first literary composition by an East African Native woman to be published in Great Britain” (Werner and Hichens 1934: 10).

Alice Werner’s work paved the way for other scholars who profited heavily from her writings and papers – sometimes without paying her due credit. Alice Werner cooperated with William Hichens (?-1944), an important editor (rather than scholar) of Swahili poetry. Inspired by Werner’s scholarly work, he started a bibliophile series of classical Swahili poetry called *Azanian Classics* for a select European audience. He produced the first two volumes, the *Hadithi ya Mikidadi na Mayasa* (1932), and the *Utenzi wa Mwana Kupona* (1934), based on Werner’s previous publications (1917, 1930/31). Although Hichens had planned a number of other editions and publications which were announced in the first two volumes, only two others – an edition of *Inkishafi* (published by Sheldon Press in 1939) and an anthology of poems by Muyaka (published in Johannesburg in 1940) – actually materialised.

<sup>9</sup> For Meinhof’s appreciation of Alice Werner, see his rather personal obituary (Meinhof 1935/36) and Frankl 2005c.

Besides Alice Werner, Hichens also relied on the Mombasan scholar and *liwali* Mbarak Ali Hinawy (1896-1959) for his edition of the *Inkishafi*, his anthology of Muyaka poems and his treatise on Swahili prosody (Hichens 1962/63), which were published without any reference to Hinawy's name.<sup>10</sup> In a letter to Robert Allen (24 April 1946), Hinawy writes: "Mr. Hichens was introduced to me by Dr. Alice Werner whom I knew personally and for whom I had great respect but in spite of our entering into agreement about the publication of *Inkishafi* and *Al-Akida* and subsequent researches into other poems, stories and general literature, Mr. Hichens took all the material supplied by me as his own." Later, J.W.T. Allen helped Hinawy to regain his papers from the SOAS archives and publish the *Al-Akida*, an *utenzi* written by Hinawy, rightfully under his own name (Hinawy 1970).<sup>11</sup>

While Hichens showed a particular carelessness when it came to questions of authorship, after his death, Lyndon Harries and Jan Knappert (see below) in turn plundered the unpublished editions and book manuscripts in the Hichens collection of the SOAS archive for their own editions, without referring to the source. For his anthology *Swahili Poetry*<sup>12</sup> (1962), the first comprehensive overview of Swahili poetry, Lyndon Harries obviously relied on the Hichens papers, not only as material to exemplify the different poetic categories but also for the commentaries that are sometimes repeated *verbatim* without marking them as citations.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Harries' categorisation

<sup>10</sup> I am grateful to Mwalimu Saggaf (Mombasa) who let me see the correspondence between Hichens and Hinawy and Allen and Hinawy that he was given by Fahmy Hinawy, Mbarak's son. The correspondence between Mbarak A. Hinawy and Hichens kept in the SOAS archives also reveals that Hichens made Hinawy renounce all his rights in respect of *Al-Inkishafi* (SOAS MS 253029b).

<sup>11</sup> See Allen's letter from 18 March 1948; see also the letter by Robert Allen 28 April 1946 and the fragment of a letter by Hinawy in the collection of Mwalimu Saggaf in Mombasa.

<sup>12</sup> Harries' chapter on *tenzi*, includes parts of the following texts: *Ras al-Ghuli*, *Utenzi wa Liyongo*, *Utenzi wa Mwana Kuponu*, *Maulidi Barzanji*, *Dura Mandhuma*, *Utenzi wa al-Akida*, *Utenzi wa Mwana Mnga* (Love-Song), *Shairi la Ndoto*, *Shairi la Mkata*, *The Warrior Song*, *Utenzi wa Hati* and *Utenzi wa Adili*. The only *utenzi* that he transliterated himself was the *Utenzi wa Ras-al-Ghuli*. Apart from the *Utenzi wa Hati*, the *Utenzi wa Adili*, and the *Maulidi Barzanji*, all of the other poems were part of the Hichens' collection.

<sup>13</sup> When working on *Liyongo* poems and on "long-measure verse", I realised that whole passages in Harries' anthology are taken from the *Liyongo Saga* manuscript, a nearly complete book manuscript, as well as from a manuscript dealing with the history of Swahili poetry (*Diwani ya Malenga wa Sawahili*, SOAS, MS 53491).

of poetry on which the structure of the book is based is rooted in Hinawy's analysis of Swahili prosody (Hichens 1962/63). Knappert, particularly in his *Four Centuries of Swahili Verse* (1979), also made extensive use of the Hichens papers and published a number of single *tenzi* editions based on them, such as, for instance, the *Utenzi wa Mkonumbi* (1964b) (cf. Harries 1967) – a poem by Muhamadi Kijuma mentioned by Alice Werner (1917-20: 126). The *Utenzi wa Barsisi* (Temptation of Saint Barsis) that Hichens had intended to publish was later published by Harries (1964) and (Knappert 1964a). Thus, while both Harries and Knappert profited from the Hichens collection, it is very likely that much of this collection should be considered as an extension of the “Werner collection”. A number of manuscripts, but also commentaries and philological work (for instance on Liyongo) that Hichens, Harries and Knappert took possession of, must in fact be attributed to her and to Muhamadi Kijuma with whom she collaborated (cf. also Biersteker and Plane 1989: 455).

*J. W. T. Allen and the project of creating of a classical literature*

Inspired by his father, Roland Allen, who had developed a deep interest in old Swahili poetry, J. W. T. Allen (1904-1979), also collected and edited old Swahili *tenzi*, becoming the most productive British scholar in the field of *tenzi*. He was the first to write a broad overview (*Tendi*, Allen 1971) with a lengthy introduction on the subject, “a landmark in the study of Swahili literature” (Biersteker and Plane 1989: 460). The six *tenzi* included in his *Tendi* were subsequently also published as booklets in the so-called *Sanaa ya Utungo* series.<sup>14</sup>

J. W. T. Allen spearheaded the production of this series by the newly established East African Literature Bureau, which was meant to make Swahili literature accessible and affordable in East Africa.<sup>15</sup> For Allen, who became

<sup>14</sup> This series consists of five booklets that contain the six *tenzi*, the *Utenzi wa Mwana Kupona* and *Utenzi wa Ngamia na Paa* (Sheikh and Nabahany 1972), the *Utenzi wa Masahibu* (Allen 1972b), the *Utenzi wa Mikidadi na Mayasa* (Bashir 1972), the *Utenzi wa Ayubu* (Allen 1972a) and the *Utenzi wa Qiyama* (Shariff 1972).

<sup>15</sup> Allen fostered the publication and editorial work of local Swahili scholars: he was a close friend of the El-Buhriy family in Tanga. He worked particularly on Hemedi Abdallah Said El-Buhriy's manuscripts and edited the *Utendi wa Sayyidna Hussein bin Ali* (1965) and the *Utenzi wa Abdirahmani na Sufiyani* (1961). Robert Allen had already helped to edit a

the secretary of the East African Swahili Committee in 1959, “classical Swahili literature” and the spread of Standard Swahili were far from being two mutually exclusive projects. On the contrary, similarly to Harold Lambert (Frankl 1999, 2005b), he programmatically emphasised aesthetically demanding literature as the only appropriate means of promoting Swahili (cf. Allen 1944, Wilkening 2000: 242). “Classical” Swahili poetry and dialectal texts were published in the hope that they would have the power to invigorate the still artificial Standard Swahili that was being met with much reservation, and disseminate it in society by showing its beauty and eloquent power (Whiteley 1969: 94). Thus, ironically, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, when the growing efforts to implement Standard Swahili (to which Allen heavily contributed) enhanced the dichotomisation of Swahili into a standard form and other (dialectal and literary) varieties, research on the latter was also fostered, exploring literature as a source for further linguistic development.

In accordance with Allen’s emphasis on an aesthetically demanding Swahili literature, which was part of a political agenda, he considered *tenzi* less as a source of historical linguistic information and more as verbal art, particularly highlighting the perfect poetic form of the *utenzi* in his writings. In his editions, Allen’s idea of accuracy and rigidity is quite different from that of the philologists, Carl Meinhof, Ernst Dammann and Alice Werner, who applied rigidity to the handling of the manuscripts and the variants transmitted in them rather than to an idea of aesthetic perfection. Aimed at underlining the poem’s aesthetic appeal and targeting a larger audience, the translation gains in importance and often deviates from the literal wording of the Swahili text, much more than in the editions of Alice Werner or Ernst Dammann, for instance, who tried to stick to the text and its actual wording as closely as possible.

### *The most controversial of all: Jan Knappert*

The Dutch scholar Jan Knappert (1927-2005) is undoubtedly the most productive scholar when it comes to the sheer number of writings on *tenzi* as well

number of Hemedi El-Buhriy’s *tenzi* manuscripts, like the *Utenzi wa Kutawafukwa kwa Nabii* (El-Buhriy 1956) and the *Utendi wa Qiyama* (El-Buhriy 1945).

as editions published by him. Probably, he also had the most comprehensive overview of the field of *tenzi*. His publications include editions of individual *tenzi* (e.g. Knappert 1964, 1968/69) as well as overview works such as *Traditional Swahili Poetry* (1967), *Swahili Islamic Poetry* (1971), *Epic Poetry in Swahili and Other African Languages* (1983) and *Four Centuries of Swahili Verse* (1979), which contextualise *tenzi* as well as other poetry in their historical and cultural background. Due to the sheer quantity of his publications, scholars inside and outside the field refer to his work *nolens volens*.<sup>16</sup> After the war, Dammann (1974, 1985) considered Knappert as *the* specialist in the field of Swahili literature, taking the lead in the field after Allen’s death. In his *Tendi*, Allen (1971: 499) recommends Ernst Dammann’s *Dichtungen in der Lamu-Mundart des Suaheli* as well as Knappert’s *Traditional Swahili Poetry*, which had appeared in 1967, to the “serious student” interested in Swahili literature.<sup>17</sup>

However, Knappert is also by far the most controversial scholar of Swahili literature: in particular, he has repeatedly been criticised for his improper handling of sources. He was frequently accused of taking possession of manuscripts as well as thoughts and ideas without naming the source (Biersteker and Plane 1989: 455, Allen 1982: 142). Furthermore, he has also been criticised for his functional view of Swahili *tenzi*, from which he constructs concepts of hell, death and repentance, or humankind and creation, which, according to his reasoning, underlie the Swahili cosmology which is of a highly constructed nature (Shariff 1971, 1981; Allen 1982, Biersteker and Plane 1989). His functional and subjective consideration of sources is also echoed in his editorial practice – an aspect that we will turn to below.

### The making of the *utenzi*

While there are considerable differences in the approaches to text, as for instance the “German concentration” on the manuscripts or Allen’s consideration of the ideal form, there are also concepts that are recurrently found in

<sup>16</sup> For a chronological list of editions of “classical” Swahili poetry by Knappert and other pioneer scholars in the field, see Mieke 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Biersteker and Plane (1989: 450ff) also stress the enormous impact made by Knappert’s writings, including *Traditional Poetry*, *Swahili Islamic Poetry*, *Epic Poetry in Swahili and Other African Languages* and *Four Centuries of Swahili Verse* (as well as Harries’ anthology): “They are works that have come to be viewed as ‘authoritative’ sources by many who study Swahili.”

approaches to the *utenzi*. A central idea which recurs in scholarly writings is the notion of the *utenzi* as a classical genre, a genre comparable to the Homeric epics of Greek Antiquity, which clearly echoes the bourgeois canon of education that all the scholars in the field had gone through, from Krapf to Knappert. While the *utenzi* indeed does show a number of similarities to other epic traditions (Vierke 2010), the term “epic” used to designate the *utenzi* has probably done more harm than good, as it has often been used not in an analytical way, highlighting narrative-poetological features that the *utenzi* shared with other epic traditions, but in a normative-ideological way, “othering” the *utenzi*, constructing it as essentially different from other Swahili poetic genres.<sup>18</sup> The narrative *utenzi* depicting the early battles in the history of Islam was put on a pedestal. Its elevated nature seemed to have its proof in a number of mutually related characteristics, foremost its written nature – the genre which is predominantly represented in Swahili manuscripts is the *utenzi* – but also its Arabisms, its perfection of style, its content and intention, etc. On the one hand, these aspects form a closed circle of argumentation; on the other hand, a closer look reveals their highly constructed nature.

### *The idea of writtenness and fixity*

In many scholarly works, the idea of an elevated genre is closely linked to the *utenzi*’s written form. On the other hand, the idea of writing that scholars imposed on the *utenzi* is derived from a Western print culture and entrenches notions of the priority of the written text and its fixity, that are hardly reconcilable with the fluid Swahili manuscript culture, where the *utenzi* is primarily meant to be performed, so that its written form is of only relative importance.

Ernst Dammann, for instance, who had initially come to Lamu to work on a new edition of the *Chuo cha Herkal*, finally gave up this plan, as his idea of faithfulness to a text transmitted in manuscripts was incompatible with the actual variability of the *utenzi* that he was confronted with (Dammann 1999: 92). He conceived of a text ideally as being derived from one original and

<sup>18</sup> Ruth Finnegan’s claim that there was no epic in Africa (cf. Finnegan 1970) and the controversy this stirred up shows how much the epic has been considered not as a literary genre but as a measure of mental evolution and literary sophistication.



canonic text that needed to be reconstructed – a view that was influenced by concepts of theological text exegesis. Dammann (1999: 91) states that he had originally planned to prepare a critical edition of the *Chuo cha Herkal* following the principles of the critical edition of the New Testament. However, as he writes, after travelling to Lamu, the “difference between the two texts became clear” to him, as the New Testament was an unchangeable “document of faith” (*Glaubensurkunde*) with a canonical intention. On the contrary, the Swahili manuscripts were copied by scribes who might have altered the wording out of ignorance or adapted it to a specific dialect.<sup>19</sup> Other copies revealed text shortenings (Dammann 1993: 29). What he could have taken as an interesting indication of fluidity was seen by him as an obstacle, because it hindered an unequivocal historical reconstruction of a single text.

Facing the same “problem”, Knappert adopted the most constructive approach, creating a sound and coherent text himself. Differently from Ernst Damman, who meticulously worked on the manuscripts, faithfulness to the manuscripts was not of concern to Knappert. He believed in an ideal text that needed to be recreated out of different versions. For his first text edition, an analysis of the *Chuo cha Herkal* (1958) that he had taken over from Ernst Dammann, Knappert relied on eight different versions of the text that he used as “raw material”, “to make the story complete, logical and consistent” (Knappert 1999: 13): “What the researcher has on his tapes or disks is not the epic yet, it is only the raw material out of which the epic can be reconstructed. I restored the Heraklios, 4600 lines, from eight manuscripts and some recorded passages. Some episodes were to be found only in one or two manuscripts and not in the others, yet their inclusion in the final version was vital for the reader’s (and a fortiori for the listener’s) comprehension of the whole epic tale” (Knappert 1999: 11). In his *Survey of Swahili Islamic Epic Sagas* (1999: 12ff) he underlines that the ultimate aim of any edition is “the recreation of the ideal or optimal epic text from all the versions. ‘Optimal’ means that every word or grammatical form in the text is the best reading of dual or multiple choices. ‘Ideal’ means that the final edition is the perfect text such as the best expert could only dream of.”

<sup>19</sup> In his critical comparison of two manuscripts of the *ukawafi Kozi na Ndiwa*, Dammann (1938/39: 218) also laments the “mindlessness” of a verbatim tradition reflecting orality and, according to him, a “pre-scientific epoch” (cf. also Dammann 1999: 63).

In Knappert's approach, it is not the poet or the scribe(s), but the editor who plays the most important role. He is the collator who glues together scattered bits and pieces and thus decides upon the plot of the story. For the sake of the ideal text, the editor selects the most archaic grammatical form and lexeme, countering the modernisation tendencies of some scribes, and he is also permitted, in Knappert's view, "to wash the epic clean from additional beautifications" and repetitions: "Some versions may be repetitious, so the collator can cut some deadwood; other versions may contain lines from other epics or other poems. These may be carefully weeded out, but only if the collator is certain they do not belong in the text, at least not there" (Knappert 1999: 12). Knappert seldom marks textual and linguistic variation, so that the establishment of the "ideal text", depending totally on the editor, becomes an obscure process (see for instance his edition of the *Utenzi wa Katirifu* (Knappert 1968/69). The reconstructed text becomes by far more important than the existing versions of it, which hardly play any role in his editions and do not appear at all in his overview works. For Knappert, the gap between textual reality and his reconstructed forms is of no concern and he frankly admits (1999: 13) that he had to "recreate" most of the Swahili *tenzi*, as "of all the different versions that I could collect of one epic, handwritten or on tape, not one was ever complete." By repeatedly stressing the difficulty of deciphering Swahili manuscripts, and the tedious work and hardships involved in trying to understand them in the light of Swahili culture, he further contributed to the image of the supremacy of the commentator and editor (cf. Knappert 1999: 20) – Biersteker and Plane (1989) refer to the reported difficulty of working on Swahili manuscripts as one of the "myths" linked to Swahili manuscript study. While the historicity of the reconstruction is secondary for Knappert, since its aim is an atemporal, unchanging perfection, on the other hand, very interestingly, the ideal form is often implicitly bestowed with historical momentum, based on the unquestioned romanticist assumption that the original text of an *utenzi*, its historical ancestor, was also the most perfect in form and content.

Earlier, John W. T. Allen had already placed emphasis on the (particularly metric) perfection of form which was similarly considered to echo an earlier stage of the text. While paying less attention to linguistic variants, Allen devoted much attention to metric accuracy, considering deviations as a sign of (later) decay: "It cannot be too strongly emphasized that in verse conforming to the classical tradition, a defective line or a faulty line cannot be admitted. If

they are found in printed editions it may be the fault of the editor, the compositor, the transliterator or the copyist, but it is virtually impossible that the composer of the piece made a mistake” (Allen 1971: 8). For Allen the edition of an *utenzi* based on different manuscripts was the attempt to reconstruct the text in its original beauty and perfection in terms of form, i.e. prosody, as well as content, while at the same time being meant as a reconstruction of the original historical text. Therefore, though Allen did not become as constructive as Knappert, he polished texts by trying to undo adaptations, levelling out inconsistencies in terms of metre and content, and filling gaps (1971: 4): “In the text of the series, we have attempted to come as close as possible to the original version. To scholars in the western tradition this is obvious; but it should be noted that this is by no means invariably assumed by local scholars. Every scribe to some extent modernizes and “simplifies” the work that he is copying, whether carefully and consciously or carelessly and inadvertently; no exception is taken to his doing this.”

Though in slightly different forms, we recurrently find the idea of establishing, or at least working towards, *one* original coherent and complete text that would be considered as historical. Even though Knappert admitted that there was hardly one complete *utenzi*, and Allen (1971: 434) watched *tenzi* “grow” in the course of their transmission, the intention of *reconstructing* a single ideal text that was at the same time considered as a historical text was never called into doubt. While in the case of Dammann, and also Meinhof and Büttner, reconstruction meant faithfulness to the written representations of the *utenzi*, which limited their scope of interpretation and construction, but made their editorial work transparent, Allen, Lambert and also Knappert made amendments and additions that were not directly retraceable to one of the manuscripts. By selecting the most archaic linguistic variant for the reconstruction, an idea of the antiquity of the text was evoked and perpetuated, which turned a blind eye to the constantly fluid nature of the text. It also left unconsidered the stylistic use of archaisms, which, rather than being proofs of antiquity, have to be understood as being part of the *utenzi*’s poetic repertoire (cf. Vierke 2010). While Amri Abedi (1954), in his practical manual of Swahili poetry, instructs the poet-to-be on how to make poems look old, ancient linguistic forms have predominantly been taken by Western scholars as indicators of the poem’s age (rather than the poet’s versatility). The *utenzi* appeared to them as an inert, unchangeable monolith from ancient times. While Allen underlines the importance of recitation, the context of manuscript production and transmission, as well

as *utenzi* composition and reception, which could have given some idea of the nature of textual transmission in oral and written form, the role and function of the manuscripts are hardly ever considered. Writtenness linked to the notion of an ancient, fixed and coherent text remains indisputable, a universal rather than a culturally entrenched concept imposed on the *utenzi*.

*The conception of the utenzi as “high literature” with an elevated intention*

Secondly, the *utenzi* has been considered as pursuing a superior – often religious – function, being an elevated genre in which “the highest aspirations, spiritual feelings and the Swahili Weltanschauung” (Knappert 1967: 9) manifest themselves.

In Knappert’s writings, the texts are considered as epics exhibiting cosmology, myths and world views (see Knappert 1967: 11, 172; Knappert 1983; Knappert 1999: 15; Knappert 2004: 540). Considering *tenzi* as atemporal sanctuaries of an unchanging culture, he constructs an unchanging Swahili world view from them. Knappert’s *Traditional Swahili Poetry* thus “contains more commentary than poetry” (Biersteker and Plane 1989: 454), as he reads the text in the light of his interpretation, citing only certain passages which are used to underpin his construction of a Swahili cosmology. This perpetuates his idea of the genre as a storehouse of Swahili culture (for examples, see also Knappert 1971, 1983 and 1979).

*Tenzi* have also been described as being essentially different from light-hearted popular literature meant for entertainment, as having a higher function. In his overview articles (Dammann 1937, 1942a, 1942b, 1958), Ernst Dammann, for instance, differentiates between *Volksdichtungen* (folk poems) on the one hand, comprising mostly poetic and literary short forms, and *literarische Dichtungen* (literary poems), an aesthetic, intellectually demanding literary product of the elite.<sup>20</sup> His dichotomisation is hierarchical: while the *Volksdichtungen* were a common, simple form of expression, the

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Dammann 1937, 1942a and 1942b, and Dammann 1958. He also traces Arabic, Indian and Persian motifs in the so-called *Volksdichtungen*, which in his view is no counter-argument to his neat dichotomisation, as the style was still predominantly “African” (cf. Dammann 1942a, 1942b).

so-called literary poems, especially the *tenzi*, were "edification literature" composed by individual poets – often also poetesses – most commonly recited as part of important *rites de passages*, like births, weddings and funerals (Dammann 1942b: 254). Unlike the "folk poems", they were composed by highly educated poets who were learned in Arabic and Muslim theology and who intended their poems for a learned audience, excluding a broader public (Dammann 1942a: 121). Differently from Alice Werner (1917-20: 119) who underlined that the demarcation line between high literature and popular literature (meant to entertain) was often hard to draw, Dammann attributed an elevated, even religio-cultic function to *tenzi*, which also seemed to be mirrored by the content: Ali and the Prophet are central figures in many of the so-called Islamic *tenzi*. Thus, the entertainment function of popular legends was left out of account, and, secondly, scholars also tended to ignore texts of a more light-hearted nature (Biersteker and Plane 1989: 451ff, Abdalla 1990: 74 and Shariff 1988: 87).

Interestingly, in spite of bearing witness to the *ad hoc* composition of even frivolous *tenzi*, and despite his descriptions of performances, Allen contributed to making *tenzi* "a more serious form of verse" (Allen 1971: 22). He points out that some of the more jovial *tenzi* have never been written down and seldom survive, which, given that most editions deal with "serious *tenzi*", "gives the impression that the *tendi* are a more serious form of verse than in fact they are" (Allen 1971: 22). He systematically excluded from his publication *tenzi* which, according to his judgement, were too mediocre or too ribald. Thus, he helped to sustain the "myth" of the *utenzi* as the supreme literary category.

### *The conception of the utenzi as oriental*

Thirdly, the oriental and African elements of the *utenzi* have been a much debated issue. Alice Werner and Rudi Paret underlined the creative process of adaptation that they considered to be at work in *tenzi*, Arabic influences being incorporated and "Swahilised". Werner (1921-23: 87) talks of a "free rendering into metre of prose material." Krapf (1854: 567), for his part, supposed that *tenzi* were translations from Arabic, "even though the Swahili claim that the poems were composed by their own fellow natives."

Furthermore, the superior character of the classical *utenzi* has been attributed to Arabian influences. In approaches where African and Arabian are

mutually exclusive categories, the *utenzi* has been considered as an essentially Arab genre, displaying a large number of “non-African” features, like prosody and (Islamic) themes and motifs, which ennoble the genre.<sup>21</sup> Knappert, for instance, considers the *utenzi* as a whole to be an essentially oriental genre, distinct from “African literature” (Knappert 1967: 9). In Dammann’s early publications, the hierarchy between folk poetry and literary poetry coincides with the dichotomy of African and Arabian influences: “The general result of our research is that Swahili literary poetry, which is to be distinguished from the *Volksdichtung*, is the result of the Arabo-Islamic culture on the East African coast” (Dammann 1942a: 267) (cf. also Dammann 1999: 54). From his perspective, the merit of Swahili culture, which was mirrored in metaphors and references alluding to the natural coastal environment, is to have put Arabic prose narratives into a poetic form of Swahili that was likewise based on Arabic models. Differently from Alice Werner and Paret, who underline creative adaptation, in his *Dichtungen* Dammann largely denies this process of poetic adaptation a creative dimension, as it was only a reaction to Arabic stimuli, or – as Dammann (1940: VIII) puts it – “re-productive” instead of “re-creative” (*neuschöpferisch*). Talking about the transmission of Arabic sources and traditions, and their rendering in Swahili poetry, Dammann (1958: 50) gives the *Miraji* and the *Chuo cha Herkal* as examples of poems whose Arabic sources could be traced, and which proved to be very close to the Swahili versions. In other cases (*Utenzi wa Ayubu*, *Utenzi wa Kutawafukwa kwa Muhamadi* and *Utenzi wa Shufaka*), an Arabic source is actually mentioned in the poem. Dammann (1958: 46) concludes by analogy that even if there is no evidence of a specific Arabic manuscript, it must be assumed that the Swahili version closely followed an original Arabic source and should thus be considered as a translation rather than as an adaptation of literary *Stoff*.<sup>22</sup>

While Knappert and Dammann were particularly enthusiastic about the *tenzi* because of its oriental features, the East African literary critics of the 1970s dismissed *tenzi* (in accordance with European essentialising discourses)

<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Werner demands an analysis of Swahili prosody independently of Arabic models, pointing out that Swahili prosody is different from Arabic prosody and that it can hardly be understood as a copy of it (see for instance 1926/27: 115ff.; 1932: 10; 1934: 29).

<sup>22</sup> Dammann (1958: 268) projects the necessary emancipation of Swahili poetry from its Arabic sources into the future, in which due to the vitality of Swahili poetry, poets would have to find their own poetic expression, preferably in the more widely used dialect of Kiunguja.

precisely for that reason. A number of intellectual Swahili-speaking poets such as Euphrase Kezilahabi and Mugyabuso Mulokozi, who experimented with free verse poetry, turned into key figures in the debate between the so-called *wanamapokezi* (traditionalists) and *wanamapinduzi* (revolutionaries). Against the strictness of the *wanamapokezi*, the *wanamapinduzi* characterised the prosodic rigidity and the topics dealt with in *tenzi*, the language of which displayed a high percentage of Arabic vocabulary, as being alien to the (African) people, recalling a division into slaves and slave-holders (cf. Kezilahabi 1973, Mulokozi 1975, Kahigi and Mulokozi 1978, 1979) – a dichotomisation which ironically echoes the orientalist classification of *tenzi* in Western discourses as being essentially Arabic.

This view of Swahili poetry was not shared by (Swahili) conservative scholars (*wanamapokezi*) and also a number of more moderate scholars, like Ohly and Arnold, who, fighting against an ideological interpretation of literature, did not subscribe to this notion of the *utenzi*.<sup>23</sup> In reaction to both colonial and post-colonial “misrepresentations” of Swahili poetry, a number of writings were produced which heavily criticised the constructive efforts of Western researchers who treated Swahili poetry by imposing Western concepts of poetry on it, as well as essentialising concepts of Africanness and Arabness in writings by both Western (cf. for instance Knappert 1967, 1983) and African scholars (e.g. Chiraghdin and Mnyampala 1977, Shariff 1988, cf. also Mulokozi and Sengo 1995). In protest against simple dichotomies, like Arabian vs. African, Swahili scholars (Abdulaziz 1979, Abdalla 1990) underlined processes of creative adaptation in both texts and culture: the propagation of a pure “Africanness” coinciding with the confines of the African continent was a misconception, as the Swahili coast was essentially characterised by its hybridity, being at the same time a part of Africa and of the geographic and cultural space defined by the Indian Ocean.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ohly (1973: 81) criticises the idea of imposing an ideological historical reading on literature (rather than taking a closer look at social practice) and of reading traditional poetry solely as exponents of (Arab) feudalism, evaluating it in terms of its revolutionary impact (cf. also Arnold 1973).

<sup>24</sup> For a harsh criticism of the orientalist view of Swahili culture, language and literature, see Shariff 1988, Mazrui 1992, Mazrui and Shariff 1993, Ohly 1973, Arnold 1973. For

The literary debate of the 1970s, a counter-strike against imposed notions of poetry, had a lasting impact on the notion of *tenzi*. The conceptualisation of classical *tenzi* as a contrast to free verse poetry, making them a pair in complementary opposition, linked them more than ever to a traditional sphere and associated them with conservatism. To put it differently, the *utenzi* would probably never have been linked so strongly to prosodic rigidity, Arabness, feudalism and a “traditional sphere” had it not been considered as a counter-example to (African) free verse poems in the context of the post-colonial liberation. Nowadays, a moderate tone has gained prominence in the scholarly debate, in favour of a plurality of poetic form and genre. *Tendi* are largely recognised as a literary heritage, which means that they are considered as playing a role in the large spectrum of Swahili poetry and its history. Their status as recognised “museum objects” is, however, not without ambiguity, as they have also been turned into traditional, sometimes lifeless relicts from the past, even on the Swahili coast. Allen’s project of nationalising the literary heritage can hardly be called a success. Through Kiunguja winning over the literary dialects of Kiamu and Kimvita, Standard Swahili was detached from a Swahili literary tradition that became restricted to a “traditional sphere”. Today, the youth is cut off from literary history and a poetic tradition that uses an Arabic script they can hardly read and language that is markedly different from the Standard Swahili they learn at school, and which brings with it its own literary canon (cf. O’Fahey 2000: 7ff).<sup>25</sup>

## Reprise

In this article, I have highlighted some concepts that have been recurrently imposed on the *utenzi* to show that there are considerable differences in the various approaches to *tenzi*. The history of research has never been one of

instance, Ohly (1973: 80) argued against the “fideistic idea” that Islam and forms of its narration, like *tenzi*, were opposed to Africanness. Abdulaziz (1979: 8), in opposition to the idea of an Arabisation of the coast, talks about Swahilisation of the Arabs. Topan (2008) describes the Swahili historical experience as one of double hybridity, implying liminality as a product of the encounter with both the Arab and the European “other”.

<sup>25</sup> We need to underline that we are talking about the literary tradition and not the genre: the *utenzi* genre as such has lived on and has even gained importance on the national level, although, of course, it has changed considerably in terms of context, function and form.



unilinear development: on the contrary, in many ways, Knappert's writings fall behind the much more refined analyses of text and context by Alice Werner, who, together with Paret and also Meinhof, considered the issue of adaptation in a much more balanced way. In respect of thoroughness in the notation of variant readings, Dammann's and Meinhof's textual editions can still be considered as role-models. In respect of comparative research in literary history, the analysis of *tenzi* was most far-reaching and ambitious under Meinhof's guidance, achieving a scope which it hardly ever reached again. Allen, on the other hand, provided us with the most extensive analysis of the *utenzi*'s literary language, seriously considering *tenzi* as aesthetic masterpieces of world literature, and aiming at an adequate rendition in translation. In brief, as shown in this article, editorial practice, the presentation of a text which provides the frame for further interpretation, is variously shaped by the particular intentions and conceptions of the author which in turn influence the text. Thus, to consider the dimensions of Swahili poetry, it is also essential to reflect upon the contexts, frames and mechanisms of reception and interpretation of the texts.

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THE “ARABIC STORY” AND THE KINGWANA HUGO:  
A (TOO SHORT) HISTORY OF LITERARY TRANSLATION INTO SWAHILI

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The Swahili-speaking area has time and again been characterised by a process of mediation between cultures taking place between regional, trans-regional, national and trans-national cultural spaces. Commercial exchange, migration, political interests, domination, liberation, and trans-national collaboration, not only have shaped the socio-political asset of this geographic area, but have also triggered profound and intricate literary transfers. Throughout history, texts and narratives have travelled from disparate social, cultural, historical and geographical contexts to the Swahili coast and inland. In what follows, I would like to trace a (too short) history of literary translations into Swahili, going back to the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> I identify four phases of literary translation flows in Swahili: translations in the pre-twentieth century Swahili literary space, missionary activity and colonial rule (1867-1960), the aftermath of the colonial era (1960-1990), and the contemporary landscape (1990-today).

\* I dedicate this article to Prof. Bertoncini. I had the honour and pleasure of being her student and I am deeply grateful for the astonishing knowledge of, the burning passion for and the firm commitment to Swahili language and literature I have learnt from her.

<sup>1</sup> In this article, I will limit myself to a historical narration of translation flows, leaving aside one of the pillars of translation history consisting in what Anthony Pym (1998: 10) has described as “social causation”, or “why translation was produced in a particular social time and space.” A historical and sociological analysis and interpretation of translational events centred on the social functions and the role of literary translations injected in the Swahili literary field is provided in my PhD thesis *Framing texts/ framing social spaces: The conceptualisation of literary translation and its discourses in three centuries of Swahili literature* (2017), University of Bayreuth.



### Literary translations in the pre-twentieth century Swahili literary space

Pre-twentieth century Swahili oral literature incorporated fables and tales, which in terms of plots, characters and themes exhibit not only Arabic but also Persian, Indian, Turkish and even Aramaic motifs and influences (Tolmacheva 1978: 229). The Sanskrit cycle *Kalila and Dimna*, and stories from *Thousand and One Nights*, such as tales about the Arab Abunuwas or the Persian Sindbad, arrived and circulated in this coastal space, and often ended up by being adapted to the African context (Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: 17-20; Zhukov 1996: 276). The assimilation of foreign narratives from the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent triggered the adoption of literary themes, motifs, and narrative structures in the corpus of Swahili literature. For instance, next to animals depicted as humanised characters in Bantu tales, there were animals depicted as stylised or mysticised characters (Tolmacheva 1978: 227). Or, characters such as sultans, vizirs, or Bedouins started to populate Swahili oral narratives (ibidem: 230), while *majini*, genies, and *mashetani*, demons, appeared alongside the Bantu *mazimwi*, ogres (Mulokozi 2006: 12).

Translation practices played a prominent role not only in the domain of Swahili orality, but also in the development of a Swahili manuscript culture. Some of the oldest testimonies of a pre-colonial written literary corpus in Swahili are poems which were, or were presented as, translations, such as *Utendi wa Tambuka* (The poem of the battle of Tabuk, 1728) (Harries 1962: 5), or *Hamziyya* (The poem in Hamza, 1749) (ibidem: 59). Already at the end of the seventeenth century, but particularly during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in a situation of increased Arabic and Islamic sensibility and influences, the Swahili literary field witnessed an outpouring of Arabic texts in the form of poetry translations, namely in the form of *utendi* (pl. *tendi*) or *ukawafi* (pl. *kawafi*). The literary transfer concerned different kinds of texts, including poems dealing with the wars against the unfaithful, such as *Utendi wa Tambuka*, *Utendi wa Katirifu* (The Poem of Katirifu), or *Utendi wa Mikidadi na Mayasa* (The poem of Mikidadi and Mayasa); hagiographic poems such as *Utendi wa Ayubu* (The Poem of Job) or *Utendi wa Fatuma* (The Poem of Fatuma); poems relating to Koranic narratives of the life of the Prophet, such as *Ukawafi wa Miraji* (The Quatrain of the Heavenly Ascent); didactic poems such as *Utendi wa Ngamia na Paa* (The Poem of the Camel and the Gazelle) or *Utendi wa Barasisi* (The Poem of the Monk Barsis); panegyric poems in praise of the Prophet, such as *Buruda ya*

*al-Busiri* (The Burda of al-Busiri), or *U Mbali Suadu* (Far away is felicity); and Maulidi texts, such as *Kitabu Maulidi* (The book of the Nativity), the two *Maulidi ya Dali* (The Maulid in –dā) by Mansabu and Mshela, *Maulidi ya Wa* (The Maulid in –wa).

The composers of these poems were usually the leading writers of Swahili poetry and members of the *ulamaa* group, Islamic scholars and judges. In this era translation was in fact an elitist practice, an appanage of the members of the highest level of the social hierarchy. Sheikh Mgeni bin Faqihi, who composed the *Utenzi wa Ras 'l-Ghuli* (The Poem of the Ras il-Ghuli) was an Islamic teacher in Mbweni, Bagamoyo (Topan 2001: 114). The composer of *Ukawafi wa Miraji*, Al-'Amin bin Aly was a scholar from Mombasa (Knappert 1971: 15). Sheikh Muhammad bin 'Uthman Haji Alekuwako Mshela, the composer of *Buruda ya Al-Busiri* and *Maulidi ya Dali*, was an Islamic scholar versed in Islamic theology and law, Koranic exegesis and recitation, and classical Arabic literature (wa Mutiso 2004: 88). Sayyid Aidharusi bin Athumani, the composer of the *Hamziyya*, was a *mwanachuoni*, a theologian and scholar of Arabic who worked at the court of the sultan of Pate, Abu Bakari V (Knappert 1979: 103). Another court poet was Bwana Mwengo, who composed the *Utendi wa Tambuka* commissioned by the sultan of Pate, Fumo Luti (Chiraghdin 1987: iii). Saiyid Umar bin Amin bin Umar bin Amin bin Nasir al-Ahdal, the composer of *Utenzi wa Ayubu*, was a judge in Siu, and the author of several didactic poems (Gérard 1976: 10). Sayyid Mansabu bin Abdurrahman, who composed *Kitabu Maulidi*, was a prominent theologian, jurist and poet, from an illustrious Lamu family that included several poets and some learned kadis (Knappert 1971: 312). He studied law and theology in Mecca and the Hadramawt, and was appointed kadi of Zanzibar by Sultan Sayid Majid bin Said, and later kadi of Lamu by Sayid Barghash, Majid's successor (Knappert 1979: 201, Harries 1962: 102). Said Abdallah Masudi el-Buhry, the composer of *Mikidadi na Mayasa*, and probably of *Utendi wa Barasisi*, was a renowned poet from Pemba who worked in Mtang'ata as a Mazrui governor (Allen 1971: 270). We have virtually no information on poets/translators such as Binti Bwana Lemba (*Siri li-Asirari*) or Binti Sayidi Amini (*Utendi wa Fatuma*), and in some other instances the translators are anonymous, as in the case of *Utendi wa Ngamia na Paa*.

An interesting feature of *tendi* and *kawafi* is that the narration is accompanied by a detailed metadiscourse on translation. In the preamble, for instance,

the composers of the Swahili poems usually address the readers and inform them that the poetic work is an act of retelling, or repeating, pre-existing Arabic sources, or *hadithi ya Kiarabu* (the Arabic story). The act of repeating is emphasised by the use of verbs such as *kudhukuri* (remember, repeat);<sup>2</sup> *kuhadithiya* (narrate, rehearse);<sup>3</sup> *kukhubiri* (announce, report),<sup>4</sup> or by mentioning that the source text has been reproduced “from the beginning” (*awali, mwanzo*) “to the end” (*akheri* also *ahari, aheri, ahiri*), which gives the translated text the quality of being *timamu* (complete)<sup>5</sup>, or by specifying that no single word has been lost or neglected during the transfer from Arabic to Swahili (“*Pasi neno kulisaza*”, “Without neglecting a word”)<sup>6</sup>.

In spite of the – sometimes rather flamboyant – display of the identity of a text as a translation, the transfer processes that have taken place through *utendi* and *ukawafi* bear witness to complex and multiple procedures of literary exchanges. It is true that some poems are derived from source texts translated almost literally. These include *Buruda ya Al-Busiri*, a translation of *al-Kawākibu-d-Durriyya fī madhī ḥayri ‘l-Bariyya* (The scintillating stars in praise of the best of mankind) by the famous Sharafu’d-Dini Al-Busiri; *Hamziyya*, a translation of another Arabic poem by Al-Busiri *Kasidatu ‘l-Hamziyyah fī ‘l-mada’ihi ‘n Nabawiyya* (Qasida in praise of the Prophet Muhammad ending in hamza), and *U Mbalu Suadu*, a translation of the famous Arabic poem *Bānat Su‘ād* (Su‘ād has departed), by another renowned Egyptian poet Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr. However, most of Swahili *tendi* are presented as translations although they have no direct source text. This applies, for example, to *Utendi wa Ayubu*, *Utendi wa Katirifu*, *Utendi wa Mikidadi na Mayasa*, *Utendi wa Ngamia na Paa* and *Utendi wa Tambuka*. In these cases, the indication of the source in the metanarration is to be questioned, since no (direct) source texts have come to light, and it is suspected that they do not exist at all. Here, the notion of pseudotranslation can help. Pseudotranslations are “TL [Target Language] texts which are regarded in the target culture as translations though no genuine STs [Source Texts] exist for them” (Toury 1995: 40). Yet, the scenery which the Swahili context offers is multi-layered.

<sup>2</sup> *Utendi wa Ngamia na Paa* (Allen 1971: 89), *Utendi wa Katirifu* (Knappert 1969: 87).

<sup>3</sup> *Utendi wa Qiyama* (Allen 1971: 440-442).

<sup>4</sup> *Utendi wa Ayubu* (Allen 1971: 376).

<sup>5</sup> *Utendi wa Ras ‘l-Ghuli* (Faqihi 1979: 229); (Allen 1971: 376, 424).

<sup>6</sup> *Utendi wa Kutawafu Nabii* (Allen et al. 1991: 52-53).

For instance, for some Swahili classical poems a source text has been identified, but the pattern we get is that the attested source texts are partial sources, from which Swahili composers drew the general topic, but with the aim of creating a poem from scratch. *Utenzi wa Ras 'l-Ghuli*, or *Utendi wa Barasisi* fit this pattern. These texts can be understood as a “metaliterary form”, a notion which James Holmes (1988: 23) used to define a range of metaliterature that are generated from a text, such as prose translation, verse translation, imitation, poem about poem, or poem inspired by another poem (1988: 23-24). In other cases, while reference to the act of translation is omitted, it is very plausible that the Swahili *tendi* or *ukawafi* are drawn and translated from a group of sources. *Ukawafi wa Miraji*, for example, was composed when different versions of the journey to Heaven were available and widely circulated in prose. In a similar fashion, some Swahili poems are only vaguely marked as translations, such as *Siri li Asirari* (The Secretive Secret), in which the poetess remarks “*Nasi tumeifupiza*” (We have abridged it) (Dammann 1940: 270). This is a case where texts have narrative themes which “can be traced back to crosscultural antecedents or ‘traditions’” (Pym 1998: 60), and can thus be regarded as “weakly marked translation”, reminiscent of the metaliterary form described by Holmes (1988: 24) as a “poem only vaguely, generally inspired by the original.” In these cases, we could look at the re-elaboration of the notion of pseudotranslation advanced by Andrea Rizzi (2008) as an umbrella term for the textual instances presented here. Rizzi’s (ibidem: 161) understanding of pseudotranslation, in fact, encompasses a plurality of activities which include non-translational processes, adjustments, additions or adaptations, and which make “[t]he coexistence of T [Translation] and PT [Pseudo-Translation] within the same text” possible. In other words, Swahili translation practices in the pre-twentieth century context, display many, and sometimes overlapping, modes of textual transfer, which present a challenge to definitions of translation.

### **Literary translations during missionary activity and colonial rule**

This phase covers the period between 1867 and 1960, and can be further divided into three sub-categories: German rule, the British mission in Zanzibar, and British rule.

In *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, German East Africa, Swahili was the medium of instruction and the language of the (low levels of) administration. Despite

the linguistic policy in the colonial education system, and in spite of the fact that back home there was a prolific process of translation of Swahili tales, fables and religious poems into German,<sup>7</sup> there was hardly any translation of texts from German into Swahili on African soil. A few translations of German tales were published in the newspaper *Kiongozi* (The leader), in its *Baraza* column, dedicated to stories and tales. These are *Wilhelm Tell*,<sup>8</sup> *Hänsel na Gretel*,<sup>9</sup> *Herzog Heinrich wa Braunschweig na simba yake* (Duke Heinrich of Braunschweig and his lion),<sup>10</sup> and *Schneewittchen* (Snow White).<sup>11</sup>

A greater exposure to European literature took place in the framework of the British Universities Mission in Zanzibar, which did not solely bring translation of the Scriptures. At the end of the nineteenth century, Arthur Cornwallis Madan translated pieces on church history and secular history, and excerpts from Dante, Buddha, and Socrates (Hellier 1940: 252). Edward Steere, the Anglican bishop in Zanzibar, introduced, in the form of abridged, summarised translations, Shakespeare and Greek mythology in the context of the mission. He translated Charles and Mary Lamb’s *Tales from Shakespeare*, as *Hadithi za Kiingereza* in 1867, and Aesop’s fables as *Hadithi za Esopo* in 1880. *Mambo na Hadithi* (1884) is a collection of 55 texts dealing with secular and Christian history, and Western literature. There are stories on Babel, Emperor Darius, Sparta and Athens, Ulysses, Socrates, Romulus and Remus, and St. Peter. In 1889 Steere also translated Charles Kingsley’s *The Heroes, Greek fairy tales*, as *Mashujaa: Hadithi za Wayonani*.

Following the activity of Bishop Steere, consistent flows of literary translations into Swahili are registered after the British took over the administration of Tanganyika from Germany, and especially in the aftermath of the establishment of the Inter-Territorial Language Committee (ITLC) in 1930.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> As early as 1894, Carl Büttner published his *Anthologie aus der Suaheli-Literatur*, which was followed by a number of other scholarly publications of Swahili literary works. For an overview of Swahili literature available by 1909 see Struck 1909.

<sup>8</sup> Issue 85, June 1912.

<sup>9</sup> Issue 86, July 1912.

<sup>10</sup> Issue 90, November 1912.

<sup>11</sup> Issues 91, December 1912 and 92, January 1913.

<sup>12</sup> The Committee was renamed East Africa Swahili Committee upon transfer to Makerere College in 1952, and afterwards Institute of Kiswahili Research upon transfer to the University of Dar es Salaam.

The Committee was established with the aim of standardising the Swahili language for use throughout East Africa. Together with the preparation of textbooks, the translation of foreign literature was envisaged as a means of promoting standardisation (Report 1925). Translations initially were circulated through journals such as *Mambo Leo* (Current Affairs), published monthly from 1923 by the Tanganyika Education Department. From 1928 translations appeared as complete books, usually published in the U.K. by Sheldon Press, Macmillan, Evans, Oxford, or Longman. The translations issued by the Committee were inserted in the school curricula of the colony as reading material and often addressed – as Frederick Johnson (1929b: v) comments in his introduction to *Mashimo ya Mfalme Sulemani* (King Solomon's Mines) – “*watu wasomao Kiswahili*” (those who study Swahili). The titles selected to be translated during the years of the Language Committee were mostly European school classics of the time, and included collections of tales, novels, and plays. The translation of poetry, on the other hand, was hardly undertaken by the English in East Africa. Although the centuries-old poetic tradition which Swahili literature could boast of, and the position of Swahili poetry in society, were not unknown to the English intelligentsia, English poetry in translation was not a popular genre. For instance, the Swahili translation of Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, was subject to a shift of genre and rendered as a *hadithi*, a prose summary. The source language was usually English (including texts by Ryder Haggard, Jonathan Swift, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Daniel Defoe, Lewis Carroll, Joel Chandler Harris, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and others), with a tiny presence of French (*Tabibu asiyependa utabibu*, a translation of *Le Médecin malgré lui* by Molière, and *Hadithi ya Zadig*, the translation of *Zadig, ou La destinée* by Voltaire, which, however, was translated from the English version), Italian (*Mambo yaliyompata Pynokio*, a translation of *Le avventure di Pinocchio: Storia di un burattino* by Carlo Collodi) and Arabic (*The Nights*).<sup>13</sup>

During British rule, Frederick Johnson, the first Secretary of the Inter-Territorial Language Committee, and Senior Clerk in the Education Department, was responsible for a high number of translations into Swahili. Between 1927 and 1935, he translated *Treasure Island*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *The Jungle Book*,

<sup>13</sup> The translation of *The Nights* into Swahili has been extensively discussed in Geider (2007), and Hadjivayanis (2011: 130-229).

*Tales of Uncle Remus*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Song of Hiawatha* and *Allan Quatermain*. Translators were usually colonial administrators (such as Alexander Morrison, James William Murison), or missionaries (such as Serafino Bella Eros). In the colonial phase the only two women participating in translation activities were, as far as I know, Virginia Ermytrude St. Lo De Malet Conan-Davies and Isabelle Fremont, who translated the children’s stories *Talking woman*, *Mone Fe’s Visits*, and *Beasts and Birds of Africa* as *Bibi msemi* (1940), *Mazungumzo Ya Mone Fe* (1948), and *Wanyama Na ndege Wa Afrika* (1949) respectively. Inasmuch as the organisation of cultural (re)production and transfer of knowledge was basically in the hands of the Language Committee, access to the position of cultural (re)producer was subject to the mediation, and control, of the colonial apparatus. The participation of East African translators was filtered among the members of the petty bourgeoisie, which gravitated around, and acquired legitimacy from, the colonial machinery. However, such participation was limited to, or recorded as, “assistance”. This was the case of Edwin Brenn, an African working in the mission, and as a senior clerk in the Education Department (Iliffe 1979: 266), who collaborated with Frederick Johnson on the translations of *Kisiwa chenye Hazina*, *Mashimo ya Mfalme Sulemani* and *Hadithi ya Hiawatha*, and whose contribution was acknowledged by Johnson through the formula *kwa msaada wa*, “with help from”. In other cases, such a contribution was destined to oblivion. E. Lewis of the Education Department participated in the translation of *Treasure Island* serialised in the journal *Mambo Leo* in 1927. When the text was published as a separate book two years later, the name of Lewis was omitted, although the texts in the journal and in the book are identical.

Some changes in the field of translation took place from 1946 when the Language Committee was opened to the effective participation of Africans (Mulokozi 2006: 15), with the consequence that Swahili translators were allowed relatively more room in translating activities – and not solely as “assistants”.<sup>14</sup> In addition, this change coincides with a decrease in the educative bias of the Swahili translations. The 1950 translation of Voltaire’s *Zadig* by Abdulla M. Abubakr, or the translation of the *Rubaiyat* by Omar Khayyam as *Omar Khayyam kwa Kiswahili* (1952), for instance, appeal more to an audience

<sup>14</sup> However, it was only the select few East Africans who had access to literacy in English, and who were trained to become subordinate administrative officers, who were able to become translators.

of adults, and in the case of Shaaban's translation, pertain to a genre deserted by the British establishment. It is also during these years that publishing activities were diverted to East Africa, especially Nairobi, after the institution of the East African Literature Bureau in 1948.

### **Literary translations in the aftermath of the colonial era**

With the end of colonial rule in Kenya,<sup>15</sup> Tanganyika and Zanzibar,<sup>16</sup> translation flows underwent considerable changes in terms of directionality, text types and the kinds of agents involved in the translation activities. Following the end of British rule, translation ceased to be the prerogative of a small group of colonial administrators, and a few Africans who had access to literacy in English. Indeed, the presence of non-Africans in the intellectual field was destined to drop. Also, the small presence of women translators remains a constant in this phase, too, with Bi. Thureya Kassim, a prolific translator from Russian, among the few. Translation practices before and during colonial rule offered a certain coherence in terms of the kinds of texts allowed to enter the doors of the Swahili literary field (religious texts during the pre-colonial phase, and literary prose texts during the colonial era). The post-colonial phase, on the other hand, is characterised by a host of text types, ranging from prose to plays and poetry, including detective novels, satire or the (auto)biographical genre.<sup>17</sup>

In the postcolonial phase, translation of foreign literatures occupied a relevant place in the Swahili literary field, and was connected to political

<sup>15</sup> Kenya attained independence on December 12, 1963.

<sup>16</sup> Tanganyika became independent on 9 December 1961, and Zanzibar became independent in 1963, with the fusion of the protectorates of Zanzibar and Pemba. In April 1964 Tanganyika and Zanzibar united and gave birth to the United Republic of Tanzania.

<sup>17</sup> A number of translations of biographies were sponsored by the Tanzania Library Service Board. These were the biographies of: Julius Nyerere, *Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere* by Hamza A. K. Mwenegoha (1977); Eduardo Mondlane, *Eduardo Mondlane* by Hamza A. K. Mwenegoha (1977); Patrice Lumumba, *Patrice Lumumba* by Hamza A. K. Mwenegoha (1977); and Kwame Nkrumah, *Daima mbele (Maisha ya Kwame Nkrumah)* by Robert M. Makange (1978). Hyder Mohamed Matano and Titus Nicholas Echessa, two university scholars, translated Tom Mboya's *Freedom and After* (1963) as *Uhuru ni mwanzo*. Zaidi Noorjehan and Shihabuddin Chiraghadin, two Swahili experts and scholars, translated *Harry Thuku: an autobiography* (1970) as *Harry Thuku: Maisha yangu* (1971).



propaganda, the establishment or enrichment of a national literary archive in Swahili, and literacy programmes. The commitment to expand the reading public via large editions (Bgoya 2008: 89) affected the rate of literary exchanges, with an increase of series which included translated titles. The Nairobi branch of the East African Educational Publishers promoted the series *Waandishi wa Kiafrika* (African Writers), with translations of Ngũgĩ wa Thion’go, Peter Palangyo, Bediako Asare, Ferdinand Oyono, Ayi Kwei Armah, Chinua Achebe, Obotunde Ijimere, or Nikolai Gogol.<sup>18</sup> In 1975 the East African Publishing House of Nairobi published the first volume in the series *Washairi wa Afrika* (African poets), which was a translation of *When bullets begin to flower: poems of resistance from Angola, Mozambique and Guiné* (1972) edited by Margaret Dickinson. The Tanzania Publishing House in Dar es Salaam initiated the series *Michezo ya Kuigiza* (Drama), which included the translation of Molière’s *Tartuffe ou l’Imposteur* (*Mnafiki*). Other series targeted children’s literature, either from Africa or from the Soviet Union. For example, *Hadithi za kikwetu* (Local Tales) was released by the East African Publishing House of Nairobi, in collaboration with Phoenix Publishers, or *Jamii ya vitabu vya hekaya fupi za kisoviet* (Series of Books of Soviet Short Stories), was published by the Moscow Publishing Department for Foreign Languages and distributed in Tanzania.

Three main trends of translation flows into Swahili can be detected from the 1960s. A first trend has to do with the translation of European classics. A second trend concerns the translation of literature from other African countries, or by African writers living in the diaspora. The third trend is the translation of literature from Russia and China.

### *Translating the classics*

During the first decade following independence (1962-1972), the translation of texts going under the much disputed label of “classics” was a favoured activity of Tanzanian political activists and leaders. Indeed, in the process of founding a national culture translation was considered as part of the intellectual nation-building project, and the figures of politicians and translators in the Tanzanian postcolonial context often overlapped. This can

<sup>18</sup> It is interesting that Gogol’s text is included in a series aimed at gathering together the most outstanding contemporary African voices.

be seen in the persons of Julius K. Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania, Samuel M. Mushi who held the position of Promoter for Swahili in the Ministry of Community Development and National Culture, Joseph R. Kotta, a Tanzanian U.N. official, or Lugo Taguaba, a diplomat at the Embassy of Tanzania in Paris.

In the realm of translations of classics, Shakespeare held a prominent position. In 1963 Nyerere translated *Julius Caesar* as *Julius Caesar*, and in 1969 he retranslated it as *Juliasi Kaizari*. In the same year, he also translated *The Merchant of Venice*, which bears the controversial title of *Mabepari wa Venisi* (The capitalists of Venice). Also in 1969, Samuel Mushi translated *The Tempest* as *Tufani*; this was his second Shakespearean translation, for he had already translated *Macbeth*, as *Makbeth*, published in 1968. The import of Shakespeare into the Swahili literary field had an echo in neighbouring Kenya. In 1970, Francis Warwick offered to the literary market another translation of *Macbeth*, with the Swahili title *Mabruk*, and in 1971 his translation of *The Merchant of Venice*, *Mlariba* (The Usurer), was printed. Warwick's translations undertake a complete Swahilisation of the English sources, resetting them in the East African context. Shakespeare's translations were not only among the first texts to be translated into Swahili after independence, but were also bound to have a profound effect on the Tanzanian and the Kenyan literary landscape. These years were concerned with the revision and localisation of school curricula and syllabi (Mngomezulu 2012: 132). Nyerere's translations were included in the literary programmes of schools and university, while in Kenya Swahili translations of Shakespeare experienced an oscillating destiny. Regarded at first as a reminder of colonial hegemony in the wake of independence, the English bard's texts were eventually rehabilitated by Daniel Arap Moi and remained the sole "foreign" presence in Kenyan school syllabi for many years.<sup>19</sup>

Subsequent to the outburst of Shakespeare's translations, other Western classics appeared on the Swahili literary scene. In 1972, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* was translated by Willy Teofilo Kisanji as *Kiini cha Giza*. In 1973 another of Molière's plays, *Tartuffe ou l'Imposteur* was translated by Lugo Taguaba with the title *Mnafiki*. And in 1981, the well-known *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway was made avail-

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed discussion of the Kenyan academic and intellectual debate on the presence of Shakespeare in the Kenyan literary scene (see Mazrui 1996).

able in Swahili as *Mzee na Bahari* by Cyprian Tirumanywa. Furthermore, efforts to enlarge the sphere of source texts to include classics of world literature were undertaken by Joseph R. Kotta, who translated Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet* in 1971 as *Mtume*, while one of the best known Swahili playwrights, Ebrahim Hussein, translated the classic Persian children’s story *The Little Black Fish* by Samad Behrangi as *Samaki mdogo mweusi* (1981). Neighbouring Kenya was responsible for the import into Swahili of works by George Orwell, Niccolò Machiavelli and Bertolt Brecht.<sup>20</sup> In 1967 Fortunatus Kawegere translated *The Animal Farm* as *Shamba la Wanyama*.<sup>21</sup> *Mtawala*, published in 1968, is the result of team-work between Fred Kamoga and Ralph Tanner, who translated Niccolò Machiavelli’s *Il Principe* (The Prince). Another collaboration, between Abedi Shephardson and Hassan Marshad, resulted in Brecht’s *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* being translated into Swahili as *Mtu Mzuri wa Setzuan* (1980).

The translation of classics into Swahili experienced an abrupt drop in the 1980s, during which literatures from African countries, or from the socialist bloc, were favoured.

### *Translations from African source texts*

Some of the most outstanding voices of contemporary African literature were translated and published in Kenya: Cyprian Ekwensi,<sup>22</sup> Ayi Kwei Armah,<sup>23</sup> Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o,<sup>24</sup> Chinua Achebe,<sup>25</sup> Bediako Asare,<sup>26</sup> Wole

<sup>20</sup> Due to his literary political engagement, Brecht’s translation – as Orwell’s – could also be part of the other sub-category relating to the import of philosocialist or anti-capitalism texts.

<sup>21</sup> The translation was sponsored by the United States Information Service during the cold war in a context in which Tanzania was veering towards *ujamaa*. Kawegere’s translation was banned in Tanzania and saw the light of publication in Kenya (Hadjivayanis 2011: 12).

<sup>22</sup> *An African Night’s Entertainment* was translated by Titus Echessa in 1966 as *Tafrija ya Usiku*.

<sup>23</sup> *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* was translated by the outstanding Swahili poet Abtillatif Abdalla in 1969 with the title *Wema Hawajazaliwa*.

<sup>24</sup> *The Black Hermit* was translated in 1970 with the title *Mtawa Mweusi*. The Kenyan novelist John Ndeti Somba translated *Weep Not Child* as *Usilie Mpenzi Wangu* (1971), *The River Between*, translated as *Njia Panda* (1974). In 1976 *This time tomorrow* was translated by Saifu D. Kiango with the title *Kesho Wakati kama huu*. *The trial of Dedan Kimathi* was translated in 1978 by Raphael Kahaso as *Mzalendo Kimathi*. Tanzanian translators also contributed to the translation of Ngũgĩ’s masterpieces: the Kikuyu play *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (I

Soyinka,<sup>27</sup> Thomas Mofolo,<sup>28</sup> Ferdinand Oyono,<sup>29</sup> or Obotunde Ijimere.<sup>30</sup> Tanzania was responsible for the import of works by Okot p'Bitek,<sup>31</sup> and Sembene Ousmane.<sup>32</sup>

The process of translation of African artistry into Swahili concerned also those East African writers who initially used English as their literary language. This is the case of Peter Palangyo, a professor and diplomat who made his appearance on the East African literary scene in 1968 with the novel *Dying in the Sun*. The text was translated into Swahili by J. D. Mganga in 1972 with the title *Kivuli cha Mauti*. Similarly, the Kenyan novelist and short-story writer Grace Ogot, who resorted to either English or Luo for her creative writings, has been translated into Swahili. Her debut collection of short stories *Land without thunder* (1968) was translated in 1979 as *Nchi bila ya ngurumo*. An interesting case of self-translation is that of the prolific Tanzanian writer William E. Mkufya, who translated his *The wicked walk* (1977) into Swahili as *Kizazi hiki* in 1980.

The translation of books by African writers was related to a general tendency to "Africanize the cultural and intellectual environment" (Madumulla et al. 1999: 318), which had a very high position in the agendas of the newly

will marry when I want), a collaboration between Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Ngũgĩ wa Mirii, was translated by Clement Kabugi as *Nitaolewa nikipenda* in 1982. In the same year, Kabugi translated another of Ngũgĩ's Kikuyu novels, *Caitani Mutharabaini* (Devil on the Cross) as *Shetani Msalabani*.

<sup>25</sup> *No longer at ease* was translated by M. M. Adam in 1972 as *Hamkani. Si Shwari Tena*. In 1977, Douglas F. Kavugha translated *A Man of the People* as *Mwakilishi wa Watu*. *Arrow of God* was translated in 1978 by Shamte Hafid M. as *Mshale ya Mungu*.

<sup>26</sup> *Rebel* was translated by N. Zaidi in 1972 as *Mwasi*. Maurusi J. Sichalwe translated *The stubborn* into *Majuto* in 1975.

<sup>27</sup> *The trials of Brother Jero* was translated by A.S. Yahya in 1974 as *Masaibu ya Ndugu Jero*.

<sup>28</sup> *Chaka*, the historical novel depicting the rise and fall of the king of the Zulus, was translated in 1975 by Muhsin S. Attas with the title *Chaka Mtemi wa Wazulu*.

<sup>29</sup> Kahaso Raphael and Nathan Mbwele translated *Une vie de boy* as *Boy* in 1976.

<sup>30</sup> *The Imprisonment of Obatala and other Plays* was translated in 1978 as *Kifungo cha Obatala na Michezo Mingine*. No mention is made of the translator.

<sup>31</sup> In 1975 Nyerere's press secretary, Paul Sozigwa, translated *Song of Lawino* as *Wimbo wa Lawino*.

<sup>32</sup> Cecil Magembe translated in 1981 *Voltaire, La noire de...* as *Chale za Kikabila*. In 1984, the distinguished Tanzanian actor, playwright, theatre historian, and scholar Amandina Lihamba translated *Le Mandat* with the title *Hawala ya Fedha*.

independent nation states. However, following the boom of the 1970s, and part of the 1980s, the translation of African texts came to a halt, and was followed by a rise in the number of literary translations from Russia and China.

### *Translating literature from Russia and China*

Literary imports from Russia and China concerned predominantly Tanzania.<sup>33</sup> Translations of literary texts from the Soviet bloc appeared as early as 1962, when the Nobel laureate Michail Aleksandrovič Šolochov was translated into Swahili by Omar Juma, who rendered *Sudba cheloveka* (Destiny of a Man, 1957) as *Ajali ya mwanamume*. In addition, a number of what Geider (2008: 76) refers to as “Russian humanistic classics” were accommodated in the Swahili literary field, including works by Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy,<sup>34</sup> Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin,<sup>35</sup> Maksim Gor’kij<sup>36</sup> and Nikolaj Vasilevic Gogol.<sup>37</sup>

Mazrui (2007: 147), Geider (2008: 76) and Hadjivayanis (2011: 38) ascribe this outburst of translating works of Soviet literature following independence to support for the *ujamaa* ideology dominating in Tanzania. Although I cannot deny the interplay between the political field and the dy-

<sup>33</sup> Mazrui (2016: 44) reports that in Kenya books published by the Russian publisher Progress were banned in the 1980s.

<sup>34</sup> The collection of children’s short stories *Rasskazy dlja detej* (Stories for Children) was translated in 1979 by A. Pahomov as *Hadithi za watoto*; *Muravej i golubka* (Ant and Dove) was translated by Herman Joseph Matemu as *Siafu na manga* in 1988. In 1991 C. G. Mung’ong’o translated *Smert’ Ivana Ilyicha* (The Death of Ivan Ilyich) as *Kifo cha Ivan wa Iliya*.

<sup>35</sup> In 1967 *Povesti Pokojnogo Ivana Petrovica Belkina* (Tales of the late Ivan P. Belkin) was translated as *Masimulizi ya Belkina*. In 1983 Husein Abdul-Razak translated *Gorjašcee serdce Danko* (Danko’s flaming heart) as *Moyo uwakao wa Danko*. In the 2000s, other works by Pushkin were translated into Swahili. The poem *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* (*Hadithi ya Mfalme Saltan na Mwanawe Guidon*), and the fairy tale in verse *The Tale of the Golden Cockerel*, translated as *Hadithi ya Jogoo wa Dhahabu*, were published in one volume by Marcus M. Mbingili in 2001. In the same year Joshua Madumulla translated the versified fairy tale *The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish* as *Hadithi ya Mvuvi na Samaki ya Dhahabu*.

<sup>36</sup> In 1970 Badru Said translated *Mat’* (Mother) as *Mama*.

<sup>37</sup> In 1979 Christon S. Mwakasaka translated *Revizor* (The Government Inspector) as *Mkaguzi mkuu wa serikali*.

namics of cultural reproduction, I would like to add that most of the texts imported from the Soviet Union did not appear in the immediate post-Arusha period, but after 1979. As observed above, Tanganyikan independence, the Arusha declaration and the establishment of *ujamaa* led to the translation of works by Shakespeare, and only at a later stage did translations of Russian literary works appear on the Swahili literary market. In other words, the translations of Russian texts were undertaken in great numbers towards the end of Nyerere's regime. This raises the question whether the socialist-oriented texts were translated as an aid to constructing the nation, or in order to reiterate a message which was losing its efficacy.

As a matter of fact, apart from a limited number of literary translations which appeared during the 1960s, after 1979 the majority of texts from the Soviet bloc that were translated were political and economic texts, such as most of Vladimir Il'ič Lenin's writings, or Karl Marx' and Friedrich Engels' philosophical treatises. Russia – together with China – subsequently became the exporters of an array of genres which included historical chronicles, works on agronomy, literacy, sport, and school textbooks.

Nevertheless, literary translations did continue to appear. These translations were generally of children's literature by writers like Čingiz Ajtmatov, Alexander Borisovich Raskin, Arkadij Petrovic Gajdar, Vitalij Valentinovic Bianki, Nikolaj Nikolaevic Nosov, Grigore Vieru, and Kornej Ivanovič Čukovskij.

Most of the translations were done in the Soviet Union by publishing houses like Progress Publishers, Novosti or Raduga. The translators of these texts were usually East Africans residing in the Soviet Union for study purposes, or working in broadcasting or publishing houses, like Husein Abdul-Razak, Herman Matemtu or Ben Ombuoro (Gromova 2004: 121). In other cases, they were Russians who had learnt Swahili, like Vladimir Makarenko (ibidem). The translations were preferably inserted in collections. An example is the collection *Mfululizo wa vitabu: Maoni ya urusi* (Book series: Russian views).

Following the 1990s, translations from Russian experienced a remarkable drop. Nevertheless, there was a renewed interest in Russian literature during the 2000s, thanks to the establishment of the Russian-Tanzanian Cultural Centre (Kituo cha utamaduni cha Urusi na Tanzania) in Dar es Salaam, which sponsored a number of translations to be part of the collection *Maktaba ya fasihi ya Kirusi* (Russian literature library) (ibidem: 121-122).

Furthermore, the cultural centre has played a role by supporting the Ndanda Mission Press in the translation and publication of prose and poetry works by classical Russian writers, in addition to Russian folk-tales (Reuster-Jahn 2008: 111).

A similar destiny – in terms of genres, location of publishing houses, and geographical provenance of translators – applies to translations from Chinese. As in the case of the Soviet Union, most of the texts selected for translation from the People’s Republic of China pertained to the field of political and economic science and children’s literature or folktales, by authors such as Kuan Hua, Guo Xu, Huang Cheng or Geng Geng. The translations were usually done in Beijing by the *Idara ya Uchapaji wa Lugha za Kigeni*, and by Chinese translators like Guanglian Si. Hadjivayanis (2011: 38) reports that it was not rare for translations from China, as well as from the Soviet Union or North Korea, to be “distributed free of charge in a number of cultural centres.” However, following the translation of the memorable *Ballad of Mulan* in 1986,<sup>38</sup> literature from China seems to disappear from the Swahili literary scene.

### Literary translations from the 1990s

The contemporary landscape of literary translations into Swahili offers a variety of views merging local, national, inter-national and global dynamics of literary imports. Although the publication of translations occupies a tiny space in publishing policies oriented towards the consumption of textbooks (Bgoya 2008: 90), the field of literary translation in Swahili from the 1990s has increased in dynamism and diversity.

From the middle of the 1990s, and especially in the 2000s, there has been a renewed interest in the translation of classics. In 1993, the Nairobi branch of Macmillan undertook a huge project with the aim of publishing European classics in the series *Hadithi za kukumbukwa* (Tales to remember). The titles included translations (and retranslations in some cases) of Robert Michael Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island*,<sup>39</sup> Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*<sup>40</sup> and David

<sup>38</sup> Cai Baomei, *Maua ya Malan: mchezo wa kuigiza wa watoto* translated by Deyao Ren.

<sup>39</sup> Translated by Elizabeth Pamba with the title *Kisiwa cha Matumbawe*.

<sup>40</sup> Translated by Amina Vuzo with the title *Visa vya Oliver Twist*.

*Copperfield*,<sup>41</sup> Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*,<sup>42</sup> Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*,<sup>43</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*,<sup>44</sup> Margery Green's *Wonder tales from Greece*,<sup>45</sup> Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*,<sup>46</sup> Jules Verne's *Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours*,<sup>47</sup> and Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*.<sup>48</sup> In 2010, the Dar es Salaam publishing house *Mkuki na Nyota* published the Swahili versions of Marita Conlon-McKenna's *Under the Hawthorn Tree*,<sup>49</sup> and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince*.<sup>50</sup>

Another trend in translation flows in the 1990s concerns their diversification and internationalisation. In addition to the U.K, the U.S., France, Russia, China, and other African countries, a broader range of sources of literary imports appears, such as Norway,<sup>51</sup> Finland,<sup>52</sup> or Egypt,<sup>53</sup> to mention a few. The internationalisation of the field of Swahili translations also has to do with recent involvements in translation enterprises in the diaspora, at both institutional and individual levels. The U.S.-based publishing house Genesis Press, for instance, is devoted to the publication of translations into Swahili. So far, Genesis Press Kiswahili has published a translation of Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*,<sup>54</sup> and republished Nyerere's *Mabepari wa Venisi* and *Juliasi*

<sup>41</sup> Translated by Alfred Kagwe with the title *Visa vya David Copperfield*.

<sup>42</sup> Translated by Alice Kasibwa with the title *Safari ya Gulliver*. *Gulliver's Travels* had already been translated in 1932 by Frederick Johnson.

<sup>43</sup> Translated by Michael Waweru with the title *Robinson Crusoe kisiwani*. *Robinson Crusoe* had already been translated in 1933 by Frederick Johnson.

<sup>44</sup> Translated by Peter Kisia as *Kisiwa chenye Hazina*. *Treasure Island* had already been translated in 1929 by Frederick Johnson. This latter translation was re-edited in a revised version from M. Saidi by Longman Publishers.

<sup>45</sup> Translated by Sultani Abdi with the title *Ngano za Ajabu kutoka Ugiriki*.

<sup>46</sup> Translated by Benedict Syambo with the title *Visa vya Tom Sawyer*.

<sup>47</sup> Translated by Yusuf Kingala with the title *Kuizunguka dunia kwa siku themanini*.

<sup>48</sup> Translated by Leonard L. Muaka with the title *Maajabu ya utepe wenye madoadoa*.

<sup>49</sup> Translated as *Chini ya mti wa matumaini*.

<sup>50</sup> Translated as *Mwana Mdogo wa Mfalme* by Philipp Kruse and Walter Bgoya, the director of *Mkuki na Nyota*.

<sup>51</sup> In 1992 E.K. Maarugu translated Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the people* as *Adui wa umma*. The translation was done via English.

<sup>52</sup> In 1992 Jan Knappert translated Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala* as *Utenzi wa Kalevala*.

<sup>53</sup> In 2004, Deogratias Simba translated, via English, Naguib Mahfouz's *Al-Tariq* (The Search) as *Msako*.

<sup>54</sup> Translated as *Msichana Anne wa nyumba ya paa la kijani*.



Kaizari, together with translations of *Robinson Crusoe*,<sup>55</sup> *Gulliver's Travels*,<sup>56</sup> *The Swiss Family Robinson*,<sup>57</sup> and *Oliver Twist*.<sup>58</sup> At the individual level, in 1999 Hassan Ali published *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Mbwa wa familia ya Baskerville* in Shelburne with Battered Silicon Dispatch Box; in 2010, Mlenge Fanuel Mgendi self-published Anton Chechov's short story *The beat as Tupinge* and in 2009 translated Charles and Mary Lamb's adaptation of *King Lear* with the U.S. publishing house Create; while in 2015, Ida Hadjivayanis, a Swahili expert from SOAS, retranslated *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as *Alisi Ndani ya Nchi ya Ajabu*. Like Hadjivayanis, a number of translators in the recent Swahili literay scene are entrenched in the academic field. Emmanuel Mbogo, professor of Dramatic Arts and Literature at the Open University of Tanzania, apart from being the author of *Ngoma ya Ng'wanamahundi*, *Vipuli vya figo*, *Watoto wa Mama Ntilie*, in 2011 made a Swahili version of the *Sundiata*. Alena Rettová, Reader in Swahili Literature and African Philosophy at SOAS and Abdilatif Abdalla, one of Kenya's most well-known poets and a retired lecturer from Leipzig University, translated Vaclav Havel's play *Unveiling* from Czech in 2005 as *Uzinduzi*. Ayub Mukhwana, professor of Sociolinguistics at the University of Nairobi and P.I. Iribe Mwangi, Chairman of the Department of Kiswahili at the same university translated *Othello* in 2012. Marcel Kalunga Mwela-Ubi, Professor of Bantu Linguistics and Swahili at the Université de Lubumbashi et de Kalemie – with the help of L. Maliza Mwina Kintende and C. Mutoba Kapoma – translated Victor Hugo's *Le Roi s'amuse* and Jean-Luc Lagarce's *Les Reglès du savoir-vivre dans la société moderne* with the title *Tamthilia mbili za Kifaransa* in 2013. Kalunga's translation bears witness to the involvement of Swahili-speaking countries from the “peripheries”, and to translation practices designed to do justice to the multiple forms of Swahili. As the editor comments in his preface, Mwela-Ubi decided to translate “*katika Kingwana*” (into Kingwana) (Bgoya 2013: vii), with the clear intention to legitimise a pluralistic view of Swahili.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> *Robinson Crusoe* Kisiwani.

<sup>56</sup> *Safari za Gulliver*.

<sup>57</sup> *Jamaa Hodari* Kisiwani.

<sup>58</sup> *Visa vya Oliver Twist*. It may be noted that, except for Nyerere's translations, in all other cases there is no mention of the translator.

<sup>59</sup> The term Kingwana can, however, be a controversial label. Fabian (1986: 33) refers that the term was used for the first time in 1910 by W. Millman to identify the Swahili spoken in the Congo. Afterwards, it became popular among European scholarship to designate the

Although, as Mazrui (2007: 150) has emphasised, there are still many blank spaces left to be filled by literary imports in Swahili, in terms of text types, and geographical spaces to be covered, the inclusion of a broader range of source languages, the engagement of agents beyond the space of the East African region, and the involvement of different forms of Swahili, translation is a promising enterprise in making Swahili a gateway to world literature.

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Swahili spoken in Congo in contrast to the Swahili of the Eastern Coast codified in the British territories (ibidem: 43). The term was therefore used as an umbrella-label under which different Congo Swahili varieties were subsumed. This led Ferrari, Kalunga and Mulumbwa (2014: 110) to define it mostly a colonial label or invention. From the 1960s, the term Kingwana has lost currency among both speakers of Congo Swahili varieties and academia. Due to their many distinctive features, the varieties are referred to by means of specific geographic locations such as Kiswahili cha Lubumbashi or Kiswahili cha Shaba/Katanga, for instance (Ferrari et al.: 114). I thank Flavia Aiello and Nico Nassenstein for elucidations and material on this topic.

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**SGUARDI SULLA NARRATIVA SWAHILI**  
**OVERVIEWS ON SWAHILI NARRATIVE**



## DE L'UTENZI AU ROMAN: FILIATION MYSTIQUE DU RECIT SWAHILI

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Dans le cas particulier de l'Afrique de l'Est, le développement d'une langue et d'une littérature swahilies "modernes" a été le fait d'un projet colonial occidental en rupture apparente avec une tradition mystique qui marquait en partie la poésie manuscrite. Le passage à la transcription du swahili en caractères latins, le choix du dialecte de Zanzibar comme swahili standard, le développement d'une littérature swahilie en prose, tout converge pour recentrer la littérature sur des préoccupations sociales, historiques et politiques. Le roman, qui naît de cette mutation prend rapidement une forme réaliste, voire existentialiste, comme l'analyse très tôt Elena Bertoncini Zúbková à propos de Kezilahabi. Toute la période socialiste qui a suivi l'indépendance de la Tanzanie va générer une littérature réaliste qui semble faire peu de place à la problématique religieuse. Le roman devra se mettre au service de l'émancipation du peuple. Pour autant, l'existence d'un genre poétique traditionnel voué au récit ne peut être resté sans influence sur la production romanesque swahilie. Il n'est pas trop difficile de retrouver, sous l'habillage réaliste des romans, une trame mystique sous-jacente.

C'est précisément dans la mesure où le roman swahili est sujet à de fortes contraintes étatiques et nationales que l'examen de la dimension mystique me semble pertinente. L'axe mystique nous permet de faire apparaître ce qui, dans un grand nombre de ces œuvres, échappe, et d'une certaine façon résiste, à cet "encadrement" de la littérature. Que ce soit sous le masque du "roman ethnographique", du roman d'apprentissage, ou encore du roman allégorique, le roman swahili véhicule un substrat mystique dont il est intéressant d'observer de quelle manière il parvient à gauchir les visées culturelles, sociales ou morales affichées du propos. Sous les modèles narratifs occidentaux, qui ont tant marqué l'évolution du genre romanesque sur tout le continent africain, nous pouvons détecter, dans le cas précis du



roman swahili, le sourd travail de la poésie narrative swahilie et de sa dynamique mystique.

### **L'*utenzi* swahili: vitalité de la poésie narrative**

L'examen de l'évolution du roman swahili depuis le milieu du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle ne peut faire l'économie d'une questionnement sur sa coexistence avec l'autre grand genre narratif qu'est l'*utenzi* (Vierke 2009). Ce genre poétique, hérité de la très ancienne tradition littéraire swahilie est encore extrêmement vivant, et semble le genre poétique par excellence de la narration. On peut tout raconter sous forme d'*utenzi*. Il est utile de poser la question du champ occupé par l'*utenzi*, et par voie de conséquence de la place qu'il laisse au roman.

L'*utenzi* se reconnaît à ses contraintes formelles: des strophes de quatre octosyllabes (le plus souvent), une rime commune aux trois premiers vers de chaque strophe, une rime commune à tous les quatrièmes vers tout au long du poème. Un double principe d'atomisation et de continuité préside à la composition de l'*utenzi*. Chaque strophe forme une cellule, mais toutes les strophes du poème – et elles sont souvent très nombreuses – sont reliées les unes aux autres par une même rime finale.<sup>1</sup> Ce type de strophe est appelée *kisarambe*, mot à l'étymologie incertaine qu'Alice Werner fait remonter à l'arabe *kissa murabba'* (récit en quatrains), inscrivant ainsi dans l'étymologie la vocation narrative de ce type de strophe.

L'étymologie du mot *utenzi* renvoie au mot "action": le narratif semble donc inscrit à l'origine du genre, au point que l'on a pu parler à propos de l'*utenzi* de "narration rimée". Aucune coupure n'existe entre l'activité poétique et l'action, la poésie est action. La meilleure illustration de ce phénomène est Fumo Liyongo, le guerrier-poète légendaire du monde swahili, dont les poèmes ouvrent toutes les anthologies de poésie swahilie, et dont les exploits ont été racontés sous forme d'*utenzi*. Cette solidarité de la poésie et

<sup>1</sup> Une autre caractéristique importante de l'*utenzi* est son statut intermédiaire entre l'oral et l'écrit puisqu'il est traditionnellement chanté, mais que son introduction comprend inmanquablement une ou deux strophes sur la nécessité pour le poète de se munir de papier et d'encre pour inscrire le poème. Les *tenzi* dont nous allons parler sont inscrits, pour les plus anciens en caractères arabes, depuis un siècle en caractères latins, mais la multiplication des manuscrits pour un même poème, dans la "période classique", nous permet de comprendre l'inscription comme une étape dans un processus de création complexe.

de l'action est d'une grande importance pour notre analyse de l'évolution du genre romanesque.

Dans le monde swahili, l'orientation islamique de la poésie classique a été identifiée avec insistance par un chercheur comme Jan Knappert. Selon lui, les trois grandes catégories de la poésie épique, de la poésie d'édification morale et de la poésie religieuse sont profondément marquées par la référence islamique. Les deux grands types de récits pris en charge par l'*utenzi* sont d'une part le récit épique et d'autre part le récit d'inspiration religieuse mettant en scène des figures comme Adam et Eve, Job et principalement Mahomet.<sup>2</sup>

### Vers une sécularisation de l'*utenzi* épique?

Les plus importants manuscrits swahilis sont des *tenzi* épiques qui racontent les guerres de Mahomet contre les infidèles.<sup>3</sup> Ces récits sont caractérisés par un très fort conditionnement religieux qui gère tout le récit au nom d'une référence unique à Allah. L'entrelacs narratif d'actes de bravoures, de ruses, de trahisons est soumis à un impératif politico-religieux unique: la nécessité de l'expansion de l'Islam. Ce genre de l'*utenzi* épique va être repris dans des contextes non islamiques tout au long du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les guerres coloniales, les guerres d'indépendance des différents pays d'Afrique de l'Est, du Kenya au Mozambique font l'objet de récits épiques sous forme de *tenzi*.

L'*utenzi* n'aura aucun problème pour adopter la graphie latine, mais les grands poètes swahilis de la première moitié du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, restent associés à une tradition islamique plus ancienne. Le regard que Shaaban Robert porte

<sup>2</sup> Notons cependant que ce genre poétique est également utilisé pour des textes moins narratifs orientés vers l'édification morale, notamment deux poèmes extrêmement célèbres: *Al-Inkishafi* (Hichens 1939) est une méditation sur la vanité des choses de ce monde à partir de l'exemple de la chute du sultanat de l'île de Paté; l'*Utendi wa Mwana Kupona* (Werner 1917) est un guide de bonne conduite pour les jeunes filles swahili, notamment du point de vue de leurs rapports avec leur mari.

<sup>3</sup> Par exemple, pour citer les manuscrits les plus anciens: *Herekali* (Heraclios), un des plus anciens manuscrits de poésie swahilie retrouvé, qui date de 1728 et se trouve à Hambourg. Raconte une guerre menée en Syrie contre les armées de l'empereur byzantin Heraclios (Knappert 1958). *Rasi 'lghuli* (La tête de goule), le plus long *utenzi* retrouvé (4585 strophes) composé vers 1850. Raconte une guerre menée par Mohammed au Yémen contre les armées d'un roi païen injuste et cruel surnommé "la tête de goule" (Faqihi 1979).

sur la seconde guerre mondiale dans son immense poème *Utenzi wa Vita vya Uhuru*, rédigé au fur et à mesure du déroulement des événements, est complètement imprégné d'un moralisme religieux issu des grands récits épiques racontant les guerres de Mahomet.

La référence religieuse est occultée dans des récits d'inspiration nationaliste de la période qui suit les indépendances, mais la dynamique narrative reste la même. La guerre que la Tanzanie de Nyerere va mener contre le régime d'Idi Amin Dada fait l'objet d'un *utenzi* (Muhanika 1981) qui cherche à se démarquer du point de vue formel de sa matrice religieuse islamique, tout en reprenant des motifs narratifs caractéristiques.<sup>4</sup>

### **Le maintien d'une tradition d'édification spirituelle dans le roman**

Le roman swahili s'est principalement développé en Tanzanie dans la mouvance nationaliste liée aux Indépendances. Adopté par Nyerere comme langue nationale, le swahili devient le véhicule d'une littérature nationale moderne en voie de constitution. Dans ce contexte, le roman est appelé à remplir globalement une double mission: enregistrer le patrimoine culturel national (mission culturelle); accompagner le peuple dans l'aventure moderne (mission didactique). Cette double mission relève d'une littérature nationale telle qu'elle s'est écrite sous l'impulsion des institutions étatiques. La société tanzanienne, dans ses traditions et dans son développement semble l'horizon indépassable d'une littérature qui est partie prenante de l'aventure nationale (Ricard 2009). A moindre échelle, le développement du roman swahili au Kenya répond aux mêmes impératifs idéologiques dans un contexte où la question nationale se pose en termes sensiblement identiques et se transmet plus directement dans la production littéraire en kiswahili que dans la production en anglais.

La distinction entre "ceux de la côte" et "ceux de l'intérieur" dans le monde swahili a quelque chose à voir avec la rivalité entre l'islam et le christianisme. Les écrivains de l'intérieur sont le plus souvent passés par les missions. Ils écrivent des romans qui portent en eux le souci de réformer la société. Le genre romanesque dans le monde swahili ne naît pas de la tradition islamique. Un des soucis des "modernisateurs" de la langue swahilie est

<sup>4</sup> Sur la reprise de l'*utenzi* épique classique dans le contexte des guerres modernes lire Garnier 2008.

de susciter une littérature en prose. C'est au niveau des romans que "l'écrivain modern" est attendu. On lui demande d'écrire de la prose. Le premier roman swahili, paru en 1932, est, de façon très caractéristique, explicitement anti-arabe et anti-musulman: il raconte le combat des missionnaires de la Church Missionary Society contre la traite d'esclaves au profit du monde arabo-musulman. C'est au nom du dieu des chrétiens qu'est écrit ce roman, dans le cadre d'un projet d'évangélisation de la côte swahilie. En contexte swahili on essaie de faire rimer modernité avec christianisation.

La tentative de créer une prose narrative d'inspiration chrétienne va perdurer sous la forme du roman d'éducation morale, qui sera comme le symétrique en prose de la poésie religieuse didactique islamique. Mais le passage à la prose sécularise le propos et le lien entre le message et sa source religieuse se fait plus distant. Beaucoup plus tôt que dans le cas des littératures africaines en langues coloniales, l'écriture en prose en kiswahili échappe au contrôle missionnaire et le message se détache de sa source religieuse.

La littérature didactique d'inspiration chrétienne trouvera un aboutissement naturel dans le réalisme socialiste qui sera la ligne de la littérature swahilie après l'indépendance de la Tanzanie. Une littérature qui parle au nom du peuple prend le relais d'une littérature qui parle au nom des enfants de Dieu: dans les deux cas il est question de libérer les plus humbles, de combattre l'oppression sous toutes ses formes. La veine du récit mystique reste sous-jacente, autant dans le roman d'influence chrétienne, que dans le roman d'influence marxiste.

## Deux exemples de narration romanesque mystique

À l'exception notable de *Ziraili na Zirani*,<sup>5</sup> assez peu de romans swahilis ont jusqu'ici eu recours au registre épique. Si nous avons pu montrer l'influence des dynamiques mystiques sur l'utenzi épique moderne, il nous faut chercher des structures narratives dans des tenzi qui ne relèvent pas de la tradition épique pour éclairer certains traits mystiques du roman swahili. Prenons comme exemple de poésie narrative à vocation mystique deux grands types de récits religieux sont les *Maulid*, qui racontent la naissance du

<sup>5</sup> Un des plus volumineux romans swahilis récent, intitulé *Ziraili na Zirani* (Mkufya 1999) raconte sur un mode épique la guerre apocalyptique que se livrent le camp des athées contre Dieu, et l'explosion nucléaire qui résulte de leur victoire.

prophète et les *Miiraji*, qui relatent le voyage du Prophète dans le ciel et sa rencontre avec Allah (Knappert 1971).

*Maulid: une vision cosmique propice à l'enquête policière*

La naissance du Prophète est un phénomène cosmique parce qu'elle introduit dans le monde un personnage porteur de la régénération du monde. Amina n'enfante pas un homme, mais un monde. C'est toute la création qui est concernée par la naissance et la vie de Mahomet. La naissance du Prophète ouvre l'espace dans lequel s'installe le poème, voilà pourquoi elle est un événement biographique déterminant. Toutes les actions, tous les miracles, tous les enseignements que le personnage fait exister dans le monde découlent de cette naissance. Le moment précis de la naissance est toujours collectif et engage le monde dans sa totalité:

Représente-toi les traits de Mohammed, notre Prophète,  
Place les devant toi, imagine que tu les contemples  
Peu importe la place qu'on lui réserve, il sera présent,  
Notre Seigneur et Maître va se mêler à nous.<sup>6</sup>

Les signes annonciateurs de la naissance se multiplient en amont, les conséquences sont recensées en aval. Il y a derrière un récit comme le *Maulid* une conception des signes et de leur interprétation qui va intéresser le roman policier.

La grossesse d'Amina est une affaire publique. Les signes annonciateurs prolifèrent. Le monde sent qu'un événement se prépare, que les uns (les méchants) tentent de conjurer et les autres de célébrer. L'image de l'astre irradiant est une constante de toutes les versions du *Maulid*. Amina va accoucher d'une lune ou d'une étoile, en tous cas d'un astre qui propage autour de lui une lumière bénéfique: cette lumière, c'est de la poésie. Mais elle plonge dans l'obscurité tous ceux qui ne veulent pas la reconnaître: cette lumière, c'est aussi du récit. La lignée d'où est issue le Prophète est pure, les entrailles d'Amina sont pures, comme purifiées par les rayons de l'astre à venir. Ce que la naissance du Prophète inaugure, c'est un partage narratif et poétique du monde, prospectif autant que rétrospectif, entre les croyants et

<sup>6</sup> Hudhurisha sura za Mtume wetu Nabia/ ziwe mbee yako uwe kama huzangalia/ kwa kulla kitako apatacho hudhuria/ hutangana nasi sayidina wa maulana (Knappert 1971 : 294).

les incroyants. L'événement de la naissance du Prophète n'a de raison d'être poétique et narrative que pour ceux chez qui elle fait sens.

Les romans policiers de l'écrivain zanzibarite Muhammed Said Abdulla, écrits entre 1960 et 1984 partagent cette vision cosmique du monde. Bwana Msa, l'enquêteur amateur surdoué, tient des propos qui permettent de douter de la scientificité de ses enquêtes:

Pourquoi l'humanité se trompe? continua Bwana Msa. Voilà une question difficile. Mais si nous y réfléchissons bien, nous prenons conscience du fait que l'homme est doté d'un cerveau. L'homme tombe dans l'erreur à cause de son cerveau. Les anges ne font pas d'erreur; ils font les choses qu'on leur dit de faire – c'est ce que dit le Coran. Ils ne pensent pas ceci ou cela; si l'un d'eux reçoit l'ordre d'enlever la vie à une créature, il s'exécute; il ne se pose pas la question de savoir pourquoi il devrait, précisément lui, interrompre la vie des créatures. La raison de ceci est que les anges ne sont pas dotés de l'instrument de la réflexion, ils n'ont pas reçu de cerveau comme nous autres humains. Nous qui sommes dotés d'un cerveau, lorsque nous voyons ou les entendons les choses, notre esprit nous entraîne à nous représenter ces choses dans le sens qui lui convient. Moi j'irai dans ce sens; toi tu iras dans un autre sens; un autre ira dans une autre sens – pour une seule et même chose. Notre errance vient de ce que nous inventons des traductions multiples pour une unique chose. Cette errance est la source de nos erreurs.<sup>7</sup>

La position mystique de Bwana Msa est au cœur de sa pratique policière. Le refus de sélectionner et surtout d'interpréter les indices, la disponibilité totale qu'il développe à l'égard des signes émis par le monde, le mènent infailliblement à la révélation finale. Les énigmes les plus mystérieuses trou-

<sup>7</sup> Kwa nini binadamu anakosa? Bwana Msa aliendelea na maelezo yake. Labda swali hili ni gumu kulijibu. Lakini tukifikiri sana kwa nini binadamu anakosa, tutaona kuwa binadamu kapewa akili. Binadamu anakosa kwa sababu ana akili. Malaika hawakosi; wanafanya jambo lile lile walioambiwa kulifanya – kama inavyosema Kurani tukufu. Hawafikiri nini wala nini; ameambiwa kutoa roho viumbe, anatoa tu; haimpitikii kufikiri kwa nini mimi nitoe roho viumbe? Na hayo ni kwa sababu malaika hawakupewa chombo cha fikira, hawakupewa akili ya kufikiri kama tuliopewa sisi binadamu. Sisi wenye akili, tukiliona jambo au tukilisikia jambo, akili zetu zinatupelekea kulisawirisha jambo lile kwa namna inavyotuelekeza akili yetu. Mimi nitalelekeza hivi; wewe utalelekeza vingine; na mwingine atalelekeza vingine – jambi lile lile moja. Tunapotea, maadam zitazuka tafsiri nyingi kwa jambo moja tu. Nakupotea kuna maana ya kukosea (Abdulla 1984: 63).

vent leur solution dans des derniers chapitres qui voient Bwana Msa établir un lien d'évidence entre des détails qui n'avaient pas été relevés comme indices par les enquêteurs professionnels de la police. Les romans de Muhammed Said Abdulla retrouvent la veine mystique des récits d'Edgar Poe, l'inventeur du genre du roman policier, dont l'enquêteur Dupin est lui aussi bien éloigné des méthodes positives et rationnelles d'un Sherlock Holmes. La composante mystique affleure ici directement par le biais de l'enquête, qui a tôt fait de se transformer en quête dans les romans de Said Abdulla. Bwana Msa, le Sherlock Holmes zanzibarite, double la traditionnelle méthode déductive, fondée sur la sélection et l'interprétation d'indices, d'une méthode intuitive qui fait toute l'originalité de l'œuvre de Said Abdulla. S'il faut chercher un ancêtre occidental à Bwana Msa, c'est du côté d'Edgar Poe avec le personnage de Dupin, cet enquêteur non conventionnel qui se méfie des interprétations. L'élucidation mystique des énigmes passe par une expérimentation intense du réel et sur lequel se crée tout un pan de la littérature initiatique.

Le contexte culturel islamique est partie prenante de ce retour aux sources mystiques du roman policier. Un épisode caractéristique du troisième roman d'Abdulla met en scène Bwana Msa plongé pendant plusieurs jours dans la lecture du coran, alors qu'il est en pleine enquête. On comprendra par la suite que l'exemplaire du Coran qu'il avait entre les mains était une pièce à conviction indispensable pour l'élucidation de l'énigme. Ce face à face entre le texte sacré et le détective est une image emblématique du recentrage mystique du roman policier: l'élucidation de l'énigme est de l'ordre de la Révélation.

### *Miiraji: le roman initiatique sur les décombres du désordre mondial*

Alors que le *Maulid* raconte la naissance d'un monde, le *Miiraji* raconte la possibilité d'une régénérescence du monde, par le biais d'un contact avec le Dehors. Le voyage du *Miiraji* est une mise en image généralisée du monde, selon un axe géographique ou spatial (axe horizontal), puis selon un axe historique ou temporel (axe vertical). La Rencontre avec Dieu n'a lieu qu'à l'issue d'un tour d'horizon global du monde passé et présent, mis en série sous forme d'une succession de tableaux. Le monde doit être représenté dans sa totalité, morceaux par morceaux. La narration égrène toutes ces représentations non pour elles-mêmes, mais pour tracer un chemin jusqu'au

principe premier, fondamentalement irréprésentable. Ce parcours initiatique à travers les images pour atteindre ce qui est hors-image sera un ressort puissant pour le roman swahili post-*ujamaa*, profondément préoccupé par la question du sens d'un monde qui a perdu ses références.

Le récit de la naissance de Mahomet est complété par le récit de sa rencontre avec Allah, le seul interlocuteur possible pour le Prophète, cette rencontre sera l'événement central des *Miiraji*. Ces poèmes racontent le voyage de Mahomet à travers les sept cieux qui enveloppent notre monde jusqu'à la cité sacrée où réside Dieu. Le voyage de Mahomet vers son Dieu suit une ligne narrative très claire. Le déplacement n'a rien d'erratique: une traversée horizontale du monde d'ici-bas jusqu'à son centre, Jérusalem; puis une montée verticale à travers les sept cieux, jusqu'au palais du Créateur. Enfin le retour au sein du monde et la nécessité pour le Prophète de témoigner.

Le *Miiraji* est l'archétype du récit initiatique avec ses deux temps de l'échappée et du retour, de la rencontre et du témoignage. Le roman de critique sociale, et notamment la critique de la corruption, prend une place grandissante dans le roman swahili des années quatre-vingt dix. Les grands idéaux sociaux s'effondrent au profit d'une course individuelle au pouvoir et à l'argent. Les romanciers populaires, autrefois méprisés pour leur propension à parler des criminels et autres grands corrompus, se retrouvent au centre des préoccupations littéraires. Le roman découvre qu'il doit s'écrire sur fond de désordre, voire de chaos. Les sociétés africaines sont ouvertes aux quatre vents de la mondialisation, elles sont traversées par des flux d'argent qui font éclater leurs structures profondes. Cette nouvelle donne mondiale libère le roman des contraintes politiques et sociales qu'il semblaient avoir acceptées depuis l'époque coloniale et l'ouvre à nouveau sur une dimension explicitement initiatique. Le chaos du monde est à la fois un point de départ et un défi pour l'écriture.

Ce schéma initiatique est le substrat des derniers romans d'Euphrase Kezilahabi: *Nagona* (1990) et *Mzingile* (Le labyrinthe, 1991). Le monde d'après l'explosion nucléaire prend la forme d'un labyrinthe que les survivants arpentent en quête d'un sens nouveau. L'explosion nucléaire est l'événement indicible qui désoriente le monde, elle est le trou noir qui interdit tout récit historique, elle est comme une force d'appel qui condamne les personnages à l'errance. Le point de vue mystique déborde la lecture religieuse du réel, chez Kezilahabi: le *Coran* est un livre qui s'est lui aussi engagé dans l'aventure historique, au même titre que



la *Bible* ou le *Capital* de Marx. S'il y a un sens à retrouver, c'est au delà de tout texte dans un voyage initiatique qui s'apparente à une errance labyrinthique.

Ces deux courts récits de Kezilahabi, qui ont ouvert la voie à la veine du réalisme magique dans le roman swahili, restent très ancrés dans une quête de l'unité mystique du monde (Kezilahabi 2010: 123):

“LE MONDE a besoin d'une lumière nouvelle!” cria le fou. Puis il ajouta: “Mais cette lumière sera précédée de destruction et de malheur!” Nous étions au club en train de boire de la bière. Les gens rirent. Moi aussi j'ai ri, mais ces paroles éveillèrent en moi le désir de connaître l'origine de la lumière. Je regardai les planètes et les étoiles et me réjouis de leur nombre. Je regardai la lune et appréciai sa lumière qui ne dispensait pas de chaleur. Puis je pensai au soleil et aux planètes qui ne cessaient de tourner autour.<sup>8</sup>

Le flux désordonnés de visions, parfois baroques, que l'on trouve dans les romans des années 2000, relèvent d'un regard apocalyptique dont on perçoit clairement le substrat mystique:

C'est comme un désert, c'est-à-dire que c'est un espace culturellement vidé de tout. Même la vérité et l'illusion sont fondues et ne forment plus qu'une chose unique. Les frontières entre le bien et le mal ont été balayées, radicalement. Cette dualité qui a informé toute l'histoire a disparu. Cette dualité qui était la cause du CHAOS ORIGINEL a disparu et à la place nous héritons de l' UNITE DU CHAOS.<sup>9</sup>

La nouvelle littérature swahilie qui s'écrit après l'échec de l'expérience socialiste et sur fond de mondialisation économique, fait affleurer à la surface des textes un fond mystique et initiatique qu'elle n'avait jamais

<sup>8</sup> “ULIMWENGU unahitaji mwanga mpya!” Kichaa alipiga kelele na kisha akaongeza, “Lakini hiyo haitakuwa kabla ya uharibifu na naafa!” Tulikuwa kilabuni tukinywa pombe. Watu walicheka. Mimi pia nilicheka, lakini maneno yake yaliamsa ari ya kutaka kujua asili ya mwanga. Nilizitazama sayari na nyota nikafurahia uwingi wake. Niliutazama mwezi nikapendezewa na mwanga wake isiotoa joto. Halafu nikalifikiria jua na sayari zinazolizunguka daima (Kezilahabi 1991: 5).

<sup>9</sup> Hili ni kama jangwa, yaani ni uwazi mpana wa kitamaduni usiokuwa na chochote. Hapa ukweli na usiokweli vimeunganishwa na kuwa kitu kimoja. Mipaka iliyoko kati ya wema na ubaya imefutwa kabisa, haipo asilani. Uwili uliokuwako katika historia umetoweka. Uwili uliosababisha FUJO ASILIA umetoweka na nafasi yake kutwaliwa na UMOJA WA FUJO (Wamitila 2002 : 23).

vraiment oublié et qui est une composante importante de toute sa tradition narrative.

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MAUA YENYE FUMBO, NJOZI ZILIZOPOTEA NA WAHENGWA WALIOFUFUKA:  
UKARIBIANO NA UANUWAI WA RIWAYA YA KISWAHILI BAADA YA UHURU  
WA MIKA HAMSINI\*

LUTZ DIEGNER  
(Humboldt University Berlin)

Miaka hamsini baada ya uhuru wa nchi za Afrika Mashariki riwaya ya Kiswahili imejiimarisha vya kutosha katika uwanja wa sanaa za Afrika Mashariki kwa ujumla. Katika makala hii<sup>1</sup> nitazungumzia riwaya ya kisasa nikimaanisha riwaya za kuanzia enzi za baada ya uhuru.<sup>2</sup> Nikifanya hivyo,

\* Tabaruku: “Bibi Lukasi Pandu mpendwa, Mama mheshimiwa wa Taaluma ya Fasihi ya Kiswahili, naomba upokee makala yangu hii nyonge kama mchango mdogo sana wa kukuenzi wewe na kuuenzi mchango wako usio na kifani katika uwanja wa taaluma yetu ya fasihi ya Kiswahili. Nakushukuru kuwa ulipoanza kunifundisha miaka 1998/1999 huko ‘Langues O’ mjini Parisi ulikuwa umenipa mwanga wa kutosha sana nijenge hamu ya kujitosa katika bahari hii tamu sana ya ulimwengu wa fasihi ya Kiswahili nikazidi kuizamia na kujitahidi kuzipigia mbizi lulu na vijilulu vya sanaa hii ya kutuvutia na kutuchochesha tafakuri nzito daima. Asante sana Mama, na kila la heri, baraka na wema kwako na kwa familia yako nzima, watoto, wajukuu, vitukuu, vilembwe, vilembwekeza na vinying’inya. Miye na wenzetu wengi tumejifunza mengi sana kutoka kwako ukiendelea kutuelimisha na kutupa nasaha zako. Srdečná vd’aka! Grazie mille! Vielen lieben Dank!”

<sup>1</sup> Wasomaji wengine watanisamehe nikiyaafiki matumizi ya “makala hii/hizi” (badala ya “makala haya/haya”), kama J. Kiango alivyoyajadili na kuyapendekeza (Kiango 2006: 76ff).

<sup>2</sup> Makala hii imetokana na wasilisho kwenye kongamano la Miaka 50 ya Kiswahili kama Lugha ya Ukombozi na Umoja wa Afrika iliyoratibiwa na Aldin Kaizilege Mutembei, Taasisi ya Taaluma za Kiswahili (TATAKI), Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es Salaam, 04-06/10/2012. Tafsiri ya kichwa chake ni *Mysterious Flowers, Lost Dreams and Ancestors Risen from the Dead – Convergence and Diversity in Fifty Years of Post-Independence Swahili Novels*. Kuhusu istilahi ya “ukaribiano” taz. sehemu husika ya makala hiyo chini. – Kwa vile muswada wa awali wa makala hii uliandikwa mwaka 2012/2013 nilikuwa nimezingatia kazi zote za taaluma zilizochapishwa au zilizokuwa zimekubaliwa kwa kuchapishwa hadi mwaka 2012, siyo za hivi karibuni zaidi. Namwomba msomaji azingatie hitilafu hii na kuichukulia makala hii kama ilivyo ikiwa kijihatua cha kitaaluma cha mwaka 2012. Asante sana.

bila ya shaka ninatambua mchango mkubwa usio na kifani wa “baba wa fasihi ya kisasa”, Shaaban Robert, aliyeweka misingi thabiti ili baadaye riwaya ya kisasa iweze kuendelezwa.<sup>3</sup> Kwa upande wa taaluma ya fasihi ya Kiswahili, makala hii ina nia ya kuenzi mchango wa Elena Bertoncini Zúbková aliye gwiji wa siku nyingi wa taaluma hiyo barani Ulaya.<sup>4</sup> Ieleweke kuwa kuandika historia ya fasihi wakati hiyo fasihi yenyewe inaendelea kuandikwa ni changamoto ya aina yake, na tena ingestahili kuandikwa kwa urefu wa kitabu, kwa hivyo jaribio hili langu katika makala hii halina budi livikubali vikwazo vya ufupi wa makala ya aina hiyo. Natumai wasomaji watavamilia hali hii.

Katika makala hii nitaingalia riwaya ya Kiswahili ya miaka hamsini baada ya uhuru katika vipindi vitatu vya maendeleo yake.<sup>5</sup> Suala kuu ninalojiuliza ni je, maendeleo haya yanaweza kuainishwa vipi? Je, riwaya za Kiswahili zinaelekea kukaribiana zaidi kifani na kimaudhui wakati wa miongo hii mitano, au zinaelekea kutofautiana zaidi? Yaani, kuhusu vipengele gani kuna kufananafanana zaidi, na kuhusu vipengele gani uanuwei wa riwaya hizo umejitokeza zaidi? Halafu na mwisho, mustakabali wa riwaya ya Kiswahili utakuwa upi?

### **Tapo la kwanza: Uhalisia wa kisasa (miaka ya 1970-1987/1990)**

Kipindi cha kuanzia mwishoni mwa miaka ya sitini, hasa hasa nd’o miaka ya sabini mwanzoni, ndicho kipindi ambacho waandishi wapya wa Kiswahili ambao ningependa kuwaita “warasimi wa kisasa” au waandishi wa urasimi

<sup>3</sup> Hilo linahusu fasihi ya Kiswahili kwa ujumla wake. Kufuatana na Elena Bertoncini Zúbková (1989; 2009) ni vizuri kuzingatia maendeleo mahsusi ya uandishi wa fasihi ya Kiswahili wa waandishi watokao Tanzania Bara, Tanzania Visiwani na Kenya (kwa jumla). Kuhusu waandishi waliosaidia sana kunyoosha njia ya kuelekea riwaya ya kisasa kwa upande wa Zanzibar, ndiye Mohamed Said Abdulla, na kwa upande wa Kenya ndio akina John Ndeti Somba na wengineo kama Peter Kareithi na Peter Ngare.

<sup>4</sup> Kazi yake kuu nyeledi na inayojulikana zaidi ndiyo *Outline of Swahili Literature. Prose Fiction and Drama* aliyoichapisha mwaka 1989 kwa mara ya kwanza. Toleo lake la pili la mwaka 2009 liliandikwa naye akiwashirikisha wenzetu Mikhail Gromov, Said Ahmed Mohamed Khamis na Kyallo Wadi Wamitila. Namshukuru sana kuwa alitaka anishirikishe katika toleo la pili, lakini kwa bahati mbaya haikuwezekana.

<sup>5</sup> Ieleweke kuwa makala hii inakusudiwa iwe mchango mnyonge tu yaani muswada wa mawazo kuhusu historia ya fasihi ya Kiswahili ya kisasa ambao hauwezi wala haunui kuvuka mipaka ya makala.

wa kisasa (*modern classics*) walianza kuandika na kuchapisha kazi zao. Hizo kazi zote ziliandikwa kwa kufuata mkabala na misingi ya uandishi wa uhalisia. Tukitumia istilahi hii ya “uhalisia”, tunamaanisha kazi za sanaa zizingatiazo kwa kiasi kikubwa (1) “usawiri wa uhalisi katika ukamilifu wake”, na (2) uchunguzi wa “undani wa picha inayoonekana ya uhalisi” (Wamitila 2003: 272ff; akimrejelea hasa mwananadharia wa fasihi George Lukács). Kwa kazi ya sanaa ya ki-uhalisia, kipengele kikuu cha kisanii chenyewe ndicho muhakati (mimesia) yaani mwigo wa moja kwa moja ili yale yanayosimuliwa yaonekane kabisa yakalingane na yale yanayodhaniwa ndiyo ya ukweli ama uhalisi ama hali halisi ya mambo (ling. papo hapo).

### *Maua yenye Fumbo*

Riwaya ambayo ningeiona ni ya kifani (*paradigmatic*) kwa miaka ya sabini mwanzoni ndiyo ile inayozungumzia ua lenye fumbo. Kuchapisha kwa *Rosa Mistika* ya Euphrase Kezilahabi mwaka 1971 kulikuwa kama mwanzo wa kuandika kazi za uhalisia ambazo hazichelei kukosoa jamii, hata mada zilipokuwa za kuvunja miiko ya wakati ule kama hasa masuala ya jinsia likiwemo la ukombozi wa mwanamke kwa ujumla. Euphrase Kezilahabi na waandishi wenzake George Mhina, Cuthbert Omari, Ndyanao Balisidya na wengineo waliweka misingi ya riwaya ya uhalisia ambayo ipo karibu sana na maendeleo ya jamii, tena jamii ya wakati ule ule, yaani walikuwa ndio waandika tarikhi (*contemporary chronographers*) ambao wakati mwingine waliziandikia mada fulani kwa kasi iliyokaribiana na kazi za waandishi wa habari. Ingawa katika kazi za mwanzo za Kezilahabi, ikiwemo pia *Kichwamaji* (1974), masuala ya nafsi ya binadamu yalikuwa yametawala kwa kiasi kikubwa, mwelekeo wa kazi zilizo nyingi za wakati huu ulikuwa wa kuandika riwaya za uhalisia zinazozungumzia masuala ya jamii nzima, hasa za kitamaduni na za kisiasa. Zilikuwa enzi za kujenga ujamaa, na waandishi wengi waliokuwa wasomi hawakutaka kukaa nyuma katika juhudi hizo; kinyume chake, walitaka waijenge jamii mpya ya kijamaa kwa kutumia sanaa yao ya kuandika riwaya.<sup>6</sup> Mkabala huu ulitawala kwa kiasi

<sup>6</sup> Hoja ya kuiandikia jamii ya wakati ule ule inahusu hasa waandishi wa Tanzania Bara, wawakilishi wa mkabala huu wakiwa akina Mhina, Omari, Kezilahabi, Balisidya, na wengineo. Tanzania Visiwani/Zanzibar na Kenya ilikuwa vyingine – huko kote waandishi

kikubwa ile miaka ya muongo wa pili wa baada ya uhuru tulipolishuhudia ongezeko la kifasihi la aina yake (*literary boom*).

### *Njozi Zilizopotea...?*

Muongo wa tatu wa maendeleo ya riwaya ya Kiswahili baada ya uhuru, yaani miaka ya 1980, ukashuhudia kama si kuvunjika bali kutikisika kwa matumaini ya kujenga jamii hiyo mpya. Riwaya ambazo ni mifano mizuri ya mkondo huu ndizo *Njozi Iliyopotea* (1980) ya Claude Mung'ong'o, *Nyota ya Huzuni* (1981) ya George Liwenga, na *Pepo ya Mabwege* (1981) ya Harrison Mwakyembe.<sup>7</sup> Katika *Njozi Iliyopotea*, tunaona jinsi matini ya kiuhalisia inavyoweza kukidhi matarajio mawili tofauti: Kwanza, inafanikiwa ku-zungumzia masuala ya kijamii na kisiasa na kuwafikia wasomaji walio wengi. Pili, kwa kuingiza vipengele vya kielimunafsi, vya fasihi simulizi kidogo, na kwa kusimulia msuko kupitia miono ya wahusika tofauti, inaonyesha jinsi mbinu tofauti za usimulizi zinavyoweza kutumika katika riwaya iitwayo ya kisasa (taz. Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: 112-114). Kimaudhui, riwaya hiyo iliakisi kuangushwa na wakati mwingine kushtushwa kwa wasomi na wananchi wengi kuhusu sera mojawapo za enzi zile zilizokuwa za kulazimisha, kama “Operesheni Sogeza” inayosawiriwa katika riwaya hii ikiwa ni

walishughulikia zaidi enzi za ukoloni wakikosoa mfumo huo wa utawala na kuwakumbusha watu kuwa ukatili wa enzi hizo haukuwa mbali, na dalili zake zilionekana baada ya uhuru, nyinginezo zikionekana hata leo. Wawakilishi wa waandishi walioshughulikia ukoloni zaidi ndio Peter Kareithi na Peter Ngare upande wa Kenya, halafu na Said Ahmed Mohamed (hasa *Dunia Mti Mkavu*, 1980) na Adam Shafi upande wa Zanzibar. Bila ya shaka tasisahau kutambua mchango mkubwa sana kwa riwaya ya kisasa kwa ujumla wa Mohamed Suleiman Mohamed na riwaya zake za *Kiu* (1972) na *Nyota ya Rehema* (1976). Riwaya zake za kipekee ndizo za uhalisia kwa hakika; walakini, sidhani sifa ya kuiandikia jamii ya wakati ule ule wala sifa ya riwaya ya kihistoria zinajitokeza kama sifa kuu. Hoja hii pia inahusu riwaya ya kwanza ya Said Ahmed Mohamed ya *Asali Chungu* (1977).

<sup>7</sup> Ndizo riwaya hizo hizo za Mung'ong'o na Liwenga ambazo Profesa Madumulla anaziita riwaya za uhalisia-teti (taz. Madumulla 2009: 49ff). Katika utafiti wangu wa kuzungumza na kujadiliana na wataalam wengi wa fasihi ya Kiswahili Tanzania (na Kenya) niligundua kuwa hasa riwaya ya *Pepo ya Mabwege* iliyochapishwa upya mwaka 2009 inasifika sana kwa hoja ya kwamba inaiakisi hali ya kisiasa ya hivi sasa kama ilivyoiakisi ile ya mwaka 1981 kwa kiwango cha kushangaza. Kulingana na hilo – kijamii, siyo kitaaluma hasa – tungeweza kuiita riwaya hiyo “riwaya-tabiri”.

harakati za kuwahamisha watu wahamie vijiji vya ujamaa (taz. NI V 89-96).<sup>8</sup> Mbali na kukosoa vipengele fulani vya sera za enzi hizo, mkabala wa ujumla wa riwaya za tapo hili ulikuwa kuutetea na kuupigania ujamaa wa kweli.

### **Tapo la pili: Uhalisia-baadaye (kuanzia 1987/1990)**

*Uasisi: Tuupuuze ama tuutukuze U-Nagona?*

Maendeleo ya riwaya ya Kiswahili kuanzia mwisho wa miaka themanini yalishuhudia kuzuka kwa tapo jipya la uandishi wa riwaya: Tapo la riwaya ya uhalisia-baadaye. Mwasisi hapo, kwa mara nyingine, alikuwa ndiye Baba Rosa Mistika, Euphrase Kezilahabi, aliyeamua aanze mambo mapya tena.<sup>9</sup> Kwa kuandika riwaya za *Nagona* (1987/1990) na *Mzingile* (1991), alijitenga kabisa na tapo la uhalisia, akiamua kuandika kwa kutumia mchanganyiko wa fasihi simulizi, vipengele vichache vya uhalisia wa kawaida, uhalisia-mazingaombwe,<sup>10</sup> uhalisia-fifi (*surrealism*),<sup>11</sup> njozi/fantasia<sup>12</sup> na njozi/utopia.<sup>13</sup> Hapa natumia “uhalisia-baadaye” kama istilahi inayovipa vipengele hivi “paa” ya kwa pamoja na inayo“tunza” riwaya nyingine pia zilizochapishwa baadaye (taz. mjadala wa pili chini).

<sup>8</sup> Maana yake NI V 89-96 “riwaya ya *Njozi Iliyopotea*, sura ya tano, kurasa 89-96” (hutumia kanuni zifuatazo za kunukuu kazi ya fasihi: kifupi cha anwani, nambari ya sura iwe nambari ya Kirumi, halafu za kurasa ziwe nambari za Kiarabu yaani za kawaida).

<sup>9</sup> Mbali na “upya” wa maudhui na mtindo wa *Rosa Mistika*, Kezilahabi ajulikana sana kwa kuwa alikuwa miongoni mwa waasisi wa mashairi aina ya masivina mwanzoni mwa miaka sabini.

<sup>10</sup> Kipengele kikuu cha “uhalisia-mazingaombwe” ni kuuchezea mpaka baina ya yale yanayochukuliwa kama ndiyo ya ki-halisia na yale yanayochukuliwa kama ni ya “ki-mazingaombwe”, kufuatana na miono na desturi za jamii husika. Wengine hupendelea “uhalisa-ajabu” ama “uhalisiajabu” (taz. pia Wamitila 2003: 274). Kwa mjadala wa “umri” wa “uhalisia-mazingaombwe” katika fasihi ya Kiswahili ling. Senkoro 2007.

<sup>11</sup> “Uhalisiafifi” ndio unashuku kabisa dhana ya uhalisi wa kimantiki. Unasisitiza kuyaachia huru mawazo yote ya binadamu, yawe ndoto, ama mchezo wa mawazo tu, na kuyatumia katika sanaa bila kujali “mantiki” ya “hali halisi”. Taz. pia papo hapo: 273.

<sup>12</sup> “Njozi/fantasia” inamaanisha sifa na vipengele vyovyote vinavyoonekana vikiuke uhalisi (au kile kinachodhaniwa kuwa uhalisi) (taz. pia papo hapo: 170ff).

<sup>13</sup> “Njozi/utopia” ndiyo utanzu wa kazi ya fasihi ambayo misingi yake yote ndiyo njozi, na inayotaka kujenga jamii mpya ama kusawiri kielelezo ama kifani cha jamii mpya (na ambayo mara nyingi inamdai binadamu mpya). (taz. pia papo hapo: 336ff).



Mjadala motomoto ukaibuka maana wasomaji wengi, hata wasomi wengi, waliona kuwa riwaya hizi hazieleweki na kwa mwelekeo wake mwandishi amejitenga mno na jamii na hadhira yake. Hilo limethibitika katika mazungumzo mengi na ya kina na wataalam mbalimbali wa fasihi ya Kiswahili vyuoni Dar es Salaam, Unguja na Nairobi (ling. Diegner 2007: 302-307).

Mjadala mwingine ulijitokeza kuhusu kuainisha kazi hizo – je, ndizo riwaya au la?<sup>14</sup> Tukiikubali istilahi ya “riwaya” iwe dhana pana, basi kazi hizo ndizo riwaya, lakini tata za kuziainisha haziishii hapo. Jambo hili laonekana wazi tukiangalia istilahi walizozitumia wataalam mbalimbali – wengine wakipendelea kuziita fasihi ama riwaya za (ki)majoribio (taz. Senkoro 1988: 178 & 2011: 81; Wamitila 2008: 127-129),<sup>15</sup> riwaya za mkondo wa tafakuri (taz. Madumulla 2009: 53-56), au riwaya ama kazi za usasaleo, usasa-baadaye au “baadausasa” (*postmodernism*; taz. miongoni mwa kazi nyingine Bertoni Zúbková 1996: 147; Gromov 1998: 78; Diegner 2007: 57; 72; 295; Wamitila 2008: 126).<sup>16</sup> Pendekezo jingine lili-kuwa kuziita “riwaya mpya” zishehenizo vipengele mbalimbali vya istilahi zilizotajwa hapo juu (taz. Khamis 2005 & 2007: mote). Kwa mujibu wa makala hii, ambayo dhamira yake kuu ndiyo kuchangia katika kuandika *historia* ya fasihi ya Kiswahili, nitateua na kusisitiza kipengele kimoja kikuu: Kwa vile riwaya hizi zimejitenga na uhalisia, nitaziita riwaya za uhalisia-baadaye kwa maana ya *post-realism*.<sup>17</sup> Kazi ya kipekee katika tapo hili jipya ndiyo riwaya ya ki-utenzi ya *Ziraili na Zirani* (1999) ya William Mkufya inayosheheni tafakuri nzito za kifalsafa kuhusu mgogoro wa dini

<sup>14</sup> Hapo sitarudia mjadala huu – tafadhali rejelea Diegner 2005: 25.

<sup>15</sup> “Fasihi ya (ki)majoribio” katika muktadha wa fasihi za ulimwengu mzima huhusishwa hasa na dhana pana ya fasihi ya usasaleo ama usasabaadaye – rejelea tanbihi ifuatayo. Walakini, kuna hoja kuihusisha istilahi hii katika muktadha wa fasihi ya Kiswahili hasa na dhana ya “makutano ya fasihi simulizi na fasihi andishi”, ling. Senkoro 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Usasaleo ama usasabaadaye wa kifasihi una sura nyingi. Msingi wake muhimu ndio dhana ya sanaa kama uwanja wa majoribio kuliko sanaa kwa manufaa ya kutafuta na kupata maana (moja). Sifa kuu za fasihi ya kisasaleo mara nyingi ni vipengele vya msuko vya kinjozi/kifantasia, kuvunja mipaka ya tanzu, kuvunja kanuni za kisarufi, kubuni maneno mapya na kuichezea lugha, halafu na kutumia sana sifa za “metabunilizi” (*metafiction*), hasa vidokezo-vijirejeshi (*self-referential elements*). Taz. pia Mayer 2004: 590 & Wamitila 2003: 311ff; 120. Kwa uchambuzi wa “vipengele vya ki-usasaleo” katika riwaya za Kiswahili za kuanzia *Nagona* hadi *Bina-Adamu!* (2002) ling. Gromov 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Dhana ya “postrealism” ni mfano mzuri wa mada ambayo imeanza kuchambuliwa zaidi baada ya makala hii kuandikwa. Tafadhali zingatia tanbihi 2.

katika historia ya mawazo ulimwenguni.<sup>18</sup> Waandishi wengine nao walifuata nyayo hizo za *Nagona* na *Mzingile* wakaliendeleza tapo hili la riwaya la uhalisia-baadaye.

### *Wahenga waliofufuka*

Ndipo hapo wahenga walipofufuka tena: Said Ahmed Mohamed, kwa kuandika *Babu Alipofufuka* (2001), ingawa kuna tofauti zake na hizo mbili hasa upande wa mkabala wa uandishi (taz. hapo chini), aliendeleza tapo hili akiandika kwa kutumia hasa mbinu za uhalisia-mazingaombwe yaani mchanganyiko wa fasihi simulizi vikiwemo visaasili, uhalisia, na mambo ya “mazingaombwe” na/ama ya uhalisia-fifi. Upande wa waandishi wa Kenya, ndiye Kyallo Wamitila ambaye hasa na riwaya zake za *Bina-Adamu!* (2002) na *Musaleo!* (2004) alitumia mbinu hizo hizo. Halafu, Clara Momanyi katika riwaya yake ya *Nakuruto* (2009), naye kafuata nyayo za waandishi hawa. Kwa ujumla malengo ya riwaya kama hizi yalikuwa ni mawili: Kwanza, riwaya hizi zina lengo la kujaribu kitu kipya upande wa ujumi (*aesthetics*) na kwa kufanya vile kuonyesha kuwa riwaya ya Kiswahili inaendana kabisa na maendeleo ya riwaya za lugha nyingine yoyote duniani. Pili, kwa makusudi mazima riwaya hizi zinatumia mbinu za kuvunja uhalisia kwa kushikilia hoja ya kwamba hali ya kijamii na ya kisiasa ya nchi za Afrika Mashariki inayojidhihirisha katika uongozi mbaya na kuongezeka kwa tofauti baina ya matabaka, imefikia kiwango kinachovuka mipaka ya hali ya kawaida ambayo ni ya kihalisia. Hapo nina maana ya kwamba ubwege (*absurdity*)<sup>19</sup> wa hali hiyo unadai aina mpya ya fasihi inayoiakisi hiyo hali yenyewe kwa ubwege wake.<sup>20</sup>

Sasa, tatizo kuu la tapo hili, kama nilivyokwisha dokeza, ndilo upokezi (*reception*) wake.<sup>21</sup> Nilipofanya utafiti wangu wa shahada ya tatu mnamo

<sup>18</sup> Kwa kipengele cha mwingilianomatini baina ya *Nagona* na *Ziraili na Zirani* taz. Diegner 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Natumia istilahi hii ya “ubwege” kama inavyotumika hadi leo, ingawa siiafiki, kwa sababu “*absurdity*” haina vidokezo (*connotations*) hasi kama “ubwege” (ling. k. mf. Wamitila 2003: 245; 376; 232; 189).

<sup>20</sup> Bila ya kurejelea dhana ya “ubwege”, Said A. M. Khamis alitoa hoja inayofanana ya kwamba enzi mpya zenye maafa ya kijamii na kisiasa zinadai sanaa mpya vilevile (taz. Khamis 2005: 95ff, 2007: 63ff).

<sup>21</sup> Bila ya shaka nikizungumzia suala la upokezi wa riwaya kama hizi (ambazo huitwa “riwaya-dhati”) sizungumzii upokezi “mpana” sana wa wananchi walio wengi. Hali hii

2003 na 2004 kuhusu hasa *Nagona*, *Mzingile* na *Babu Alipofufuka* vyaoni huku Afrika Mashariki yaani Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es Salaam, Chuo Kikuu cha Nairobi, cha Kenyatta, cha Kikatoliki Afrika Mashariki, na cha Kitaifa Zanzibar, niligundua kuwa hata magwiji wengi wa fani ya fasihi ya Kiswahili hawajalikubali tapo (*paradigm*) hilo jipya wakisema halifai kwa jamii za huku.<sup>22</sup>

Kwa maoni yangu ni swali la kusikitisha kidogo maana upande wa ujumi hapo tumepata mambo mapya ambayo ni magumu, ni changamano, lakini yanatupa changamoto ya kisomi, basi ndiyo ya kuvutia kisomi. Vilevile naona kuzuka kwa tapo hili jipya la riwaya lilichangia kwa kiasi kikubwa uanuwai wa mandhari ya riwaya ya Kiswahili. Kwa hivyo, waandishi wakiendelea kuandika hivyo, kama Said Ahmed Mohamed alivyofanya ali-poandika *Dunia Yao* (2006), naona sisi wahakiki tuwapongeze kwa juhudi zao, tuzithamini kazi kama hizi tukajikaze kuzihakiki kwa uangalifu, la siyo tunawakatisha waandishi jasiri tamaa.

*Miaka ya 2000: Kurudi na kuendelea kuwepo kwa uhalisia ama tapo la tatu la “uhalisia-baadaye-baadaye” lililo ndilo mwingiliano wa matapo?*

Tukiangalia riwaya za Kiswahili zilizoandikwa yaani kuchapishwa kuanzia miaka ya 2000, swali linalojitokeza ni je, tapo la uhalisia umeendelea kuwepo au umerudi, na umezidi kukua au kurudi? Au je, kuna mwingiliano wa matapo mawili ya kabla tunaoweza kuuita (*kwa utani fulani wa kitaaluma*) “uhalisia-baadaye-baadaye”?

Naona tukilitafakari suala hilo, hakuna jibu jepesi. Inavyoelekea, kuna mielekeo yote miwili: kuendelea kuwepo au kurudi kwa uhalisia, na mwingiliano wa matapo.

inahusu suala la kutofautisha “riwaya-dhati” na “riwaya-pendwa”. Kwa matokeo ya utafiti kuhusu riwaya-pendwa za Kiswahili, ling. Gromov 2008 & Reuster-Jahn 2008. Vilevile, hali hii inahusiana sana na hali ya usomaji wa kawaida, lakini hususan usomaji wa riwaya. Ling. Madumulla 2006. Inavyoonekana “upana” wa upokezi wa riwaya za Kiswahili ziitwazo “dhati” unategemea sana uteuzi wa vitabu vya kiada shuleni, lakini hasahasa upokezi huu ndiyo *discourse* ya wasomi. Hapo ieleweke kwamba bila ya shaka masuala ya kiuchumi yanachangia katika suala hilo la hali ya usomaji, lakini vilevile tunashuhudia hali kama hii katika jamii nyingi duniani, zikiwemo zile za nchi tajiri.

<sup>22</sup> Kama tulivyosema hapo juu, kwa mjadala huu pamoja na marejeo yake yote tazama Diegner 2007: 302-307. Kwa muhtasari wa hoja ya ukosoaji wa tapo hili jipya taz. Mbatiah 2006: 143ff.

### *Maua ya Faraja na Almasi za Matumaini*

Kujitokeza kwa tapo la pili la uhalisia-baadaye hakumaanisha kuwa tapo la kwanza umekuwa haupo tena, ama umepoteza nguvu. Mifano ya riwaya za muongo uliopita zilizoandikwa kwa kufuata mkabala wa uhalisia ndiyo hii:

**Jedwali 1: Tapo la uhalisia kuendelea (riwaya teule)**

|                   |                                     |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Chachage Chachage | <i>Makuadi wa Soko Huria</i> (2002) |
| Adam Shafi        | <i>Haini</i> (2003)                 |
| Zainab Burhani    | <i>Kipimo cha Mizani</i> (2004)     |
| William Mkufya    | <i>Ua la Faraja</i> (2004)          |
| Clara Momanyi     | <i>Tumaini</i> (2006)               |
| Kyallo Wamitila   | <i>Msimu wa Vipepeo</i> (2006)      |
| Ken Walibora      | <i>Ndoto ya Almasi</i> (2007)       |
| Mwenda Mbatiah    | <i>Vipanya vya Maabara</i> (2007)   |
| Daudi Shayo       | <i>Adha ya Heri</i> (2008)          |

Ninafikiri waandishi hao wanaendelea kuandika katika tapo hili, au walirejea katika tapo hili la uhalisia, kwa sababu wanaona umuhimu wake kijamii. Yaani kwanza, waandishi bado wanaukubali sana mkabala wa *littérature engagée*, yaani fasihi yenye msimamo thabiti wa kijamii, na ha-waoni tatizo lolote ikiwa uhusiano wa kazi ya sanaa na jamii yenyewe ni wa karibu sana; kinyume chake, wanaudai uhusiano huu wa karibu kama sharti linalokadiri ubora wa kazi ya sanaa hasa.<sup>23</sup>

Pili, kutokana na mabadiliko makubwa ya siasa na jamii ulimwenguni, katika enzi zinazoliliwa na kujadiliwa sana za utandawizi/wazi,<sup>24</sup> waandishi hao wanadhani uhalisia wa kijamii ndio unatajikana hata zaidi kuliko ku-livyokuwa kabla ya “ufunguzi wa milango”. Wanashikilia kuwa uhalisia unatoa mwelekeo kwa wanajamii wanaotisika na kuteseka sana kutokana na mabadiliko hayo ya kuelekea zaidi na zaidi na kwa kiasi kikubwa katika “utamaduni” mpya, utamaduni wa pesa, yaani uyakunifu unaoegemea upande mmoja tu.

<sup>23</sup> Ingawa istilahi ya “*littérature engagée*” ilitumika hasa na Jean-Paul Sartre (ingawa siye aliyeibuni), mwakilishi wa falsafa na fasihi ya udhanaishi, hapa hatuna maana ya kwamba fasihi ya aina hii ihusike na udhanaishi.

<sup>24</sup> Rejelea Diegner 2004: 227; 230ff, Chachage 2004: 3, Khamis 2007: 47ff. Mbali na ukosoaji wa “utandawizi”, rejelea ukosoaji wa “kutunduwaza” badala ya “kutandawaza” (Masele 2007).

*Je, Dunia yao ndiyo yao tu?*

Tapo la uhalisia-baadaye kwa sasa inavyoonekana limekufa ganzi. Baada ya riwaya ya *Dunia Yao* (2006) kutoka, hatukuona tena riwaya jasiri za aina hii, isipokuwa riwaya ya *Nakuruto* (2009) ya Clara Momanyi.<sup>25</sup> Jinsi *Dunia Yao* (2006) inavyotumia misingi ya usasaleo kama kuvunja mipaka ya tanzu, kuvunja kanuni za kisarufi, kubuni mawano mapya na kuichezea lugha, halafu na kutumia sana sifa za “metabunilizi”, hasa vidokezo-vijirejeshi, haina kifani katika mandhari ya riwaya ya kisasa.<sup>26</sup>

Kwa nini sasa tapo hili limekufa ganzi ama angalau linaonekana kuwa umekufa ganzi? Tunahisi sababu yake inaweza kuwa jinsi upokezi wa riwaya kama hizi hadi sasa ulivyokuwa hafifu, yaani wahakiki hawaziandikii riwaya hizi vya kutosha. Basi *dialogue* ya mwandishi na mhakiki ikiwa haipo ama haipo vya kutosha na kuridhisha pande zote mbili, lakini hasa kumridhisha vilevile mwandishi anayehitaji kuhakikiwa ili apate motisha ya kusonga mbele, tapo hili haliwezi kuendelea kuzaa matunda.

*Nyuso mpya, upeo mpya? Unaitwaje?*

Walakini, waandishi hao hao wa tapo la pili, Kyallo Wamitila na *Unaitwa Nani?* (2008) na Said Ahmed Mohamed na *Nyuso za Mwanamke* (2010), kwa mujibu wa uhakiki wangu, wamefanikiwa kuunda mwingiliano wa matapo hayo makuu mawili. Huu mwingiliano wa uhalisia na uhalisia-baadaye ndilo tapo jipya la tatu ambalo ki-dayakronia (kihistoria) tungeweza kuliita “uhalisia-baadaye-baadaye”, walakini, tunapendelea kuliita mwingiliano wa matapo (ama usaniisi wa matapo). Maana yake ni kwamba, riwaya hizi zinasimuliwa katika tapo la kihalisia kwa kiasi kikubwa, lakini vilevile zina vipengele vingine vya njozi/fantasia (*Nyuso za Mwanamke*) ama za kidhahania, ama zinaleta umbo na muundo mpya wa riwaya kwa ujumla (*Unaitwa Nani?*). Mfano wa kipengele cha

<sup>25</sup> Riwaya zijazo zitadhihirisha kama jambo hilo litajwe kama “hakuna nadharia tete isiyo na mwanya” ama kuwa *Nakuruto* (2009) ndiyo dalili ya tapo hili kuendelea kushamiri.

<sup>26</sup> Ling. Diegner 2016, na makala nyingine kadhaa za mkusanyiko huu. Kuhusu uchambuzi wa kimaudhui na kimkabala wa uandishi wa *Dunia Yao* likiwemo suala la utata wa “dunia yao na dunia yetu” ling. Waliaula 2010b.

njozi/fantasia ni sura ya tatu katika *Nyuso za Mwanamke* iitwayo “*Nana Nimezaliwa Upya*” ambapo mhusika mkuu anaota ndoto ya kuzaliwa upya inayoanza kwa kutoweka kwa vitu vyake vyote, hadi kuta, chumbani mwake (cf. NzM III 24-28). Mfano mwingine ndio umbo na muundo wa *Unaitwa Nani?* ambao ni wa kipekee: Kuna usambamba wa sehemu kuu mbili ambazo kila moja ni mkusanyiko wa hadithi fupi sita. Hadithi sita za kwanza zinasimulia visa vya wahusika wakuu wa kike, halafu hadithi sita za pili zinasimulia visa vya wahusika wakuu wa kiume. Licha ya hizi hadithi fupi kuna “fremu” na sehemu ya katikati ambazo ni visa vya kidhahania ambapo wahusika (wa kike na kiume tena) hawana hata jina – ndicho kielezo kimojawapo cha kichwa chenyewe cha riwaya: “*Unaitwa Nani?*” (ling. pia Diegner 2014).

### **Ukaribiano na Uanuwai wa Riwaya ya Kiswahili**

Suala la ukaribiano<sup>27</sup> wa riwaya linaweza kuangaliwa kutoka kwa mitazamo tofauti: kwanza, kuhusu suala la matapo, lakini vilevile, pili, kuhusu suala la riwaya za Tanzania tukizitofautisha na zile za Kenya. Tena, ni suala la kihistoria, maana kila muongo wa enzi za baada ya uhuru una tabia yake, mfumo wake wa fikra, *Zeitgeist* yake.

*Ukaribiano na Uanuwai wa Riwaya ya Kiswahili kuhusu matapo matatu ya riwaya*

Kuhusu tapo la uhalisia ningesema mwelekeo wa kukaribiana upo sana tangu awali, hasa ukihusu maudhui ya kijamii. Katika mlolongo mrefu wa riwaya za uhalisia zihusuzo jamii, na ambazo tungeweza kuziita riwaya za kijamii, kazi za kifani (*paradigmatic*) zingekuwa *Mwenda Kwao* (1971) ya Cuthbert Omari, *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo* (1975) ya Euphrase Kezilahabi,

<sup>27</sup> Istilahi ya “ukaribiano” ni matokeo ya tafakuri za muda baada ya kutumia “kukaribiana” wakati wa kuwasilisha makala hii, na kuzingatia pia mapendekezo ya “ukutano”, halafu na “uelekeano”. Namshukuru sana Aldin Mutembei kwa ushauri wake katika suala hilo na masuala mengine ya kiistilahi yanayohusu makala hii. Ingawa niliwahi kufundishwa kuwa kutumia ngeli ya “u-” mno katika kuunda istilahi mpya inaweza kuwa aina ya “U-kiingereza-shaji”, hatimaye nimechagua “ukaribiano” kwa sababu niliambiwa sivyoy, na kwa sababu neno lenye umbo hili linaonekana kufaa zaidi katika kufinyanga makala ya kitaaluma.

zikifuata *Njozi Iliyopotea* (1980) ya Claude Mung'ong'o, *Kiza katika Nuru* (1988) ya Said Ahmed Mohamed, *Upotevu* (1999) ya Mwenda Mbatiah, *Makuadi wa Soko Huria* (2002) ya Chachage Chachage, hadi *Msimu wa Vipepeo* (2006) ya Kyallo Wamitila.<sup>28</sup>

Hata hivyo, tukiangalia kwa undani zaidi, ndani ya tapo hili, tunaona uanuwai wa kiasi kikubwa tukizikuta riwaya za kijamii hasa, za kisiasa, za kielimunafsi, za kipelelezi, na hata za kifalsafa<sup>29</sup> (taz. mifano ya jedwali lifuatalo).

**Jedwali 2: Riwaya za uhalisia zihusuzo jamii, walakini, kipengele fulani kinajitokeza zaidi**

|                        |                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Riwaya za kisiasa      | George Mhina, <i>Mtu ni Utu</i> (1971)<br>Euphrase Kezilahabi, <i>Gamba la Nyoka</i> (1979)<br>George Liwenga, <i>Nyota ya Huzuni</i> (1981)<br>Adam Shafi, <i>Haini</i> (2003) |
| Riwaya za kielimunafsi | Euphrase Kezilahabi, <i>Rosa Mistika</i> (1971)<br>Said Ahmed Mohamed, <i>Tata za Asumini</i> (1990)<br>Kyallo Wamitila, <i>Msimu wa Vipepeo</i> (2006)                         |
| Riwaya za kipelelezi   | Riwaya mbalimbali za akina Aristablus Elvis<br>Musiba na Marehemu Ben Rashidi Mtobwa                                                                                            |
| Riwaya za kifalsafa    | Euphrase Kezilahabi, <i>Kichwamaji</i> (1974)<br>William Mkufya, <i>Ua la Faraja</i> (2004)                                                                                     |

Tumeshasema kabla katika makala hii kwamba kurudi au kuendelea kuwepo kwa tapo hili ni wazi. Kwa nini? Tapo hili linaendelea kuwepo kwa sababu inavyoelekea jamii mbalimbali za Afrika Mashariki zinathamini kwa kiasi kikubwa uhusiano wa karibu wa fasihi na jamii. Tapo hili la uhalisia linaendelea kuwa mbinu muhimu ya kumulikia na kujadili masuala nyeti ya jamii, na kuikosoa jamii kwa nia ya kuleta ukombozi (*emancipation*) na mwamko mpevu wa kijamii.

Waandishi ninaowaita jasiri (kisanii), walio“thubutu” kujitenga na uhalisia, wao kwa uchache wao kazi zao zilikaribiana wakisomeana na

<sup>28</sup> Kuziainisha kazi hizo kama riwaya za kijamii hakumaanishi kuwa haziwezi kutiwa katika mikondo mingine ya riwaya pia. Zote nilizoziorodhesha hapa pia zingeweza kuingia katika mkondo wa riwaya ya kisiasa.

<sup>29</sup> Maana riwaya ya kifalsafa si lazima iandikwe katika tapo la uhalisia-baadaye, kama mifano ya *Kichwamaji* (muongo wa pili, 1974) na *Ua la Faraja* (muongo wa tano, 2004) inavyoonyesha.

kuathiriana – “mtu si kisiwa”, basi kazi yoyote ya sanaa wala si kisiwa.<sup>30</sup> Lakini hata hivyo, kazi hizo chache – furaha na raha ya mhakiki – ukizihakiki kwa undani, zinatofautiana si haba, basi ndani ya tapo lenyewe la uhalisia-baadaye uanuwei upo ingawa kazi ni chache.

Ili kutoa vipengele angalau vichache kuelezea zaidi jinsi riwaya hizi<sup>31</sup> zinavyotofautiana, ningesema katika *Babu Alipofufuka* (2001) kipengele kikuu cha uhalisia-mazingaombwe cha kuufuta na kuuchezea mpaka baina ya uhalisia na mazingaombwe (taz. hapo juu) kinajitokeza kwa kiasi kikubwa zaidi kuliko katika *Nagona* (1987/1990) na *Mzingile* (1991). *Bina-Adamu!* (2002), kwa namna yake, inatokeza zaidi mada ya ukosoaji wa utandawazi – kama *Babu Alipofufuka* – lakini vilevile inatokeza zaidi kipengele cha safari ya mhusika mkuu kama “fremu” ya msuko mzima – kama katika *Nagona*. Maana yake, ukitaifuta tofauti baina ya hizi riwaya, ningesema hivi: Katika *Nagona* na *Mzingile* ndivyo vipengele vya falsafa na usasaleo (*postmodernism*) vinatawala, wakati katika *Babu Alipofufuka* ndivyo zaidi vipengele vya uhalisia-mazingaombwe (*magical realism*), usasaleo na Umarx mpya. Katika *Bina-Adamu!* sifa kuu ndiyo jinsi uhalisia-mazingaombwe na usasaleo zinavyounganishwa na ukosoaji wa utandawazi, halafu katika *Dunia Yao* (2006) vipengele hivi vyote vipo,<sup>32</sup> kipengele kitawalacho kikiwa ndicho usasaleo uliokomaa (taz. Diegner 2016).

Kwa vyovyote vile, kuhusu tapo hili na tapo la tatu la mwingiliano ningesema ni mapema mno kuweza kujua kama yataendelea kuwepo kwa kiasi gani na kuonyesha ukaribiano wa kuunda tapo lenyewe, kwa upande

<sup>30</sup> Jambo la wazi ni kwamba uandishi wa *Nagona* (1987) na *Mzingile* (1991) ulikuwa wa kifani kabisa ukiathiri sana uandishi wa kazi kama *Babu Alipofufuka* (2001) na *Bina-Adamu!* (2002). Taz. pia Bertoncini Zúbková 2006: 85. Hata hivyo, mwingiliano-matini huu haumaanishi kabisa kuwa zile za mwisho hazina ubunifu wa kipekee. Kwa maoni yangu, *Babu Alipofufuka* inasheheni ukwasi wa lugha ya Kiswahili kwa kiwango cha juu kabisa katika historia ya riwaya ya Kiswahili hadi sasa. Jinsi lugha, fani na maudhui zinavyoendana katika riwaya hiyo, na kuunda ujumi wa aina yake, haina kifani. *Bina-Adamu!*, kwa upande wake, ndiyo inakosoa na kukejeli taswira ya “dunia imekuwa kijiji kimoja tu” katika muktadha wa utandawazi kwa umahiri na ustadi wa kipekee.

<sup>31</sup> Ili hoja yangu kuu ieleweke vizuri zaidi, hapa sitajadili tofauti za riwaya zote za tapo hili, kwa hivyo sitazungumzia *Ziraili na Zirani* (1999), *Musaleo* (2004) na *Nakuruto* (2009).

<sup>32</sup> Kwa uchambuzi wa kipengele cha uhalisia-mazingaombwe katika *Dunia Yao* ling. Waliaula 2010a.



mmoja, na uanuwai wa kutosha ndani ya kila tapo, kwa upande mwingine. Hilo linahusu hasa tapo la mwingiliano ambamo tumeainishia riwaya mbili tu za *Unaitwa Nani?* (2008) na *Nyuso za Mwanamke* (2010; taz. aya ya “Nyuso mpya, upeo mpya?” hapo juu).

*Ukaribiano na Uanuwai wa Riwaya ya Kiswahili kuhusu riwaya za kutoka Tanzania na Kenya*

Pili, tukiangalia suala la ukaribiano ama uanuwai kuhusu riwaya zitokazo Tanzania na zitokazo Kenya naona “mandhari ya fasihi” imebadilika kwa kiasi kikubwa. Tangu katikati ya miaka tisini, riwaya ya Kiswahili nchini Kenya ilishuhudia ongezeko kubwa sana hadi leo, “boom” ya aina tuliyoishuhudia Tanzania katika miaka ya sabini (taz. Diegner 2014). Leo hii, katika kila tapo nililokwisha kuelezea utakuta kuna waandishi wa kutoka Tanzania na Kenya. Mifano ya waandishi wa Kenya na Tanzania katika matapo yote matatu ndiyo hii:

**Jedwali 3: Riwaya za Tanzania na Kenya (mifano teule)<sup>33</sup>**

***I. Tapo la uhalisia (wa “kirasimi”)***

| <i>Tanzania</i>                                                                                                                                            | <i>Kenya</i>                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Euphrase Kezilahabi, <i>Rosa Mistika</i> (1971)<br>Claude Mung’ong’o, <i>Njozi Iliyopotea</i> (1981)<br>Said Ahmed Mohamed, <i>Kiza katika Nuru</i> (1988) | Katama Mkangi, <i>Ukiwa</i> (1975)<br>Zainab Burhani, <i>Mali ya Maskini</i> (1981) |

***II. Tapo la uhalisia-baadaye***

| <i>Tanzania</i>                                                                                                                                  | <i>Kenya</i>                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Euphrase Kezilahabi, <i>Nagona</i> (1987/1990)<br>Euphrase Kezilahabi, <i>Mzingile</i> (1991)<br>William Mkufya, <i>Ziraili na Zirani</i> (1999) | Kyallo Wamitila, <i>Bina-Adamu!</i> (2002)<br>Kyallo Wamitila, <i>Musaleo!</i> (2004)<br>Clara Momanyi, <i>Nakuruto</i> (2009) |

<sup>33</sup> Nasisitiza sifa ya “uteule” ama uteuzi wa mifano hii, hasa ya matapo ya I na III A. Bila ya shaka zipo riwaya nyingi sana za maana sana ambazo sijaziorodhesha hapa, na bila ya shaka uteuzi wa wataalam wenzangu wengine ungekuwa tofauti. Kwa mfano, katika tapo la II, tungaliweza kuainisha vilevile riwaya ya *Walenisi* (1995) ya Katama Mkangi. Walakini, naiona riwaya hiyo zaidi kama riwaya ya kinjozi/ya ki-utopia “ya kirasimi”, jadi iliyoanza na riwaya za kiistiara za *Kufikirika* (1967; written in 1946) na *Kusadikika* (1951) za Shaaban Robert.

|                                                                                                   |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Said Ahmed Mohamed, <i>Babu Alipofufuka</i> (2001)<br>Said Ahmed Mohamed, <i>Dunia Yao</i> (2006) |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

### ***III A. Tapo la uhalisia (unaoendelea)***

| <i>Tanzania</i>                                                                                                                                                                       | <i>Kenya</i>                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chachage Chachage,<br><i>Makuadi wa Soko Huria</i> (2002)<br>Adam Shafi, <i>Haini</i> (2003)<br>William Mkufya, <i>Ua la Faraja</i> (2004)<br>Daudi Shayo, <i>Adha ya Heri</i> (2008) | Clara Momanyi, <i>Tumaini</i> (2006)<br>Kyallo Wamitila, <i>Msimu wa Vipepeo</i> (2006)<br>Ken Walibora, <i>Ndoto ya Almasi</i> (2007)<br>Mwenda Mbatiah,<br><i>Vipanya vya Maabara</i> (2007) |

### ***III B. Tapo la uhalisia-baadaye-baadaye***

| <i>Tanzania</i>                                  | <i>Kenya</i>                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Said A. Mohamed, <i>Nyuso za Mwanamke</i> (2010) | Kyallo Wamitila, <i>Unaitwa Nani?</i> (2008) |

Baada ya kuona maendeleo hayo yanavyoakisiwa katika jedwali, swali ndilo je, mustakabali utakuwaje? Nadhani zipo dalili za kutosha kuwa ukaribiano huu utazidi maana waandishi wenyewe wameanza kusomeana zaidi kazi zao kuliko hali ilivyokuwa zamani.<sup>34</sup> Bila ya shaka suala la usambazaji na kupatikana kwa vitabu pande zote mbili za mpaka linachangia hapa si haba.

## **Hitimisho**

Katika makala hii nilijaribu kufafanua maendeleo ya riwaya ya Kiswahili katika miongo mitano ya tangu uhuru upatikane. Ili kubainisha taswira kamili ya “mandhari” hii ya riwaya ya Kiswahili niliweza kugusia tu hatua kubwa kubwa za maendeleo hayo bila ya kuelezea mifano mingi, na kwa undani. Kwa ufupi, nadharia tete kadhaa zilizotolewa hapa ndizo:

<sup>34</sup> Ingawa hapo, inavyoonekana, Kenya wasomaji walikuwa wameanza mapema zaidi kusoma riwaya za kutoka Tanzania. Siku hizi ninahisi Watanzania wengi zaidi wameanza kusoma riwaya za wenzao Wakenya, ingawa bado si kwa kiwango cha Wakenya kuzisoma riwaya za Watanzania.

#### **Jedwali 4: Nadharia-tete za makala hii**

(I) Yapo matapo matatu makuu ya riwaya ya Kiswahili:

- (1) uhalisia
- (2) uhalisia-baadaye
- (3) mwingiliano wa matapo hayo mawili  
("uhalisia-baadaye-baadaye")

(II) Ukaribiano wa riwaya za Kiswahili upo:

- \* katika kuweza kuainishwa katika matapo hayo makuu
- \* kuhusu mikondo ya riwaya ndani ya kila tapo, kwa mfano riwaya ya kisiasa
- \* umezidi kuongezeka ukilinganisha riwaya za Tanzania na Kenya kimaudhui na kifani

(III) Uanuwai nao upo:

- \* kipaji cha lugha ama mazoea yatamwezesha msomaji kutofautisha riwaya za Kenya na za Tanzania; halafu, uanuwai unajitokeza kuhusu matumizi ya lugha ya watu wa pwani/visiwani na bara pande zote mbili za mpaka
- \* ndani ya kila tapo:
  - ✓ riwaya ya uhalisia ina mikondo mingi: ya kijamii, ya kisiasa, ya kijinsia, ya kielimunafsi, ya kimazingira, ya kifalsafa
  - ✓ riwaya za uhalisia-baadaye, ingawa ni chache, zinatofautiana si haba
  - ✓ riwaya za mwingiliano wa matapo hayo ambazo hadi sasa ni chache sana, nazo zinatofautiana sana

Kwa kuhitimisha makala hii, wito wangu ndio tuendelee kuchambua ukaribiano huo, lakini tutambue, tukaheshimu na kufurahia uanuwai vilevile, maana uanuwai ndio unaoipa fasihi ladha yake, tusije tukawa tumechoka na kusoma riwaya za aina ama tapo moja tu. Ili kufanikisha hilo, tuzisome na kuzichambua zaidi riwaya za tapo la pili na la tatu, ili tuwatie waandishi hao moyo wasije wakakatishwa tamaa na ilhamu yao ya kuandika mapya.

Kwa maoni yangu, hali ya maisha ulimwenguni kote imekuwa changamano kiasi cha kwamba kupend(ele)a kazi za matapo hayo siyo Umagharibi(-magharibi, *Westernism*) wala Ukaskazini(-kaskazini wa

kilimwengu, *Global Northernism*), yaani upendeleo wa wasanii na wataalam wa janibu hizo za dunia. Hapo nakubaliana kabisa na nadharia tete ya Said Khamis (taz. hapo juu) anayesema dunia imebadilika kiasi cha kwamba sanaa mpya inahitajika kote. Mbali na hayo, ninashikilia hoja ya kuwa uanuwai wa sanaa unanufaisha sana jamii yoyote ile, iwe ni jamii yenye watu maskini wengi au la. Kimsingi kinachohitajika ni walimu wazuri na wahakiki wazuri ambao wataelezea na kusaidia kuchambua na kuhakiki kazi za aina hiyo.

Hata hivyo, vilevile tuisahau kuchambua na kuhakiki pia riwaya za uhalisia za hivi karibuni, maana yapo maua mengine mapya mengi yasheheniyo mafumbo yatusubiriyo tuyafumbue.

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SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF KENYAN SWAHILI NOVEL  
AFTER THE YEAR 2000

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The importance of literature as a social institution, creating to a large extent what is popularly referred to as a public consciousness of a specific society, has always attracted the attention of the scholars of literature. As the wider theoretical ground for this study we hold the view that literature is, first, a mirror of the society – the view which, emerging basically after the French revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, has repeatedly been expressed by various scholars of literature and found its detailed theoretical substantiation in such recent works as, for example, Holger Kiesow's *Literature as a Mirror of Society* (Kiesow 2006). Also, we agree with popular assertion that literature is a watchdog of the society who must bark at all the injustices committed by and against its members. Thus we assume, that literature, on the one hand, reflects in different ways all the processes going on in a society it belongs to; on the other hand, by disclosing the social wrongs being committed in these processes, it increases the awareness of the society's members, and by doing so increases their commitment to improve the social conditions they live in. It must be added, that speaking about the ability of literature to reflect in different ways the social processes, "different" should be deemed as a key word – for, with a considerable unity of their general task, the authors use striking variety of artistic methods, devices and principles.

The above fully applies to modern African literatures, which since their formation period have demonstrated a very high rate of "social charge". It is true for literatures in both European and African languages – and among the latter, Swahili literature obviously holds the first place.

Swahili writers have demonstrated their commitment to write about socially topical issues already in the late colonial period – suffice it to remember the prose works of Tanganyikan writers Shaaban Robert and Mohamed Said



Abdulla, which are now considered to be the founding texts of modern Swahili writing. In its later periods, Swahili writing in Tanzania has multiply increased its social engagement, remaining a very precise “chronicler” of the country’s social history. Lutz Diegner in his PhD thesis wrote about “the responsibility of a Swahili writer to act as *kioo cha jamii* ‘mirror of society’ if not *mwalimu wa jamii* ‘teacher of society’ as a common viewpoint among the Tanzanian authors” (see Diegner 2007: 302-307).

In Kenya, social potential of literature was initially mainly realized by its English-language stratum, which from the onset has gained a conspicuous place on the palette of modern African literatures. Kenyan literature in Swahili, being “overshadowed” by its English-language counterpart (and thus not enjoying the “privileged” position of Swahili writing in Tanzania, where Swahili has been by and large the only literary language), was undergoing a rather unsteady and slow development in the 1960s-1980s. However, since the 1990s, when Kenyan literary scene was entered by a new generation of writers, Swahili literature in Kenya has received a previously-unheard-of impetus in its growth, largely facilitated after the year 2000, during the present period of political liberalisation in the country, which tangibly expanded the range of the issues that the authors are trying to address.

This new generation of Swahili writers brought to the literary arena such names as Omar Babu, John Habwe, Elijah Kaberia, Emmanuel Kariuki, Jeff Mandila, Joshat Makori, Mwenda Mbatiah, Swaleh Mdoe, Clara Momanyi, Sinjiri Mukuba, Geoffrey Mung’ou, Anduvate Mwavali, Juma Namlola, Alex Ngure, Ali Hassan Njama, George Ong’ang’o, Francis Otuche, Sheila Ryanga, Ken Walibora, Kyallo Wadi Wamitila. However, of these writers only Walibora and Wamitila appear to receive considerable attention from literary critics – see, e.g., Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009, Diegner 2014, Gromov 2015. The critical regard towards other writers appears to be much less profound – for example, some novels of Habwe, Mbatiah, Momanyi, Mdoe and Njama were analysed by Wamitila (Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009), the works of Mbatiah also by Diegner (2014); other writers seem to be still waiting for their critical assessment and appraisal.

Seeking to at least partially fill this gap, we in this paper will try to focus on three writers, who, despite acquiring a prominent position in contemporary Swahili literature in Kenya during the recent years, still remain more or less unnoticed by the local and international literary criticism – John Habwe, Tom Olali and Clara Momanyi. We have chosen these writers not only be-

cause of their prominence and artistic qualities of their works, but also owing to the fact that each of these authors appears to represent a specific trend in modern Kenyan Swahili writing – social critical realism, “new” novel and women’s writing respectively.

### **John Habwe: social criticism from the stance of enlightenment**

John Habwe, the most established and the most prolific of the writers chosen for this study, also seems to have gained the highest attention from the critics.<sup>1</sup> His first three novels were reviewed, among others, by Kyallo Wadi Wamitila in his survey of Kenyan novel in the new edition of *Outline of Swahili Literature* (Bertoncini et al. 2009). In that survey Wamitila notices, along with other traits, Habwe’s tangible inclination towards “Enlightenment-type” didacticism. Already in his first novel *Maumbile si huja* (Appearances do not matter, 1995), telling the story of “Said, a farmhand involved in an illicit affair with his employer’s wife, Amina, who feels neglected by her husband, Juma [...], a chauvinistic racist who looks down on anyone who does not have the same light pigmentation as he”, Habwe “examines, albeit in passing, the issue of race in the coastal towns of East Africa. Amina later abandons her husband and marries Said by whom she bears a blind son, vindicating the novella’s title” (Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: 61).

*Maisha kitendawili* (Life is a puzzle, 2003) “examines the trials and tribulations besetting a modern young person. At the centre of this story is Farida, an easy-going and astute female character who sails through her university studies by relying on her hard-working male colleagues, whom she however spurns, opting instead for the rich men who hover around the University’s female lodgings. Farida is brought back to her senses by the harsh realities that confront her at the end of her university education, when

<sup>1</sup> Kenyan author and linguistics scholar, born 12 December, 1962 in Vihiga, Western Kenya. Studied for his degrees at the University of Nairobi where he teaches in the Department of Linguistics and Languages. Author of the novels *Maumbile si huja* (1995), *Maisha kitendawili* (2000), *Paradiso* (2005), *Cheche za moto* (2008), *Fumbo la maisha* (2009), *Safari ya Lamu* (2011), *Pamba* (2011), *Kovu moyoni* (2014), *Pendo la karaha* (2014). He also wrote several short stories and children’s stories.

she is unable to get a job. She ends up living a life of squalor before she is rescued by Juma, the old university friend she had once looked down upon. Farida immerses herself into religion, which serves as her liberating force” (Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: 61).

The theme of religion is furthered in Habwe’s third novel *Paradiso* (2005), although in that book Habwe offers “a biting indictment of religious hypocrisy and the commercialization of religion.” The novel tells the story of Michael Mango, a young Mombasa dweller, who after his recovery from a dangerous ailment becomes a devoted church person, soon making a preaching career. However, he soon “comes face to face with the religious gangsterism and greed [...] and the adulterous escapades of religious leaders like Musa Bosire” (Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: 62). After the conflict with these leaders Michael founds a new church, the Bethany Bible, and soon himself becomes subjected to all those ills that he previously hated his foes for.

Although, as it was mentioned above, Habwe’s novels have attracted certain attention from the critical realm, the critics have claimed that his novels “do definitely deserve more attention than what has been published on them so far” (Diegner 2014: 344). Having acknowledged his achievements in various aspects of form (“rich in its use of language and realistic descriptions” – Wamitila, “his ‘minimalist’ linguistic style, his formal experimentalism” – Diegner), the critics also point at Habwe’s aspiration to write about topical social issues, at the same time combining in his texts two distinctive artistic methods – social criticism, which is mostly presented through “richness of realistic descriptions” and elements of social satire, and moralistic didacticism, which is brought through moralising dialogues and authorial sentences (e.g. Wamitila, writing about *Maisha kitendawili*, noticed that in the novel bears “some elements of didactic melodrama” – Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: 61).

In the recent decades Habwe produced six more novels – *Cheche za Moto* (Sparks of fire, 2008), *Fumbo la maisha* (Riddle of life, 2009), *Safari ya Lamu* (Journey to Lamu, 2011), *Pamba* (2011), *Pendo la karaha* (Love of abhorrence, 2014), *Kovu moyoni* (Scar in the heart, 2014). In this study we will focus on two of the latest novels by Habwe – *Pamba* (2011) and *Pendo la karaha* (Love of abhorrence, 2014), since, in our view, these two texts are marked with pronouncedly “Habwean” combination of social documentary, with realistic and impartial depiction of urgent social problems, with certain

devices and methods that appear to be “borrowed” from the classical works of European enlightenment.

Habwe’s novel *Pamba* (titled by the name of the main character) is in fact a long and bitter lament about the miserable state of public universities, represented in the novel by a certain Chiromo Centre (presumably its prototype being the University of Nairobi) and one of its lecturers, a talented mathematician Professor Pamba. Pamba, a locally and foreign-educated scholar, initially gets a profitable position at a prestigious NGO, but resigns from it when he gets an opportunity to head a newly founded centre for mathematical research at Chiromo which “was hoping to change the ways of constructing computer devices in its mathematical calculation. It is the development which was intended to influence the whole world and to bring to the country of Kenya big reputation worldwide” (Habwe 2011: 48). The center works successfully, but the state of the university and its lecturers becomes more and more destitute; even foreign-financed projects, no matter how well done, do not bring desired increments – everything is taken by the state structures. Classes and laboratories do not have equipment, lecturers lack money; Pamba is thrown out of his house in Kileleshwa and can not pay his old father’s medical bills. But when the teachers decide to defend their rights, the repressive machine strikes, and their efforts go in vain.

Brought to the end of their tether, the teachers decided to organize an all-university strike. The government responded by the insertion of spies into their ranks and by the arrest of ten important members of the teacher’s organization – among them Miheso, the secretary, who disappeared without a trace. The forthcoming strike was joined by the students, who organized their own protest action against the pitiful state of the teachers – and were dispersed and harassed by the police. By the bitter irony of fate Pamba, who was all the way expressing cautiousness towards the actions of his colleagues, was arrested that same evening and accused of inciting the students to join the strike of the dons. Eventually he is released, and now decides to participate in the strike; the strikers are also brutally scattered by the police, Pamba is arrested again, and spends three days in police cells. The strike goes on, with threats to withhold the teachers’ salaries and more sackings – among the sacked ones now is Pamba himself. His further efforts to get employed in private and foreign universities go in vain. In the end, desperate Pamba, who is deprived of his lifetime work and deserted by his family, commits suicide in his Chiromo office.

Habwe's latest-to-date novel *Pendo la karaha* (Love of abhorrence, 2014) also deals with one of the crying problems of the "global south" – modern slavery, disguised as employment. The novel's main character, a young school graduate Kudra, comes from a humble family of Mombasa residents. Her father, a brave policeman, was killed by a local gang of drug dealers, and since his death her mother, a petty vendor, is struggling for the survival of her family. Kudra, like many other girls, is seduced by the advertisements about easy and profitable employment abroad, posed by a local agent. She pays her last money for the arrangements, and soon finds herself employed by a well-off family in Dubai. Employed – but, rather, enslaved, because her masters, the rich businessman Amini and his wife Nayrat, soon inform her that her salary will not be paid until she repays them her air ticket expenses; her passport is withdrawn, and poor Kudra finds herself in the state of a real "*mtumwa wa kisasa*" – a modern slave. She tries to deny this painful reality even to herself, hoping that things will straighten up one day. However, the situation is getting only worse, which pushes Kudra towards decisive actions in search of solution and salvation. After being harassed by Amini, Kudra flees his house with some stolen money – only to find herself as a mistress of another wealthy local dweller named Salim, who later pushes her out of his house in favour of a new flame. Having her last employment at a "massage parlour", whose owner tries to push her into prostitution, Kudra only by chance – or, rather, lucky concurrence of circumstances – manages to return to Kenya.

Parallel to the saga of "modern slavery" the novel highlights another burning problem of today's Africa – drug addiction among the young; using several secondary characters, the author shows devastating effect of drugs over the younger generation. Poverty and the absence of life perspectives push the younger people toward enslavement abroad and drug addiction at home – this conclusion, severally proclaimed by different characters in the book, commits Kudra and her mother to seek solution through their own effort: they intend to set up in their native Mombasa a private poultry farm and a hairdressing salon, employing local destitute youth in order to fight poverty together.

Habwe's striving to address in his books the topical issues of modern Kenyan (and, on a wider scale, African) society is obvious; in fact, of the two novels *Pamba* appears to have a higher degree of social criticism. However, even in *Pamba* – and to a much higher extent in *Pendo la karaha* – the author uses methods and devices reminiscent of the classical works of Enlightenment;

namely, he asserts the power of self-purification and positive example (e.g. Kassim, a drug addict youth in *Pendo la karaha*, after realizing his miserable state comes to his senses, becomes a successful businessman and sponsors the local drug-fighting campaigns), furnishes the text with his own moralising passages, and fluently exploits the figure of *raisonneur* (e.g. mzee Simba in *Pendo la karaha*, who lectures the local youth about the danger of drugs; Belgian philanthropist in *Pamba*, who initially sets the main character on the right track). But the strongest source of moral strength and self-awareness lies within the personality of the main characters themselves; that is why Habwe constantly engages his heroes in the dialogues with the *nafsi* – their “inner self”, who, sharply criticising the character’s current state, thus opens their eyes and commits them to corresponding actions. It was *nafsi* that made the last attempt to push Professor Pamba into changing his life, revealing to him the neglected state of true scientists in Kenya:

*“Dunia ina maonevu makubwa sana,” aliwaza Pamba. Alipowaona wale watoto hakuelewa kuzaliwa kwao kulinuiwa nini katika dunia.*

*“Na wewe?” Mara nafsi yake ilimwuliza.*

*“Mimi ni mtafiti, bwana,” Pamba alisema hapo kwenye kitanda alichokuwa amekilala.*

*“Mtafiti wa nini?” Nafsi ilimwuliza tena.*

*“Mimi ni mtafiti mkubwa wa mambo ya hisabati,” Pamba alisema huku amekazia macho kitabu alichokuwa alikisoma.*

*Pamba alisikia mcheko mkubwa kutoka kwa nafsi yake.*

*“Je, dunia inajua?” Nafsi iliuliza kwa ihadi.*

*“Inajua, nimetuzwa mara kwa mara,” Pamba alijitetea.*

*“Utatuzwa vipi uwe huwezi kumudu chakula na nyumba ya kukaa ya starehe?” Nafsi ilimwuliza.*

*Pamba alishangaa hiyo daiolojia ilivyoendelea. Ilimuudhi, ilimkera moyo. (Habwe 2011:112-13)<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> “The world has a lot of oppression,” thought Pamba. When he saw those children [of the slums], he did not understand for what intention were they born into the world./ “And you?” his Nafsi asked him immediately./ “I am a researcher, bwana,” Pambo said from the bed on which he was laying./ “Researcher of what?” Nafsi asked him again./ “I am a big researcher of the matters mathematical,” said Pamba, shifting his eyes to the book he was reading./ Pamba heard a big laughter from his Nafsi./ “And does the world know?” asked Nafsi with contempt./ “It does, I was rewarded from time to time,” Pamba defended himself./ “How were you rewarded if you can not afford food and a decent house to live?” Nafsi asked

Likewise, *nafsi* opens Kudra's eyes to her state of enslavement:

*"Kwa nini walifanya vile?" Siku zote Kudra alijiuliza alipopata fursa ya kupigia makini maisha yake. Hakupata majibu. Siku moja, Nafsi ilimweleza kimasomaso.*

*"Huo ndio utumwa, dadangu. Utumwa uliotaka wewe," Nafsi ilisema.*

*"Utumwa?" Kudra aliuliza kwa mshangao.*

*"Eeeh utumwa. Modern slavery," Nafsi ilipambana kumfafanulia kwa Kiingereza.*

*"Mimi si slave lakini. [...] Mimi ni mtu wa uwezo wangu. Nina akili. Nina msimamo. Nina maono." [...]*

*"Wewe ni mtumwa. Hii ndiyo sababu wafuta nyumba usilipwe mshahara ukufaa," Nafsi ilisema na ikacheka kicheko kikubwa cha kitashtiti. [...]*

*"Nitatoka," Kudra alisema.*

*"Kutoka ni vigumu. Kwataka moyo," Nafsi ilisema.*

*"Moyo ninao. Nguvu ninazo na mikakati ninayo," Kudra alisema. (Habwe 2014: 119-20)<sup>3</sup>*

These dialogues with inner self, which permeate the texture of both novels, vividly remind of moralistic dialogues (including dialogues with self) as one of the most popular genres of Enlightenment (suffice it to recall the works of Rousseau, Diderot and Cr billon). Habwe appears to use these dialogues for the same purpose – to provide their characters, confronted by the hostile social forces and abandoned, for different reasons, even by their family members, with the last hope of getting a voice of support – although a very critical one. It did not help in the case of Pamba, whose suffering was too much to defeat; but it mobilized Kudra towards decisive actions.

him./ Pamba was surprised how this dialogue continued. It annoyed him, it troubled his heart. (All the translations from Swahili are mine).

<sup>3</sup> "Why did they do that?" Kudra was always asking herself when she had a chance to look carefully at her life. She was not getting the answers. One day, Nafsi pretended to explain it to her./ "This is slavery, my sister. Slavery that you yourself wanted," Nafsi said./ "Slavery?" Kudra asked with surprise./ "Eeeh, slavery. Modern slavery," Nafsi struggled to elucidate in English./ "But I am not a slave though.[...] I am a person with my ability. I have intellect. I have a stand. I have imagination." [...] "You are a slave. That is why you clean houses, not being paid a salary that fits you," Nafsi said, and laughed a big sarcastic laughter./ "I will get out," said Kudra./ "Getting out is difficult. It needs a heart," Nafsi said./ "I have a heart. I have strength and I have plans," said Kudra.

### Tom Olali: “new” novel at the “extreme”

Tom Olali<sup>4</sup> may well be regarded as the youngest adept of the so-called “new” novel in Swahili, a form of the novel genre that “declared a conscious formal and thematic split with the previous tradition of novel writing in Swahili. The novels by Tanzanian and Kenyan authors written in 1970s-1980s mainly were of realistic social-critical type and were dealing solely with local problems of these countries. The “new” novels in their formal and stylistic aspects are marked by tangible links with post-modern writing [...] and such forms as parabolic and allegorical prose. In terms of contents, the main concern of the authors appears to be not only the local developments in East African region, but also their fear for the future of Africa in particular and the human race in general” (Gromov 2014: 40).

The setting that these novels depict is usually a very innovative merge between a realistically painted “earthly” social situation (mostly that of an African state) and a fantastic “other-world”, into which the main character goes on a quest for a specific mission. Likewise, their characters vary from human types of various social stands and spheres, to fantastic creatures, such as giants, spirits, prophets etc., depicting in the allegorical, metaphorical, parabolic ways various social trends and political orientations.

These features are fully present already in Olali’s first novel *Mafamba* (Underhand doings, 2008), that so far gained the highest critical attention (see, e.g. Diegner 2018, Gromov 2014, Rettová 2017). Lutz Diegner, comparing *Mafamba* with Katama Mkangi’s novel *Walenisi* (1995), one of the first “sci-fi” texts in Kenyan Swahili writing, wrote as follows:

Taking a look at the genre of science fiction, Mkangi’s *Walenisi* and Olali’s *Mafamba* are, on the surface, conceived as intrinsically post-nation, even “post-global” (“post-earth”), as they take the reader to other planets. In the former case, the other planet is conveyed as an ideal antithesis to the unequal society on our earth; in the latter, different

<sup>4</sup> Tom Olali (born in 1969 in Nairobi) studied for his first two degrees at the universities of Maseno and Nairobi, worked for the *Kenya Times* newspaper and later as a columnist for the *Taiifa Leo* (1995-2000), where he wrote *Lugha Yetu*, a weekly column which debated the science of linguistics. Also made a brief acting career in a popular TV series *Tausi*. After winning the Aga Khan International Scholarship Award went for doctoral studies at the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). Currently teaches at the University of Nairobi.



planets with different rulers illustrate political conflict and turmoil to the detriment of the “common man” living in poverty. However, the type of “post-nation” which can be discerned here proves to be innovative *Verfremdung* in the sense of a nation-writing in disguise: Whereas *Walenisi* seems to be consciously designed as an *implicit* critique of Kenyan politics embracing capitalism, the more specific references to Kenyan politics in *Mafamba*, once you begin to decode them, turn out to be abundant. (Diegner 2018:19-20)

These references are really abundant – suffice it to say, that the novel ends with what seems to be a rather comprehensive, although concise, account of Kenyan post-election crisis of 2007/2008, thinly disguised as the elections on the planet of Nuka. In the final passage of the novel the author expresses his hope of getting out of the vicious circle of “Nukian” (read – Kenyan) politics by eliminating the mentality of *mafamba*, which, as understood from this and the subsequent texts by Olali, is the authorial term for (mainly) corruption and tribalism:

*Panahitajika hatua saba. Na haitahitajika hatua ya nane. Hatua hizo sita ndizo hatua zilizotimizika kabla kufikia hii hatua ya saba [...]*

*Hatua hii ya saba haitatokea maishani mwa mwanasayari yeyote akiwemo wewe msomaji wa hadithi hii. Na haijulikani kwa yakini kama itatokea. Labda imetokea. Na ikitokea, jambo moja litatokea. Tokeo hilo ni hili: Kifo cha shetani – shetani mafamba.*

*Na baada ya kifo cha mafamba, sayari zote zitafinyangwa upya. Wanasayari wanya watafinyangwa. Labda wewe msomaji utakuwa mmojawapo wa wanasayari wanya – lakini kwa sharti moja: Usishiriki ama kuwa na hata chembe ya fikra ya umafamba.*

*Ole wao watakaojitosa kwenye sakata hii! Adhabu yao itakuwa ni kutoswa kwenye gehenna.*

*Nawaulizeni swali la mwisho. Jibu silitaki. Mjijibu ndani ya nafsi zenu. Je, hatua hii ya saba ilitimizika, itatimizika, inatimizika au imetimizika? (Olali 2008: 252-254)<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>5</sup> Seven steps are needed. And the eighth step is not needed. These six steps are the ones that were fulfilled before reaching this seventh step [...] This seventh step will not happen during the lifetime of any child of the planet, including you, reader of this story. And it is not known with certainty whether it will happen. Maybe it has happened. And if it happens, one thing will happen. This outcome is: death of the satan – satan of *mafamba*. And after the death of *mafamba*, all the planets will be moulded anew. New children of the planet will be moulded. Maybe you reader

Olali's next novel *Watu wa Gehenna* (People of Gehenna, 2012), in its "architectonics" differs from the previous one and bears much closer resemblance to the texts by Olali's peers and predecessors (such as Wamitila), since its structure is based on the same main elements – the human world (again, the world of the future – the action spans from the year 2045 to 2050) and another world, the Gehenna.

The earthly world of 2040s has practically no difference with that of the second decade of the century. Africa, in the novel shown under the name Kiafra, is suffering from never-ending misuse of power, poverty and exploitation, thus many "Kiafrans" are fleeing to the rich countries like England to be faced there with even harsher exploitation and abuse of rights. On the whole, the world of 2040s is ruled by the devil and his bonnets, who are recruited from among unscrupulous politicians and other criminals, the future population of Gehenna. Apparently, the devil's aim is to increase the amount of evil in the earthly world, with the long-term task of turning the whole of the earth's people into the dwellers of Gehenna. This aim he tries to attain by involving humans into all the possible unlawful and immoral activities; this especially is helped by establishing in the world's countries (especially these of Kiafra) the rule of the devil's accomplices, the worshippers of Satanic Code. Gehenna, to which the "converts" are transported, is situated around four big volcanoes, each bearing the name of one of the earth's (and specifically Kiafran) social ailments – Korrapzion (Corruption), Traibbolizim (Tribalism), Landdigrraba (Landgrabbing) and Burnt for rest (this one looks as extinguished, but certain activity is going on inside). The space around these volcanoes is reserved for those who in the earthly world was engaging in these vices.

However, the malicious plans of the devil and his henchmen, both earthly and unearthly ones, can be ruined by the unity and courage of the people. This is described in various episodes of the novel, one of the most notable being the chapter about the rebellion in one of Kiafran universities. The students and most of the lecturers, drawn to the end of their tether by the

will be one of these new children of the planet – but on one condition: don't you partake or have even a grain of the thought of *mafamba*./ Woe be to them who will plunge into this commotion! They will be punished by being thrown into gehenna./ I am asking you all the last question. The answer I do not want. Answer yourselves inside your own selves. This seventh step was fulfilled, will be fulfilled, is being fulfilled or has been fulfilled?

outrage of the university authorities (namely, by their decision to make the studying of the Satanic Code the compulsory part of the curriculum and to transfer instruction into the “Gehennic” language), are burning down the offices in the university and the suburbs; to justify their actions, they fluently use such “devilish” devices as Facebook and Twitter, thus successfully fighting the fiend with its own weapon. Soon, their enthusiasm causes the wave of similar rebellions around Kiafra against the evil rules in many of its countries. According to the author, this “new force of the old united with the young in [...] the fight against evil” (Olali 2012: 125) would terminate the expansion of mischief and eventually prevent the transformation of humans into the dwellers of the evil world” (Gromov 2014: 47-48).

In an interview given to *Daily Nation* newspaper, Olali confesses that “I loathed and never enjoyed what I call structured plots. Instead I wanted to read anti-structured plots. Every time I took a book to read, I would say, ‘I wish this character died twice’ or ‘Oh no, why can’t this character bleed green blood instead of red’” (Olali 2014). Generally, he defines his creative method as “hallucinatory realism, which has some connections to the concept of magical realism” (ibidem). It seems that in this novel his method in fact stands much closer to the latter, because all throughout the text a reader finds well-known supernatural creatures, such as genies from the coastal folklore, acting along with the mythical figures of the authorial creation (e.g. the infernal Mzee, alias the Voice, who discloses to one of the characters the “underhand doings” of the modern world order – chapter 3), and the characters representing various groups and strata of modern African society. And it is among these latter characters that the author tries to find his ideal figures: despite the author’s dislike towards “structured plots”, a closer look at the (in fact quite entangled and “unstructured”) vicissitudes of the story reveals that it, again, is based on the quest motif – namely, the quest for humaneness, which is performed by the characters of the youth – a serious, modest and self-sacrificing girl Siyawezi, her brother Baingana, student leader Hikmat, emigrant Faki and layman Yunasi. Olali’s hope for the younger generation is obvious – all the above mentioned characters are young people. Thus, no matter how “hallucinatory” the author’s method may be claimed, it finally appears to perform a rather definite task – to paint a frightening dystopian picture of the not-so-distant future of the human race, and specifically Africa (which is supported by the motif of dream-reality, repeatedly mentioned in the text), and to give a hint of how this future could possibly be avoided. It is

also notable, that among the recipes for salvation Olali assigns a considerable role to religion; Siyawezi, a Muslim, in her quest for humaneness calls upon her Christian compatriots for the observation of Christian virtues (chapter 16); the story of Yunasi and his wife in chapter 17 also highlights religion as one of the possible means of fighting Gehenna and its influence.

Olali's latest-to-date novel *Mashetani ya Alepo* (Devils of Alepo, 2015) contains not only direct references to his previous books (*Mafamba* and *Watu wa Gehenna* are mentioned several times in the text), but also rather straightforward allusions to the reality which the author portrays in the novel in a much thinner disguise compared even to his previous books. The country of Alepo, where the action of the novel is set, strikingly resembles Kenya – not only the outskirts of Alepo's capital are called Mlolongo and Kitengela (which are the real names of Nairobi's outskirts), but even the country's motto – “vision 3020” – closely resembles the current Kenyan “vision 2030”. Most of the apocalyptic events described in the novel take place during this year:

*Ni mwaka wa 3020. Ni mwaka ambao ulishuhudia siku mbaya kuwa binadamu. [...] Mwaka ambao unatarajiwa maendeleo yote nchini Alepo yatakuwa yamekamiliika. Wengine wanasema vision 3020. Mwaka huo wa 3020 umefika. Ni sasa. Kila mtu alijiona ni alwatani na kubinganya starehe na kazi.* (Olali 2015: 10)<sup>6</sup>

The quest motif, which lies as the backbone of the most of the “new” novels, is also presented in Olali's latest book, in whose first part the quest for the blood of their compatriots, performed by the youth militia called “*sisimizi*” (ants) and their leader Megido (they are seeking to exterminate the village of their rival tribe of Wamaya – and succeed in this) turns the future life of the people of Alepo into a quest for their lives. People involved in inter-tribal wars – both the victims and the perpetrators – through the interference of mysterious virus are turned into the zombie-like “living dead” (*wafu*), who attack the remaining humans, eating their flesh, until the very existence of the country of Alepo comes at stake.

<sup>6</sup> It is the year of 3020. The year that witnessed the bad day for being a human. [...] The year when it is expected that all the advancement in the country of Alepo will be complete. Some say [it is] *vision 3020*. This year of 3020 arrived. It is now. Everyone was seeing himself as a patriot and expecting comfort and work.

The lamentable state in which the country of Alepo eventually finds itself is caused by same types of *mafamba* – corruption and tribal wars. These are perpetuated by *mashetani* (the devils), hireling state officials and businessman of Alepo, incited by their foreign masters – “people of X-ray” (*watu wa eksirei*), another symbolic representation of the world’s imperialist powers. In fact, “people of X-ray” are preparing for the rest of the world an even more dreadful future, which one of the novel’s characters sees in his dream (again, the motif of dream-reality is recurrent in the novel) – in that future, humans will be used by “people of X-ray” literally as a raw material, their life substances being extracted from their bodies by a conveyer-like device, after which their eviscerated bodies are utilized as garbage. “People of X-ray” are also responsible for the creation of the deadly virus, which transforms the people of Alepo into “living dead.”

The motif of divine (supernatural) punishment, unobvious in Olali’s previous novels, in this book becomes a leading one – the whole apocalypse of *wafu* appears to be designed by an ancient African god named Obong’o Nyakalaga (the name apparently “appropriated” from the oral tradition of Western Kenya – see, e.g. *The Strange Bride* by Grace Ogot). Obong’o Nyakalaga does not spare neither the vicious nor the righteous – everyone in this or that way is guilty of the decline of the country of Alepo from “the land once blessed in every way – by milk and honey” (*nchi iliyobarikiwa kwa kila namna – asali na maziwa*, Olali 2015: 9) into a place deserted by *mafamba* – corruption and tribalism.

Another notable trait of the novel is its stylistic palette – which is the combination of features characteristic for various textual styles. For example, the first part of the novel – the march of Megido’s “*sisimizi*” across the magic forest to the village of the Wamaya – is quite reminiscent of oral tradition, with folktales as embedded narratives (e.g. the tale of frogs and lizards, 2015: 55-60), animals (cobra, crocodile, owls) used as bad omens (sent by Obong’o Nyakalaga), the god himself being present as a mysterious voice. The middle part of the book, telling about the infernal future built by the “people of X-ray” – the conveyer consuming humans – looks like a “sci-fi” dystopia (again, reminding, among others, of Huxley and Zamyatin), whereas the final part of the book, telling about the advent of *wafu* over the country’s capital, reads like a popular *zombie* novel (or, again using a different art analogy, as a low-budget horror movie – which effect is enhanced by the fact that the author’s descriptions of fights between *wafu* and humans are very “cinematographic”). Such mixture of styles is also a characteristic

feature of “new” Swahili novel, but Olali seems to elevate it onto a new level, stressing with the help of it the phantasmagoric reality of Alepo – so closely and lamentably resembling the reality of his native land.

With all the innovations and inventive interpretations found in the novel, it appears that the author strives to perform the task more or less related to his previous books: to draw an apocalyptic picture of the future in order to issue a serious exhortation to the reader – even the worst nightmare can become a reality, unless something is done about that. In the final paragraph of the novel, the author warns the reader straightforwardly – “Important thing is that, all these things were done, are done and will be done. Dream or no dream. Dream is alive!” (*Muhimu ni kuwa, mambo haya yote yalifanyika, yanafanyika na yatafanyika. Njozi ama si njozi. Njozi ina uhai!* – Olali 2015: 275).

### Clara Momanyi: feminism “unbound”

Clara Momanyi,<sup>7</sup> a prominent scholar and teacher of Swahili, started her career as a novel writer with *Tumaini* (Hope, also the name of the main character, 2006). According to Bertoncini Zúbková et al. (2009: 68):

*Tumaini* is a beautifully narrated and lyrical *Erziehungsroman* that centres on a young girl, Tumaini; her father, Mzee Masumbuko, wants her married off while still at primary school rather than seeing her continue with her education. Her mother, Bi. Amina, seems resigned to the patriarchal ethos symbolized by her irrational and selfish husband. Tumaini, however, does not want to give in to her father’s wishes. She runs away from home to her aunt’s place. Her aunt, Bi. Halima [...], has devoted her life to agitating for change and to liberating young girls from the shackles of tradition and demeaning rites like female circumcision. This puts her on a collision course with Masumbuko, a man who is prepared to do anything to satisfy his egoistic desires. Bi. Halima and her husband are however determined to support young Tumaini in her education. Tumaini excels in her primary education and wins a government scholarship, despite

<sup>7</sup> Kenyan novelist, short story writer, poet and scholar, born 1953 in the Taita area of Coastal Kenya. Obtained her PhD in Kenyatta University in 1998, currently is the head of the Department of Kiswahili at the Catholic University of East Africa in Nairobi. Has published two novels, *Tumaini* (2006) and *Nakuruto* (2009), a children’s book, *Siku ya wajinga* (2005) and authored several short stories, published in different collections. Has written a book on riddles, *Tamathali katika vitendawili* (2004), as well as a biographical reader on Ronald Ngala.

attempts by her father and the vengeful Chief Andrea to deny her the award. Chief Andrea's wish for revenge stems from the time when Tumaini, briefly employed by him as a house-help, rejected his lecherous advances; also, during the same period, the Chief's son, Majuto, a miscreant and a delinquent, attempted to rape Tumaini. His father initially succeeds in saving him from arrest, but Majuto is eventually charged. Chief Andrea has been entrusted with the task of compiling a list of needy children in his area, which he tries to manipulate. Tumaini courageously confronts the vetting board headed by the District Commissioner, who overturns Chief Andrea's short list. The story ends with Tumaini going to university to pursue a medical degree, as does her friend, Sifa. This novel is set in the coastal area of Kenya and is narrated in lyrical prose rich in compelling figurative language and powerfully evocative realism. Notable features of the narrative are its sometimes emotive prose and pointed symbolism, both serving to advance the strong feminist ethos.

As could be seen even from this brief narration of the plot, female empowerment surely stands out as the central theme of the novel. Two central characters – Tumaini and her aunt Halima – stand as two equally powerful embodiments of feministic ideas of the novel. They in fact epitomise two generations of feminists, and thus, despite their difference in age and life experience, hold very similar views on the issues related to the rearing and the future of a girl child, and women's choices and perspectives. This is how Bi Halima formulates her vision of Tumaini's life:

*Mama mdogo wake alimshika kwa bega na kumwambia, "Nafahamu una wasiwasi mwingi kuhusu hatua atakayochukua babako. Nataka kukujulisha kuwa hapa ni kwenu pia. Utaishi na kusoma ukiwa hapa. Hutalazimishwa kutahiriwa wala kuolewa ukiwa hapa. Mimi na babako mdogo tuliyazungumza haya hapo awali. Tuliifikiana kuwa endapo babako atakufukuza nyumbani kutokana na msimamo wako, utakaa hapa nasi. Tutakusomesha kama tulivyomsomesha binti yetu Riziki, na hutapungkiwa na chochote hapa. Mimi mamako mdogo nakuhakikishia haya, kwa hivyo usihofu vitisho vya babako."* (Momanyi 2006: 30)<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Her aunt held her by the shoulder and told her, "I know you have a lot of worries about the steps that your father took. I would like to inform you that here [with us] is your place as well. You will study while you are here. You will not be forced to get circumcised or married while you are here. Me and your uncle have already discussed this before. We agreed that if your father expels you from home because of your stand, you will stay here with us. We will

The views of Bi Halima, who at one point was even the member of the delegation of Kenyan women to international women's congress in Beijing, all throughout the novel are echoed by her niece Tumaini. Tumaini, for example, tries to inspire her fellow female students, among them her more conformist classmates:

*Tumaini aliwatazama wenziwe na bila kuwaficha, alitamka, "Mwajua babangu mdogo aliniambia kuwa wanafunzi wa kike kama kawaida hawapendi masomo ya sayansi. Lakini akaniambia pia kuwa sio ati hawawezi kufaulu, bali wanaamini tu kwamba hawatafaulu kabisa. Hivi ndivyo nyinyi sasa mnavyodhania. Mkiamini kuwa masomo haya ni ya wavulana peke yao, ndivyo itakavyokuwa. Lakini mkiamini kwa dhiti kuwa sayansi siyo masomo yaliyotengwa wavulana pekee, bila shaka mtafaulu. Hivi ndivyo ninavyoamini."* (Momanyi 2006: 24)<sup>9</sup>

As also could be seen from the passage above, the male characters of the novel are supported in their feministic stand by their male counterparts – Halima by her husband, Tumaini's uncle Shabani, and Tumaini herself by her classmate Sifa. However, when Sifa after their school graduation comes to woo Tumaini, she also straightforwardly (with English insertions, as she is an educated girl!) declares her views on marriage:

*"No, Sifa, I am sorry. Tuzidi kuwa marafiki kama kawaida, lakini kwangu mimi ndoa si mwisho wa kila kitu. [...] Mimi nataka muda zaidi ili nijijue mimi ni nani, na uwezo wangu maishani ni upi. Sipendi kuwategemea watu wengine waniamulie hatima zangu. I want to shape my own destiny."* (Momanyi 2006: 136)<sup>10</sup>

educate you, as we are educating our daughter Riziki, and you will not be denied anything here. I, your aunt, am assuring you of this, so do not fear threats of your father."

<sup>9</sup> Tumaini looked at her friends and without concealing, told them: "You know my uncle told me that female students usually do not like lessons of science. But he also told me that it is not as if they can not succeed, only they believe that they will not succeed no matter what. This is exactly what you think. If you believe that these lessons are for boys only, it will be so. But if you believe sincerely that sciences are not reserved only for boys, no doubt you will succeed. That is what I believe in."

<sup>10</sup> "No, Sifa, I am sorry. Let us remain friends as usual, but for me marriage is not the end of everything. [...] I want more time so as I know who am I, and what is my ability in life. I do not like other people to make conclusions for me. I want to shape my own destiny."



In the novel's last chapter, Tumaini has a dream, in which she is climbing a big mountain, on whose top there is a forest full of trees with fruits. There are two groups of people at the mountain's bottom, one group encourages her, other sends her curses. In the end, she makes it to the top.

*Alifahamu kuwa katika kujenga, wabomoaji hutokea. Wabomoaji hao huwa wengi zaidi iwapo ni mwanamke anayejitahidi kujenga. [...] Alikata shauri kuwa watu kama hao kamwe hangewaruhusu kumtia shemere ili wampelke kule wakutakako. Hangewaruhusu kumwendea maisha yake. Yeye mwenyewe ndiye angekuwa nahodha wa dau la maisha yake. (Momanyi 2006: 157-158)<sup>11</sup>*

Clara Momanyi's second novel *Nakuruto* (2009) may be labeled as the first female contribution to the realm of the so-called "new novel" in Swahili. As mentioned above, many novels of this type follow the quest structure, and *Nakuruto* is not an exception. The female heroine Nakuruto, assisted by mysterious powers (and herself possessing magical abilities), is sent through the history of Africa from the pre-historic to pre-colonial and then – to colonial and post-colonial times. Nakuruto declares that her aim is "to search for the lost way" (*kuisaka njia iliyopotea*) (Momanyi 2009: 11) and "to change things which are not pertinent to human nature" (*kubadilisha mambo yasiyotaalaki utu wa binadamu*) (31). But if for that purpose in the pre-colonial days she has to deal with the destructive forces of nature (she saves the people of the village that accommodated her from the impending flood), then in colonial time she has to lead the people's rebellion against the invaders, who in the novel are called Wanguzu (anagram of *Wazungu*). Nakuruto's desire to liberate people is strengthened by the atrocious deeds that the Wanguzu commit against the indigenous inhabitants of her land. Nakuruto leads people to victory, Wanguzu are forced away – but after the victory it proves that the riches that they were using, and which belong to the people, are now appropriated by the former henchmen of the colonizers. These new rulers use their freshly acquired powers to grab

<sup>11</sup> She knew that while building, destroyers come. These destroyers usually are even more if it is a woman who endeavours to build. [...] She decided that she would never allow people like these to subdue her so that they bring her where they want. She would never allow them to lead her life. She herself would be the captain of her life's ship.

people's lands, close schools and burn churches that impede their self-enriching exertion.

Equally transparent is the author's allegory of neo-colonialism – the people, especially those who were supporting the Wanguzu in colonial days, are poisoned by the wax that Wanguzu had, but took with them, leaving only its scent – and even this allows them now to dictate their terms to the people of formerly colonized lands, because the scent makes them addicted. This wax is the symbol of advanced technology and higher living standards, which the neo-colonizers only allow the Africans “to smell”. Understanding the necessity of the wax itself for the decent living, people of the country of Maboni (a symbolic name for Africa) decide to build a high stairway, which will allow them to reach the wax; but even at the initial stage the building is complicated by discordances and theft; moreover, the building is supervised by the specialists from the land of Wanguzu and their leader nicknamed Quick Buck. In the end, those are the women (especially the young ones) who manage to mobilize the people of Maboni to continue the construction against all odds; Nakuruto expresses her hope that these women will manage to help the people to find their lost ways.

The central woman character of Nakuruto, along with other female characters who support Nakuruto in her commitment to improve people's lives, again are used by the author to vocalize her concepts of woman's stand and perspective in the new society. When the people of Maboni, after repeated attempts, fail to reach the concord about the building, Nakuruto calls upon the younger generation to join and head the process; her keenest supporter is the young woman called Maridhia, whose mother Nakuruto met in her previous journeys in time – she was the only woman in the village to take seriously Nakuruto's flood warning, which later led to the salvation of many people.

*Katika umayamaya ule, [Nakuruto] aliweza kumwona msichana mmoja aliyekuwa akiongea kwa ukakamavu mkubwa. Msichana huyo alimshangaza kutokana na jinsi alivyokuwa akiwatolea wenziwe kauli zilizonata masikio yao, wakabaki wakimsikiliza kwa tuo. [...]*

*“Ni kweli, jamii ya Quick Buck hujali maslahi yao tu. Hata tukifaulu kuunda programu zetu wenyewe huenda wakazitupia virusi. Kwanza hawatakubali sisi tumliki nta au hata tutengeneze yetu wenyewe. Hata tukajiundia kingavirusi, watahakikisha wameharibu programu hizo au hata kutoweza nyenzo za kuufikia wavu wa mawasiliano,” Maridhia akadokeza akiwa mwenye wasiwasi. [...] “Tutumie ujuzi wetu kwa kujiheshimu ili kuuvinjari wavu wa Quick Buck. Kwa njia hii, tutaijua siri*

*iliyofundikwa kwenye utando huo wa nta. Tusikubali kuamini kuwa sisi wenyewe hatuna wataalamu wa kutuongoza au kuamini kuwa kilicho kizuri lazima kitoke kwa akina Quick Buck.*

*"Taib. Hapo umenena," Nakuruto alikubaliana naye.*

*Wakati wote huu, Nakuruto alikuwa anatazama Maridhia na kushangaza na alama ya kuzaliwa aliyoona shavuni mwake.*

*[...] "Ama kweli, maisha ni mduara wa kushangaza," alitamka kimya maneno haya. Mwishowe, alimwita Maridhia pembeni na kumuuliza,*

*"Unaitwa Maridhia ama sivyo?"*

*"Naam, ndivyo", Maridhia alimjibu.*

*"Mama yako anaitwa nani"*

*"Anaitwa Nash," Maridhia alimfahamisha. (Momanyi 2009: 143-145)<sup>12</sup>*

Intelligence and fighting spirit run through generations – that assumption appears to be illustrated by the above episode. Moreover, the intelligence of her mother and other ancestors will help Maridhia – and Nakuruto, and other women – to head successfully their people's struggle for a new and better life, against Quick Buck and his local henchmen.

## Conclusion

As could be seen from the above, three authors selected for this study depict in their writings some of the most topical and burning problems of contemporary Kenyan society – however doing it in a tangibly different manner. Of

<sup>12</sup> In that crowd, [Nakuruto] was able to see one girl who was speaking with great determination. This girl amazed her by the way she was giving to her friends opinions that stuck to their ears, they were listening to her silently. [...] "It is true, the community of Quick Buck care about their own interests only. Even if we succeed in creating our own programs, they throw viruses into them. First, they will not agree if we own the wax, or even create that of our own. Even if we create virus protection, they will make sure to have ruined these programs or even the applications for accessing the communication networks," Maridhia refrained worriedly. [...] "Let us use our skills for self-respect, so that we scout the nets of Quick Buck. This way, we will know the secret of this web of wax. We shall not agree to believe that we ourselves do not have experts to guide us, or that everything which is best shall come from the kin of Quick Buck."/ "Right. You have said," Nakuruto agreed with her./ All this time, Nakuruto was watching Maridhia and getting surprised at the birthmark on her cheek. [...] "Or is the life really a surprising circle," she said silently. In the end, she called Maridhia aside and asked,/ "Your name is Maridhia, or not?"/ "Yes, this is so," Maridhia answered./ "How is your mother called?"/ "She is called Nash," Maridhia informed her.

the three, John Habwe appears to stand the closest to conventional social criticism – he addresses the societal issues in a straightforward way, gives realistic depiction of social ailments and their consequences, indicates the reasons and, increasing the level of plausibility, puts the events into familiar geographical and cultural settings of Kenya and other countries, such as Nairobi and Western Kenya in *Pamba* and coastal Kenya and Dubai in *Pendo la karaha*. At the same time, he tries to propose possible solutions to these problems in a markedly “Enlightenment-style” fashion – through positive examples and moralistic sententia.

Unlike Habwe, Tom Olali in his novels creates phantasmagorical allegoric pictures of the unspecified future – but, in full compliance with his self-labeled “hallucinatory realism”, these fantastic pictures actually serve as a rather feeble disguise – or, rather, method of depiction – of the very recognisable problems of modern societies, first of all those of Africa. Presenting the urgent social issues in a camouflage of “intellectual puzzle”, Olali apparently intends to stimulate the imagination of his audience, so as they may comprehend better the world-wide scope and importance of these issues. In other words, Olali seems to successfully use the method of “estrangement” in a way characteristic of the “new” Swahili novel, the trend which owes its current development to Olali’s works.

Clara Momanyi, addressing in her novels one of the most urgent issues of modern Kenyan society – the gender parity and emancipation of women, demonstrates the commendable variety of approaches: from traditional critical realism in *Tumaini* to obvious inclination towards the methods of “new” novel in *Nakuruto*. This allows her to view the discussed problems from different angles and on varied scales – from a small coastal village in *Tumaini*, where the issues under consideration are presented as a “case study” of a family under transition, to large-scale allegorical plans in *Nakuruto*, where the gender-related problems are embedded into a wider context of historical development and the future of African continent.

With all these tangible differences in their creative approaches and artistic methods, the three writers, representing some of the main trends in modern Kenyan Swahili novel – critical realism, “new” novel and women’s literature – appear to follow one and the same main task: to depict, in the way each of them considers the most convincing, topical and urgent problems of modern Kenya, Africa and the whole wide world, and even to hint at possible solutions – thus adding up to elaborate and complicated mosaics of the social dimensions of Kenyan Swahili novel of the recent decades.

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**STUDI ANALITICI SUL ROMANZO SWAHILI**  
**ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS INTO THE SWAHILI NOVEL**



## “KIPIMO CHA MIZANI”

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Katika kitabu chake *Vamps and Victims, Women in modern Swahili literature* (1996) Bi Elena Bertoncini Zúbková amechambua na kueleza nafasi na hali ya wanawake katika riwaya za siku hizi za Kiswahili. Riwaya zote alizozichambua zilikuwa zimeandikwa na wanaume tu. Utangulizi wa kitabu chake umetoa udhuru wa kuwepo kwa waandishi wanawake wachache tu ambao hawashughulikii matatizo ya wanawake na juu ya hayo ameeleza kutokuwepo fasihi ya kifeministi (kinisai) kwa Kiswahili.

Naye Alamin Mazrui katika *Swahili Beyond the Boundaries: Literature, Language, and Identity* (2007) vile vile ameonesha kuwa wako waandishi wanawake wachache tu kati ya waandishi wa fasihi ya Kiswahili ya siku hizi ingawa nao walikuwa wa kwanza kwa kuhifadhi fasihi simulizi yaani wao ndio ni watungaji na wahifadhi wa nyimbo na tenzi na mashairi. Hata hivyo ameeleza Bi Zainab W. Burhani [Zainab B. Abdul Wahab] ndie mwandishi mwanamke pekee anayejaza hilo “pengo la kijinsia” katika fasihi-andishi ya Kiswahili.

Makala yetu yanachambua kitabu *Kipimo cha Mizani* (2004) cha Bi Zainab Burhani kwa kutumia vipimo vya matumizi ya lugha alivyotumia Bi Elena Bertoncini Zúbková katika *Vamps and Victims* pamoja na vipimo vya kijamii, kama vile migogoro ya jinsia, vizazi, mila na utamaduni, na jamii kwa jumla inavyojitokeza kutoka katika sura na hali za wahusika wanawake katika *Kipimo cha Mizani*.

### **Mwandishi**

Kitabu *Kipimo cha Mizani* kimeandikwa na Bi Zainab W. Burhani na kuchapishwa mwaka 2004 na Sasa Sema Publications ambayo ni chapa ya Longhorn Publishers huko Nairobi, Kampala na Dar es Salaam. Kitabu chenyewe kina sura nane na kurasa 234.



Vitabu vingine viliandikwa na Bi Zainab kwa kutumia majina yake ta-fauti kidogo, kama vile: Z. B. Abdul-Wahab, *Ulimbo* (1976); Z. Burhani, *Mali ya maskini* (1981); Zainab B. A. Wahab, *Kikulacho* (1985); na Z. Burhani, *Mwisho wa kosa* (1987).

Vilevile Bi Zainab ameandika hadithi fupi jina lake *Sina Rafiki* kilichotoka 1977 katika mkusanyiko *Kinywa jumba la maneno* (Bertoncini Zúbková 1989: 67; Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: 235, 238).

Kutokana na Bertoncini Zúbková 2009: 235/238 Bi Zainab Burhani amezaliwa Zanzibar mwaka 1937 na kusoma digrii ya kwanza huko Chuo Kikuu cha Khartoum kabla ya kupata stashahada ya Elimu huko Chuo Kikuu cha London. Pia akasoma Kifaransa huko Sorbonne, Paris, na baadaye kusomesha Chuo Kikuu cha Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Halafu aliishi Arabuni, UAE, na kwa sasa yuko Moroni, Ngazija.

Wahakiki wawili wa maandishi ya kifasihi, Elena Bertoncini na Said Ahmed M. Khamis wametoa maoni yao kuhusu maandishi ya Zainab Burhani. Bertoncini akihakiki *Ulimbo* (1975) na hadithi fupi katika *Kinywa jumba la maneno* (1977) aliandika: “Ingawa hadithi zimeandikwa kwa lugha ya kuvutia zimeingia doa kwa vile mwandishi alitegemea filamu za Kimarekani za hali ya chini na riwaya rahisi.”<sup>1</sup>

Naye Khamis katika Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009 akiandika kuhusu *Kipimo cha Mizani* kaeleza maoni yake yafuatayo: “Riwaya mpya ya Burhani ina sifa zote za ‘hadithi zake za kisisimua’ alizowahi kuandika kabla zinazoelimisha na kujenga maadili, nayo ina muundo wa riwaya uliobuniwa vizuri na wenye mfululizo wa matukio ulio na kasi.”<sup>2</sup>

### ***Kipimo cha Mizani* - Mukhtasari wa kisa**

#### *Wahusika wakuu*

Halima - mshiriki mkuu; Amini - mumewe Halima; Umari - ndugu yake Amini; Mariyamu - mkewe Umari; Selemani - rafiki yake Amini;

<sup>1</sup> Though written in colourful language, the stories are vitiated by the author’s reliance on third-rate American movies and paperback novels (Bertoncini Zúbková 1989: 67; tafsiri zote ni zetu).

<sup>2</sup> Burhani’s new novel retains all the characteristic features of her previous ‘edifying thrillers’, such as lively characterizations and a well-constructed, fast-paced plot (Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: 170).

Bi Riziki - jirani wa Halima; Mzee Hasani - rafiki wa ukoo wa Amini; Ali, Uledi na Baraka - watoto wa Halima na Amini; Salama - muuguzi hospitali aliyolazwa Halima; Dk Isa - rafiki wa Salama; Dk Juma - mkuu wa hospitali; Bakari - muuza duka; Bi Rehema - mhisani wa Bakari

### *Hadithi yenyewe*

Halima aliishi na mumewe Amini na watoto wao watatu kwa mapenzi na furaha. Ghafla Amini alipatwa na ajali akafariki. Umari, ndugu yake Amini, na mkewe Mariyam wamejaa uchu wa mali. Waliogopa kama, ikiwa Halima ataolewa tena, mali aliyoacha Amini yatapotea. Mariyam aliweza kumshawishi mumewe Umari wamnyang'anye Halima watoto na mali naye Halima wantie katika hospitali ya wagonjwa wa akili. Walifanikiwa kumhonga Daktari Juma kutekeleza uovu wao. Basi Halima alichukuliwa kwa nguvu na kufungwa hospitali. Watoto walinyanyaswa na Mariyam na walikuwa katika dhiki kubwa.

Tangu alipofika hospitali Halima alifungwa na Daktari Juma. Hakutibiwa wala hapakuwa na habari zozote kuhusu maradhi yake. Halima alipoteza kumbukumbu zake na hawezi kusema. Muuguzi Salama alianza kumshughulikia na kujaribu kutambua kwa nini Halima hasemi. Salama hakujua jina lake wala maradhi yake na Daktari Juma alimwambia asiingiliane na kadhia hiyo. Daktari Isa, rafiki yake Salama, anampa shauri vipi aweze kumsaidia Halima kumbukumbu zake zirudi. Baada ya Salama kugombana na Daktari Juma alishinda kesi nao Salama na Halima wakahamishwa na kwenda kwenye hospitali mpya ambapo Halima anaanza kupata nafuu kwa vile kumbukumbu zake zilianza kurudi.

Mariyam hakuwatesa tu watoto bali alifaulu pia kumshawishi mumewe wachukue mali yote ya Amini. Watoto walidhulumiwa nyumbani kwa Umari na Mariyam kisha wakafukuzwa na Mariyam. Walisaidiwa na mwenye duka Bakari ambaye Ali baada ya kutoroka alikuwa amekutana naye kabla kwa bahati tu. Bakari aliwapeleka kwa Bi Rehema ambaye alikuwa ni mhisani wake. Watoto hawakujua mama yao alipo.

Selemani, rafiki yake Amini, alimwajiri askari mstaafu Sefu kutafuta habari ya Halima. Kwa msaada wa Mzee Hasani na Bi Riziki walipata kutambua Halima alipo. Huko hospitali mpya Halima alianza kutembelewa na

Bi Riziki. Hali ya Halima ilianza kutengenea na akatolewa hospitali. Alisindikizwa na Bi Rizika na Salama na kwenda nyumbani kwa Bi Rehema na kuungana na watoto wake.

Mwishowe aliolewa na Selemani na kuhamia kwake pamoja na watoto. Umari na Mariyamu walisamehewa na kupewa nyumba waliyokuwa waki-kaa Amini na Halima kabla Amini hajafariki.

### **Uchambuzi wa wanawake wahusika**

Halima katika kisa hiki ndiye aliyedhulumiwa, hata hivyo haina maana kwamba hakuwa na sauti katika ndoa yake na kuonewa tu. Kabla yake alikuwa mshauri mkuu wa mumewe katika kazi na biashara zake zote. Mara zote Amini alimsikiliza mkewe na kufanya vile alivyomshauri. Katika kitabu Halima si mwathirika bila sauti (*as a character not a speechless VICTIM*).

Bi Riziki ambaye aliishi peke yake pamoja na mtoto wake Rajabu aliyekuwa mgonjwa kidogo alikuwa mwanamke mwenye nguvu nyingi za kuweza kuendesha maisha yake katika dhiki kubwa. Pia alikuwa mwema sana na msaidizi wa Halima katika dhiki zake zote.

Mariyamu ambaye alikuwa na kazi na gari yake mwenyewe hukotosheka kabisa kwa kile alichokuwa nacho. Wakati wote aliendelea kumshawishi mumewe Umari kupata mali zaidi, naye alifanikiwa kumwathiri mumewe kwa kiasi kwamba alifanya yote aliyoyataka mkewe.

Salama ambaye alikuwa nasi mdogo na ndiyo kwanza alianza kazi, hata hivyo hakukubali kuonewa na daktari Juma. Alifanya jitihada kuu kumsaidia Halima, kinyume na amri za mkuu wake. Hata mwishowe alifanikiwa kumshtaki daktari Juma.

Bi Rehema aliyekuwa mjane na kuendesha pekee maisha yake ya biashara na ya binafsi, alikuwa mwema kupita kiasi na kuwalea watoto. Alimpokea Halima na wanawe nyumbani kwake.

Tukiwatizama hao wanawake watano walioshiriki katika kisa cha *Kipimo cha Mizani* tunaweza kuona kwamba walikuwa wanawake waliokuwa na athari kubwa katika maisha yao na ya wale waliokuwa karibu nao. Hata Halima ambaye kwa kiasi kikubwa alionewa na Mariyamu alipofiwa na mumewe, alikuwa msaidizi na mshauri mkuu wa mumewe.

Katika kisa hiki ni dhahiri kwamba wanawake wahusika wote wana nafasi muhimu katika jamii yao na hapana hata mmoja anayekubali kukandamizwa au kuonewa na mwanamme.

Ingawa katika hadithi yenyewe Halima ni mwathirika wa uovu wa Umari na Mariyam, siye mwathirika wa hali yake ya kuwa mwanamke, yaani ya kijinsia. Kwa upande mwingine si uovu wa Umari tu, ulivyoelezwa na Mikhail D. Gromov katika muhtasari wa kisa katika toleo jipya la *Outline of Swahili Literature* (Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: 352), bali ndiye mkewe Mariyam anayemshawishi mumewe kumnyang'anya Halima watoto wake na mali yote. Hata kabla hajafariki Amini, Mariyam alikuwa akijaribu mumewe Umari adai mali (sehemu ya nyumba, shamba na duka) alioacha baba yao Amini na Umari.

Vile vile tunakubaliana na mtizamo wa Mavisi Rose (2007: 103) aliyeandika katika tasnifu yake: “[Burhani] Amewasawiri wanawake walio na uwezo wa kujitegemea, kikazi na hata kupitia biashara ndogo ndogo”, ingawa anatustaajabisha akiandika kabla (Rose 2007: 102) kuwa “Burhani anajitokeza na vizazi tofauti vya wanawake. Kile kichanga kina shime ya kupambana ili waweze kujikomboa na kupata haki zao. Kwa upande mwingine kizazi kikongwe kimekubali hali ilivyo. Wameichukulia hali hii kuwa ni majaaliwa. Asasi kama dini na ndoa zinapulizia sumu hii.” Kwa hakika tunajiuliza wapi katika kitabu amepata uthibitisho wowote kwa tamko hilo.

Kuna mhakiki mwingine aliyechambua *Kipimo cha Mizani* kutokana na vipengele vya migogoro ya kijinsia na hasa migogoro ya vizazi. Alivyoandika Magdaline Wafula katika tasnifu yake:

Juu ya hayo ukidhaniwa muktadha wa kidume ambao *Kipimo cha Mizani* kimewekwa, mtu anaweza kusema kama kwamba, mgogoro huu baina ya vizazi unaendelea kwa kuongeza mapambano ya mamlaka kati ya wahusika wa kiume na wa kike. Katika mgogoro huu maalum yanajitokeza chini chini mapambano ya kijinsia yaliyofichika katika matakwa ya heshima kwa mamlaka.<sup>3</sup>

Kwa hakika mgogoro mkuu ulio dhahiri katika *Kipimo cha Mizani* ni mgogoro wa cheo na vipi hicho cheo na uwezo wake unavyotumiwa na

<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, taking into account the patriarchal context in which *Kipimo cha Mizani* is situated, it can be argued that this inter-generational conflict goes further to reinforce a power struggle between the male and female characters. Subtle undercurrents of gender power struggles disguised in the demand for respect of authority can be inferred in this particular conflict (Wafula 2013: 110).

Daktari Juma, Umari na Mariyamu kwa jinsi ya ufisadi kwa ajili ya kutajirika. Wahusika wanawake walivyotokea kutoka katika riwaya hii hawapigani na udume wa wanaume wala mila na desturi ya kizazi kikongwe, bali wanapambana na uwezo wa cheo pamoja na rushwa na ufisadi.

### Mtindo wa mwandishi

Bi Elena Bertoncini Zúbková katika kazi zake nyingi alikusudia kuchambua mitindo ya uandishi wa riwaya za siku hizi za Kiswahili kwa kutumia vipimo vya umbuji wake maana ufasaha na uzuri wa uandikaji wenyewe: “[...] nimekusudia hasa kushughulikia umbuji wa mitindo iliyotumiwa katika vitabu husika.”<sup>4</sup>

Katika kitabu chake cha *Vamps and Victims* (1996: 149-171), ambacho kinawalenga wanafunzi, amekusanya mitindo mbalimbali katika matini 18 ya kifasihi ya waandishi kumi kutokana na vipimo kama 25 hivi. Baada ya kutoa picha kwa jumla ya sifa na mtindo wa uandikaji wa mwandishi, ameorodhesha mifano ya vipimo hivyo kutoka katika maandishi ya huyo mwandishi. Kwa njia hii msomaji anapewa nafasi kulinganisha kazi za waandishi hao kumi.

Vipimo hivyo alivyotumia kwa kupimia mtindo wa uandikaji au mwandishi fulani, vinatafautiana kwa vile vingine vinatokana na ta-thmini ya Bertoncini Zúbková mwenyewe, kama vile “maneno yasiyo ya kawaida” (*uncommon words*), “lugha ya kuvutia” (*colourful speech*) au “tafsiri ya kifasihi” (*literary translation*).

Vipimo kadhaa tumeviorodhesha hapa chini pamoja na mifano yake inavyotokea katika *Kipimo cha Mizani*. Hatukuorodhesha mifano ya vipimo vyote alivyotumia Elena Bertoncini Zúbková maana vingine havi-ukotokea, wala mifano yote ya kipimo fulani tuliyoikuta.

Tumejaribu kutafsiri kwa Kiswahili kila istilahi ya Kiingereza aliyo-tumia Bertoncini Zúbková, lakini mara nyengine hatukufanikiwa. Istilahi za Kiingereza alizotumia Bertoncini Zúbková tumeziweka kati kati ya alama za mabano. Kila mfano unatoka moja kwa moja kutoka katika matini yenyewe na unafuatwa na nambari ya ukurasa.

<sup>4</sup> [...] one of my main concerns has been with the stylistic qualities of the titles discussed (Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: vii).

## KIUNGUJA (ZANZIBARI FEATURES)

Kwa jumla Kiswahili anachoandika Zainab Burhani.

### *Msamiati*

- siku ya Ijumatanu (18) tarishi (36)
- [Halima] rangi yake ya maji ya kunde (58)
- [nywele] zile zilizoitwa “mwanaharamu wa singa” (58)

### *Sarufi*

- mwenye kustaajabu (2)
- sitosahau hata kidogo (20) lakini “sitakuwa” ipo pia (49)
- Haitokuwa shida kubwa kwake (65)
- bila ya (14, 26, 45)
- miye (57)
- simjui jina (14)

### *Lahaja nyengine*

Yako matokeo machache ya lahaja za kaskazini:

- -enda miguu tupu (71)
- Lazima mumtafute haraka! (141)

## TAHAJIA / UANDIKAJI WA MANENO (*SPELLING*)

Mara nyingi kitenzi cha “kuwa” kimeandikwa “kua”:

- Pia alikua amevaa vizuri
- Alikua akirejea mchana (63)

## MANENO YASIYO YA KAWAIDA (*UNCOMMON WORDS*)

Vipi mtu aamue neno au msamiati fulani si wa kawaida? Kwa jumla tumeamua neno ni “si la kawaida” likiwa halimo katika makamusi, kama vile Sacleux 1939, Johnson 1939, Bakhressa 1992, OXFORD 1981/2004, Kamusi ya Visawe 1998, BAKIZA 2010, Knappert 2010, Mohamed 2011 pamoja na Kamusi Kuu ya Kiswahili ya BAKITA 2015. Hata hivyo ikiwa neno fulani sisi tumehisi “si la kawaida”, ingawa linapatikana katika makamusi moja mbili, tumeliorodhesha hapa chini:

- hadharani – rangi yake ilikuwa hadharani (2);
- -enda miguu tupu (71) (badala ya: -enda miguu chini)

- senenesenene (232)
- Umari naye alijitia simanzi na kukaa tutwe bila kushiriki (80)

### MISHANGAO (*EXCLAMATIONS*)

- Hiari yako! (30, 50)
- Dunia inapita! (62)
- La, Mungu apishe mbali! (64)

### LUGHA YENYE HISIA (*EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE*)

Tumeongeza kipimo cha “uradidi” (maneno marudufu) kwa vile unatokea sana na unaongeza hisia nyingi katika lugha. Vile vile matumizi ya miundo “isiyoachanishika” (kama vile “njaa inamwuma” huongeza lugha kujieleza kwa nguvu):

- Usijitawanye namna hiyo (65)
- Na kwa hakika hilo ndilo nililolijia leo (38)
- moyo ulimdunda kwa hofu na miguu ilimtetemeka (8)
- midomo inamcheza na moyo ukimdunda kwa hasira (9)
- damu ilimchemka (9)
- huko akili yake ikimzunguka (15)
- hata chakula kilimtumbukia nyongo (61)
- miguu ilimtetemeka (76)

### URADIDI (MANENO MARUDUFU) (*REDUPLICATIONS*)

- wananyatanyatia (10)
- anapofungafunga maofisi (11)
- ukajaribu kumwuliza, na pengine huenda kidogokidogo, akaweza kukumbuka, ingawa jambo mojamoya (20)
- kidogokidogo, kipandekipande (25)
- kujinyofoanyofoa, hurandaranda, kumbabaishababaisha (25)
- zungukazunguka (26)
- kuzinyooshanyoosha nguo juu ya kamba (37)
- kuangalia magazeti na kufuatiliafuatilia! (53)
- Wakienda kimyakimya mpaka wakafika (63)
- Alikumbuka kidogokidogo (65)
- Halima alikuwa akiandikaandika (66)

**MPANGILIO WA MANENO (*MARKED/FOREGROUNDED WORD ORDER*)**

- Fikira hizo ambazo akili yake ilimletea kama picha mbele ya macho yake (65)
- Alinyamaza daktari (211)
- “Unafikiri, daktari,” aliuliza Selemani (214)

**USAMBAMBA WA KISARUFI (*SYNTACTIC AND VERBAL PARALLELISM*)**

- Alipokuwa akihangaika akienda na kurudi jikoni akipika na kutayarisha chakula (42)
- Namjua ndugu yangu. Analo analolifikiri (43)
- Mwili una sehemu na roho ina sehemu (53)
- Halima hakuwa mrefu, lakini hakuwa mfupi pia (58)

**KUNYAMBULIKA (*POLYPTOTON AND DERIVATION*)**

- aliwaza na kuwazua (33)

**TABAINI / KINYUME (*ANTITHESIS*)**

- Halima hakuwa mrefu, lakini hakuwa mfupi pia (58)
- Kwa Halima [...] wakati huu ulikuwa wa nafuu na wa shida pia (65)

**TASHBIHA (*SIMILE*)**

- huzuni ilikuwa kama pazia machoni mwake (4)
- akili wakati huo huwa kama mwanajeshi anayepewa onyo (17)
- lakini ni kama ramani (20)
- akili ya mtu ni kama hizi kompyuta (21)
- hima yake ilikuwa kama ni kengele iliyomwamsha (23)
- Ghafula alikumbuka, kama mtu aliyefunguliwa mlango, na mkururo wa picha mara hii uliendelea bila ya kusita (26)
- Alipenda kujifaharisha na kujitawanya, kama ambaye siku zote alitaka kutangaza kwa wote, “ni nani kama miye?” (57)
- (jicho alilokuwa [Mariyamu] akimwangalia) alihisi kama kisu chenye ncha kali (60)
- huwa kama ni kiamsho na akili yake huzidi kufunguka (65)
- Fikira hizo ambazo akili yake ilimletea kama picha mbele ya macho yake (65)
- maisha ni kama shule (231)

**SITIARI (*METAPHORS*)**

- akili huvuta pazia (17)
- Kila siku pazia lilifunuka na kupitisha mwangaza (24)



- kila siku pazia lilisogea (25)
- amepata kipenyeo cha kupita, katika ule ukuta alioujenga (5)
- alimwona kama mtu aliyefungika katika jengo lisilokuwa na mlango wa kutokea (7)
- usigongane pembe na nyati (10)
- mshale wa mwangaza umegusia lile tatizo lake (12)
- anasafisha uwanja ili kuokota matunda (12)
- huenda ikawa ndio ufunguo (20)
- baada ya muda akili yake ikachanganya herufi fulani na kumpa ufunguo anaoutafuta (23)
- mlango uliofunguka upenu (24)
- Kama unavyomjua, hana wizani (38)
- asikae nazo hizo pesa [...] kabla hazijapururika (52)
- pengine huenda na yeye akafanya mambo mparazo tu (52)
- ladha ya dunia (55)
- sauti ziliwapiga masikioni kama sauti za matarumbeta (60)
- Alijaribu kusaka akili yake (61)
- Hapo utajitia kamba ya roho, maana mzigo utakuwa mkubwa zaidi (65)
- ukimya wa ardhi ile (71)
- Riziki alishika hatamu na kufanya yote yaliyohitajika (77)
- alionja shubiri, lakini aliuma meno na kuimeza (200)
- siri yake aliifungia kwa kufuli nzito (201)
- hii senenesenene huenda ikalitia nanga jahazi la maisha ya mama huyu (232)

#### MBALAGHA (*HYPERBOLE*)

- furaha ya Amini haikuwa na mpaka (51)
- ilikuwa ni shida kwao kusikilizana au hata kuelewana (57)
- Amini hakupata kumsaili kwa hili wala lile (63)

#### SEMI (*IDIOMS*)

- silaha kali kwake yeye, lakini yenye ncha mbili (3)
- kuchafua matope [yaliyofunikwa na] maji yaliyotuliya (4)
- jitapia nafsi (5)
- ulimi wake uliteleza (5)
- Alijipa moyo (8)
- kumvunja moyo (9)
- alimwunga mkono mwanawe (37)
- kuingia utu uzimani (10)
- alinitia imani (15)
- uso kwa uso (16)

- amekunja uso (21)
- kumtupia jicho mwanawe (27)
- rangi yake ilitakata zaidi (29)
- Selemani naye alimeza maswali yake (45)
- Lakini lazima uwe macho! Asiye akakuondoa njiani tu (50)
- mwili nao una sehemu (53)
- mdomo uliojaa (59)
- hata chakula kilimtumbukia nyongo (61)
- moyo wake umepanuka (71)
- Hiyo ndiyo alama moja tu iliyompa moyo (79)

### MISEMO (SAYINGS)

- ahadi ni deni
- majuto huja kinyume (72)

### MITHALI (PROVERBS)

Hatukukuta hata mithali moja wala tamko lolote linalorejea kwa mithali fulani.

### MFULULIZO MARUDUFU / JOZI (*GEMINATIO* / *ENUMERATION-DOUBLET*S)

- wasifanye kazi ya puruzai au kwa dharau (54)
- ile hamu na furaha ya mkewe ilikuwa ya kuambukiza tu (56)
- Alipenda kujifaharisha na kujitawanya (57)
- ilikuwa ni shida kwao kusikilizana au hata kuelewana (57)
- Halima aliona watu wawili watatu (60)
- mara moja moja (60)
- watu waliondoka mmojammoja (61)
- [nyumba] kubwa na nzuri (61)
- baada ya kula na kupumzika (63)

### (PACHA YA) UTATU (*TRIPLETS*)

- huruma na uchangamfu na jitihada ya Salama ilimpa nguvu (23)
- Kutwa alishughulika pale dukani, akipima na kupanga na kuhesabu (51)
- Anashughulika kukosha na kupangusa na kuiangalia (baiskeli) (55)
- baada ya kukaa na kupumua, na kutuliza hasira yake...(68)
- moyo wake umepanuka kwa amani na utulivu na ukimya wa ardhi ile (71)
- mapumziko ya mwili, roho na akili (72)
- mwenye imani na huruma na wema (164)
- aliishi maisha yake ya nyumbani kwa furaha, amani na utulivu (201)

## Hitimisho

Katika kitabu chake *Kipimo cha Mizani* Bi Zainab Burhani amechanganya Kiunguja na kile Kiswahili cha kisasa kinachoitwa Kiswahili Sanifu. Mara moja moja kuna pia lahaja za kaskazini, k.v. “Lazima mumtafute haraka!” (2004: 141). Kufuatana na mifano ya vipimo iliyotolewa hapo juu, mtindo wake wa kuandika ni mwepesi, yaani bila kutumia msamiati mzito, sentensi refu sana, maneno “yasiyo ya kawaida”, sitiari zilizofichika sana au misemo iliyo nadra sana. Kwa jumla mwandishi anatumia mithali na misemo michache tu.

Hata hivyo Bi Zainab Burhani amefanikiwa kumteka msomaji kwa uandishi wake ambao unamchukua msomaji mara tu katika mazingira anayochora ya hali ya siku hizi ilivyo mahala pengi Afrika ya Mashariki. Katika hadithi aliyobuni mwandishi amefaulu kujenga msisimko na kumtia msomaji hamu ya kutaka kujua vipi kisa hiki kinaendeleaje na kufikia mwisho. Linalovutia zaidi anavyotilia mkazo ni maadili na uadilifu kama vile kuweza kumsamehe yule aliyekutendea ubaya wa hali ya juu na kuleta islahi.

Kama alivyosema Said A. Mohammed Khamis: “Kitabu hiki kipya kinajitokeza kwa vile msimamo wa mwandishi kuhusu maadili umetajwa wazi kabisa. [...]. Imani ya mwandishi katika nguvu za maadili na uadilifu [Imani yake thabiti katika wema, huruma, kusaidiana na nguvu za kusamehe] ni ya nguvu kwa kadiri kwamba wasomaji wanatekwa nyoyo zao bila kujali wanachopenda kifasihi wala usuli.”<sup>5</sup>

Bi Zainab W. Burhani amepima wema na uovu kwa mizani yake: ndicho kipimo cha mizani. Kwa kweli katika kazi kadhaa zinazoshughulikia kitabu hiki *Kipimo cha Mizani* imetafsiriwa kwa Kiingereza kwa njia mbalimbali, yaani *Measuring scales* (Bertoncini Zúbková 2009: 170), *Weighing scale* (Wafula 2013: 91 na Mazrui 2007: 37) na *The Measure of Balance* (Románczuk 2016).

Kitandawili kimebaki pale pale nini hasa maana ya *kipimo cha mizani*.

<sup>5</sup> What is remarkable about this new book is the even more pronounced moral stance taken by the author. [...]. The writer’s conviction of the power of these values and virtues [her firm belief in kindness, sympathy, mutual help and the power of forgiveness] is so strong, that readers are deeply moved, regardless of their literary tastes or backgrounds (Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: 170).

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ALEX BANZI'S FORMATION AND CAREER AS AN AUTHOR  
IN EARLY POST-COLONIAL TANZANIA

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Alex Banzi belongs to the first generation of writers of modern Swahili prose literature in post-colonial Tanzania. His first novel, *Titi la Mkwe* (The daughter-in-law's breast), was published in 1972 by the state-owned Tanzania Publishing House (henceforth TPH). It soon became required reading in Tanzanian secondary schools and colleges for the subject of Kiswahili and remained as such at least until the mid-1980s, as evidenced by the numerous reprints (1973, 1975, 1978, 1981). Banzi's second novel, *Zika Mwenyewe* (Bury your dead alone), which was published in 1975 by TPH was again received favourably by literary critics (Gibbe 1977, Ohly 1983). Two collections of short stories followed, both published by Ndanda Mission Press as part of that publisher's "entertainment programme" (Reuster-Jahn 1995, 2008b). Both collections, *Tamaa Mbele na Hadithi Nyingine* (Desire in front, death behind and other stories, 1980), and *Nipe Nikupe na Hadithi Nyingine* (Give me and I'll give you and other stories, 1982) comprised six short stories.

Elena Bertoncini Zúbková in her *Outline of Swahili Literature* (1989) dedicated some pages to Banzi, referring to him as "[o]ne of the most noteworthy authors of the Tanzanian mainland" (Bertoncini Zúbková 1989: 94).<sup>1</sup> In accordance with *Outline's* format, she also gave a short author's portrait and summaries of Banzi's two novels and two collections of short stories. Bertoncini characterised him as "a writer interested in the problems of the evolving African society, studying it in terms of relations between man and woman, and in the broader sense, between the individual and his community" (Bertoncini Zúbková

<sup>1</sup> The second, extensively revised and enlarged edition appeared in 2009. Its authors are Elena Bertoncini Zúbková, Mikhail D. Gromov, Said A.M. Khamis and Kyallo Wadi Wamitila. The section on Banzi has remained almost unchanged and can be found on pages 83-85.

1989: 95). In particular, she referred to the author's ability in his novels to present "a convincing psychological analysis of his characters" (Bertoncini Zúbková 1989: 94) and to his individual style, which "oscillates between emotional involvement and detached irony" (Bertoncini Zúbková 1989: 95). She also commented on Banzi's "secret rapport with the reader" and his use of "spoken-language qualities in vocabulary, grammar and spelling" (Bertoncini Zúbková 1989: 96). However, Bertoncini regarded Banzi's first collection of short stories as "a step backwards" (ibidem) because it lacked the character development and vividness of his previous novels. Nevertheless, she approved of his second collection of short stories, which were in the style of traditional tales (1982), because of their melodious language and the rhythm which was established through verbal and grammatical parallelisms.

Strangely enough, despite his successful entrance into the Tanzanian literary scene and after almost two decades of presence in the literary landscape, Alex Banzi lost his status as a well-known writer. He did not publish a new book after 1982 and his older ones were out of print. When I embarked on the project of translating *Titi la Mkwe* into German in 2005, I tried to find the author but his two publishers, TPH and Ndanda Mission Press, had no idea of his whereabouts. In 2015, Walter Bgoya, whose publishing house Mkuki na Nyota had become the legal successor of TPH, kindly helped me to find the author's phone number. Banzi and I started to communicate in early 2016, through email and telephone calls. He was excited that his novel would be translated into German and was helpful with questions about certain meanings and his background as author. When we finally met in Dar es Salaam in August 2017, my translation of *Titi la Mkwe* had already been published.<sup>2</sup> It was my aim to better understand Banzi's history as an author in the formative years of modern Swahili literature. Banzi responded willingly to my questions, and it turned out that he, in contrast to most Tanzanian authors I had interviewed, had kept records as well as an archive of most of his publications. These he kindly shared with me. I am very grateful to Alex Banzi for his cooperation. This article is based on our email exchange and the interview in Dar es Salaam.

In the following I will first give a brief background to *Titi la Mkwe* and my translation project, which facilitated my contact with Alex Banzi. Then, his career as a writer will be presented and discussed, followed by some remarks on

<sup>2</sup> The translation was published under the German title *Versuchung* (Temptation) on 31<sup>st</sup> November 2016.

the content of his writings and his concern as a writer. I will conclude by comparing Banzi's career to those of other Tanzanian writers.

### **Translating of *Titi la Mkwe* and discovering its author's career**

*Titi la Mkwe* was the first literary book that I read in Swahili. This was back in 1985, when I was working as a biology tutor at Nachingwea Teachers College. I had been asked to teach in Swahili, as this is the language of instruction in primary schools in Tanzania. To improve my language skills, I took lessons with a colleague who taught Swahili at the college. We soon reached the level where I could read literary texts. I remember being impressed by *Titi la Mkwe* because of the way it depicted life in the rural areas that also surrounded me in the remote Southeast of Tanzania. I found many parallels with things from real life which I had witnessed or been told about, particularly with regard to the omnipresent discussions about magical practices and the respect that most people had for the supernatural. Moreover, I liked the novel for its psychological dimension and its avoidance of overt didacticism.

The main protagonist of *Titi la Mkwe* is Ena, the wife of the village teacher Zenga. Despite their marriage of eight years, the couple have only one child, the sickly six-year-old Enika. Ena is in despair. Troubled by the fear of losing Zenga to better educated women and wanting to satisfy her husband's urgent desire for more children, she puts a love charm on him. To her, this seems to be the only way to regain control especially as Zenga is oblivious to her anxiety. However, knowing that Zenga as a modern and enlightened person condemns magical practices she feels guilty. In the course of events she becomes increasingly entangled in guilt, especially when her daughter dies. Not able to face her role in this tragedy she relies increasingly on magical means. The climax of the conflict is reached during a nocturnal ritual, which she must perform naked in a cave. Here she has an encounter with her father-in-law, thus breaking a strong taboo. Unable to cope with this transgression, Ena loses consciousness. Her spirit is caught between this world and the next. In this transitory sphere, she meets her deceased grandmother, who tells her what she had done wrong and gives her instructions on how to save her marriage. However, in the end it is a complete confession and explanation of her fears to her husband that restores Ena's equilibrium. Nevertheless, Zenga is not fully able to understand and forgive his wife. Under a rather thin layer of modern attitudes he is essentially a traditional husband who expects certain services from his wife and whose empathy with



her is limited. The couple's communication has ground to a halt and their relationship is floundering. Nevertheless and surprisingly, Ena gives birth to triplets. Zenga is perplexed. While the ending is not happy in a Hollywood sense, it does give hope that the couple will reconcile and find better ways to live together.

Because the story of Ena and Zenga moved me, I wanted to share it with non-Swahili-speaking readers – and thus the idea to translate *Titi la Mkwe* was born. I started with the translation after I had completed my doctoral dissertation about oral storytelling in Southeast Tanzania. I embarked on this project with much enthusiasm and confidence, only to realize the difficulties of a literary translation in the course of my efforts (Reuster-Jahn 2016a: 15-20).

However, when I was finally satisfied with the text, I discovered that finding a willing publisher was no less difficult. No publisher, it seemed, was willing to risk publishing the novel of an unknown Tanzanian author translated from Swahili into German. After reading sample chapters, they said that German readers were bound to be unfamiliar with the content and language style of such a translation. In the end, I resorted to self-publishing via an online publishing platform (Banzi 2016). In my introduction to the translation I gave some information on the background of the project, the Tanzanian culture and the Swahili language. If unfamiliarity were to be a problem, I was determined to deal with it in advance.

As a much appreciated bonus of the translation project, I came to know Alex Banzi and could ask him questions about his career as a writer. As a result, I could incorporate into my introduction new insights into the unique challenges and joys of being a writer in early post-colonial Tanzania. This was in full consent with Banzi himself; he allowed me to use passages from our correspondence, which I translated from Swahili into German for the purpose. His openness gave me the opportunity to tell, through his own words, my readers about the experiences of an African writer writing in an African language.

### **The beginnings of Alex Banzi's career as a writer**

Alex Banzi was born in 1945, in the village Mgeta near Morogoro, as the seventh and last child of a peasant family.<sup>3</sup> After receiving his primary education

<sup>3</sup> The information in this section is taken from personal communications with the author in 2016.

in Mgeta he qualified for secondary education, but the limited resources of his family did not allow him to go ahead with his schooling. Instead, he started a career in the civil service in 1962. Nevertheless, his desire for further education was unabated and he decided to continue his studies in addition to working. In 1966, he enrolled in a correspondence course at the Rapid Results College, London, and completed his O-level in 1968.<sup>4</sup> He even continued with A-level courses at that institution but did not complete them. Instead, he passed an examination within the framework of the 'mature age entry scheme' of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in 1978. Banzi did his Bachelor in Sociology at UDSM in 1982 while on leave from his work with the parliamentary administration. At that time he already had a family with five children. The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation in London granted him a scholarship for postgraduate studies at the New Delhi Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies. When Banzi returned from Delhi after one year, he became secretary of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee and, in addition, a coordinator for election affairs. In the 1990s, he was Director of Elections in the National Electoral Commission and in the 2000s was a high-ranking official in the parliamentary administration until his retirement in 2005. The picture that emerges here is that of a gifted and striving spirit, who is willing to work hard, ready to make financial sacrifices for his education and be creative in finding ways to further himself and his studies. As we will see, these are the very traits which also characterise Banzi's career as an author.

According to Banzi, his mother and one of his sisters were talented story tellers; he grew up listening to their stories and loving them. He also became an enthusiastic reader of stories in books and magazines and later wanted to write stories himself. In 1967, when he was twenty-two and employed in the civil service, he sent a story to the Catholic magazine *Kiongozi* (The leader).<sup>5</sup> Although this first attempt did not yield the envisaged result, the budding author was not discouraged. On the contrary, he concluded that he needed more knowledge about writing techniques and enrolled in a course in creative writing at the Institute of Adult Education (*Chuo cha Elimu ya Watu Wazima*) in Dar es Salaam, where he was now living. In addition, in December 1967, he registered

<sup>4</sup> The Rapid Results College still exists, but does not offer secondary education any more: <http://www.rrc.co.uk/>.

<sup>5</sup> *Kiongozi* was published in Tabora and was a springboard for many Tanzanian authors (see Reuster-Jahn 2016: 226 and Sturm 1998: 70, 89, 104).

for a distance learning course in the Know-How Technique of Writing Success with the British American School of Successful Writing based in London, which cost him the considerable sum of 26 pounds sterling. He found the course through an advertisement in an English language newspaper in Tanzania.

The writing class at the Institute of Adult Education comprised nine participants, out of whom only Banzi later succeeded in actually publishing a book. The class was taught subsequently by John Pantaleon Mbonde, publishing manager at the state-owned TPH, Irenei Cassian Mbenna<sup>6</sup> from the same publishing house, and for a short time by the young tutorial assistant Euphrase Kezilahabi, who later was to become a professor of African Literatures and one of the internationally most acclaimed Tanzanian writers. While Banzi was not too enthusiastic about what he learned in this class, it certainly provided him with the contacts that were of critical importance in the publishing sector. At the time, the country was in urgent need of suitable reading material for the subject of Swahili literature because Swahili had become the national and official language of the country, and language of instruction in primary schools. TPH was on the lookout for suitable manuscripts. In fact, it was Mbonde who encouraged Banzi to publish *Titi la Mkwe* with TPH.

In our conversations, Banzi spoke with great approval of the correspondence course with the London-based institution, saying that it helped him greatly to improve his writing skills. At the start of the course, he said, he was asked to write about his life and his motivation for writing. The programme stressed that anybody could write a story using material from his or her own life. Based on the life histories and motivations of the participants, the course instructor suggested a number of magazines which would probably be interested in texts produced by the participant in question. Banzi remembered that he was referred to the *Red Star Weekly* magazine and *Reveille*, as well as a few similar magazines from the UK. Aiming at a female readership, the *Red Star* featured romantic stories, articles, readers' letters, cartoons, adverts and an agony aunt. The magazine was published from the 1940s to the 1980s.<sup>7</sup> *Reveille* was a popular weekly tabloid which was published by different publishers from 1940

<sup>6</sup> Mbenna was also the author of a handbook for would-be writers titled *Uandishi wa Vitabu* (The writing of books, 1970), see Bertoncini Zúbková et al. (2009: 257).

<sup>7</sup> This information is derived from <http://lost-albion.blogspot.de/2013/10/red-star-weekly.html>, where some covers are also depicted. The source states that the magazine was published by DC Thomson & Co.

to 1979.<sup>8</sup> Banzi remembers that he wrote to the school to inquire about what kind of story he probably could submit to a British magazine, and he was advised to always write about the environment he knew and was familiar with, otherwise he would not be able to capture the readers' emotions. Observing this fact, he could write about any universal theme such as love, relationship, or money. However, when Banzi sent a story to the *Red Star*, he got no response whatsoever. He thus decided not to pursue this uncertain trajectory any longer, but to further address his home audience in Swahili.

The correspondence course was divided into fifteen instalments devoted to topics such as plot construction, character development and dialogue. It focussed on writing as a technique and was less concerned with philosophical issues or literary history. The aim was successful writing, and success was measured in the sale of texts to magazines for publication. Creative writing was considered as a way of self-expression and as a means to make money. After each unit, the participants were given writing assignments which they submitted for comments and suggestions. Banzi remembered that he reliably got his assignments back from London with corrections, and that they were always signed by a certain Henry Kowal.

My curiosity was piqued and so I researched this mysterious writing teacher. The result was fascinating. Henry Kowal was editor of the magazine *Writer* from 1956 onwards and a writing coach who was "running the British American School of Successful Writing on the side" (Hilliard 2006: 268). It was thus not surprising that Banzi's enrolment at the school included a subscription of the *Writer*. The magazine had been key in the "democratization of writing" as Christopher Hilliard stated in his fascinating book on the fundamental change of the British literary landscape in the twentieth century (Hilliard 2006). Hilliard described how a movement emerged in the 1920s with writers' circles, magazines, guidebooks and correspondence schools, all intended to enable ordinary people to express themselves through creative writing and make money doing it. The motto behind this movement was that real-life experience can be put into literature. The *Writer* served as a platform to coordinate the activities. In the post-war era, the movement changed its character and when Kowal became the *Writer's* editor, the magazine had developed towards more highbrow literature (Hilliard 2006: 269). Even so, it still represented a democratic understanding of writing as an occupation or profession open for all social

<sup>8</sup> Information from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reveille\\_\(newspaper\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reveille_(newspaper)).

backgrounds. Access to correspondence courses, writers' guides and advice magazines did not require a certain social status or educational level. They were designed for ordinary people in Britain but could also be accessed from elsewhere in the world provided one had a sufficient English-speaking competence and could afford the rather modest fees. Moreover, as Banzi's case so vividly illustrates, this movement even reached out into the global periphery.

### From short story to novel

Banzi's first published text was the short story *Maiti Yanikondesha* (The corpse causes me lose weight), which appeared in July 1968 in the fortnightly magazine *Kiongozi*. It was the first of about thirty short stories he published in magazines between 1968 and 1974 (see Figure 1). In 1968, Banzi published exclusively with *Kiongozi*, later adding the Kenyan magazines *Nyota Afrika* (Star Africa) (since 1969), *Baraza* (The parlour) (since 1969), and *Taifa Weekly* (Nation weekly) (since 1970) to his portfolio. As he said, these magazines were very popular in Dar es Salaam and he thus hoped to reach more readers.

From the beginning, Banzi conceived of writing not only as creative expression but also as a business, and the London-based correspondence course encouraged its participants to give the commercial aspect of the art serious consideration. The *Writer* in particular featured business advice for authors, which helped Banzi to plan his strategies more methodically. *Kiongozi* was a good place for him to sell articles. The magazine paid authors according to length, and one square inch was equivalent to one Tanzanian shilling. According to Banzi, his investment into the British correspondence course returned through three stories published in *Kiongozi*. The Kenyan magazines paid per story and offered thus less than *Kiongozi*. Banzi recalls that he, however, negotiated the sum of 50 Tanzanian shillings. Publishing with magazines was indeed lucrative. For Banzi, it was always a second source of income to supplement his salary with.

| No. | Title of story                                                  | Magazine        | Year | Other use                                                                                               |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | <i>Maiti Yanikondesha</i><br>(The corpse causes me lose weight) | <i>Kiongozi</i> | 1968 | a) <i>Zika Tuone</i> in <i>Taifa Weekly</i> (Serial novel)<br>b) <i>Zika Mwenyewe</i> , TPH 1975 (Book) |

|    |                                                                                                 |                                              |              |                                     |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2  | <i>Titi la Mkwe</i><br>(The daughter-in-law's breast)                                           | <i>Kiongozi</i>                              | 1968         | Book <i>Titi la Mkwe</i> , TPH 1972 |
| 3  | <i>Milele hutanipata</i><br>(You will never get me)                                             | <i>Kiongozi</i>                              | 1968         |                                     |
| 4  | <i>Usingizi wa Kifo</i><br>(Death sleep)                                                        | <i>Kiongozi</i>                              | 1968         |                                     |
| 5  | <i>Barua yenye Mkosi</i><br>(The unfortunate letter)                                            | <i>Kiongozi</i>                              | 1968         |                                     |
| 6  | <i>Tamaa Isiyotosheka</i><br>(Unsatisfiable desire)                                             | <i>Kiongozi</i>                              | 1968         |                                     |
| 7  | <i>Sikitiko Lililofurahisha</i><br>(The sorrow which caused joy)                                | <i>Kiongozi</i>                              | 1968         |                                     |
| 8  | <i>Vazi la Uokovu</i><br>(Salvation gown)                                                       | <i>Kiongozi</i>                              | 1969         |                                     |
| 9  | <i>Kilio Kisichotegemewa</i><br>(The unexpected mourning)                                       | <i>Kiongozi</i>                              | 1969         |                                     |
| 10 | <i>Chemchemi ya Majonzi</i><br>(The fountain of sorrow)                                         | <i>Kiongozi</i>                              | 1969         |                                     |
| 11 | <i>Deni la Huba ni Machozi</i><br>(Tears are the debt of love)                                  | a) <i>Nyota Afrika</i><br>b) <i>Kiongozi</i> | 1969<br>1970 | <i>Tamaa Mbele</i> (TM) 1980        |
| 12 | <i>Nimekoma</i><br>(I will never do it again)                                                   | <i>Kiongozi</i>                              | 1969         |                                     |
| 13 | <i>Mapenzi Yawaka Moto na Kuvunja Utakatifu</i> (Love flames up and breaks down chastity)       | <i>Baraza</i>                                | 1969         |                                     |
| 14 | <i>Ujana Wawavuruga Akili Wapenzi</i> (Their youth agitates the lovers' minds)                  | <i>Baraza</i>                                | 1969         |                                     |
| 15 | <i>Nimechoka Kuwatolea Jasho Wenzangu</i> (I'm tired of slaving for my fellow men)              | <i>Baraza</i>                                | 1969         |                                     |
| 16 | <i>Lazima Nimwoe Nitulize Moyo</i> (I have to marry her to calm my heart)                       | <i>Baraza</i>                                | 1970         |                                     |
| 17 | <i>Kikulacho Ki Nguoni Mwako</i> (What eats you up is in your clothes) (popular Swahili saying) | <i>Nyota Afrika</i>                          | 1970         | TM as <i>Tamaa mbele</i>            |
| 18 | <i>Mnajimu Moto</i> (Moto the astrologer)                                                       | <i>Taifa Weekly</i>                          | 1970         | TM                                  |

|    |                                                                                                                           |                     |      |                                 |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------|---------------------------------|
| 19 | <i>Saa 11 mbaya na njema</i>                                                                                              | <i>Taifa Weekly</i> | 1970 |                                 |
| 20 | <i>Sikutegemea</i><br>(I didn't expect this)                                                                              | <i>Kiongozi</i>     | 1970 | TM as <i>Milele Sitakusahau</i> |
| 21 | <i>Lahaula!</i><br>(Oh my god!)                                                                                           | <i>Kiongozi</i>     | 1970 |                                 |
| 22 | <i>Dondandugu</i><br>(A chronic wound)                                                                                    | <i>Kiongozi</i>     | 1970 |                                 |
| 23 | <i>Dawa ya Moto</i><br>(The cure of fire) (first part of a popular Swahili saying)                                        | <i>Kiongozi</i>     | 1970 |                                 |
| 24 | <i>Aibu Isiyosemeka</i><br>(The unspeakable shame)                                                                        | <i>Kiongozi</i>     | 1971 |                                 |
| 25 | <i>Mapenzi na Masomo</i><br><i>Hayaambatani</i><br>(Love and studies don't go together)                                   | <i>Nyota Afrika</i> | 1971 |                                 |
| 26 | <i>Nani Asiyejua</i><br>(Who doesn't know this)                                                                           | <i>Nyota Afrika</i> | 1971 | TM                              |
| 27 | <i>Dua la Heri</i><br>(The invocation)                                                                                    |                     |      | TM                              |
| 28 | <i>Najichoma Kisu Kumfuata</i><br><i>Msichana Ahera</i> (I'll stab myself with a knife to follow a girl to the afterlife) | <i>Baraza</i>       | 1971 |                                 |
| 29 | <i>Tafadhali Megi Uwe Wangu wa Milele</i> (Please Megi be mine forever)                                                   | <i>Baraza</i>       | 1971 |                                 |
| 30 | <i>Unasemaje Kidawa</i><br>(What do you say, Kidawa)                                                                      | <i>Nyota Afrika</i> | 1974 |                                 |

**Figure 1:** Short stories by Alex Banzi published in magazines, according to documentation by himself as well as references in Lepine (1988: 512-513), regarding the stories published in *Baraza*.

As can be seen in Figure 1, Banzi put six of his short stories together and published them as a book with the Catholic Ndanda Mission Press in Southeast Tanzania. Elena Bertoncini Zúbková was thus right when she suggested that the stories were “lifted directly from a newspaper” (Bertoncini 2009: 85). However, Banzi, knowing that in Ndanda he was dealing with a mission press, removed or revised romantic passages from the originally published texts. The book was published in 1980 under the title *Tamaa Mbele*. This is the first part of the Swahili saying *Tamaa mbele mauti*

*nyuma* meaning “desire ahead, death behind”, and is a hint to the moralistic content that awaits its readers.

In another approach, Banzi expanded and developed two of his short stories into novels. He emphasised to me that this was only possible because of the skills he had honed in his courses. Interestingly, these short stories were the very two first texts that he had published in magazines, *Maiti Yanikondesha* and *Titi la Mkwe*. Both stories deal with problems of societal transformation in Tanzania, particularly the conflict between individualism and socially oriented behaviour. In general, Banzi propagates in his texts the idea of *ujamaa* or African socialism while making comprehensible the motives and conflicts of the individual who has to decide between personal advancement and the well-being of society.

The main character in *Maiti Yanikondesha* gives his own needs and desires priority over the social demands of the people in his neighbourhood. When help is needed, he refuses it for pretended or invented reasons, and when personal attendance is required, he gives money instead. Slowly, people develop an aversion to him and are only waiting for the moment when they can take revenge. This moment comes when his wife dies. It is impossible to perform funeral rites without the active participation of other people such as relatives and neighbours, and so by ignoring the funeral they can teach the main character a lesson.

By adding more detail to the individual episodes, Banzi was able to paint a vivid portrait of society in the socialist *ujamaa* era. He gave the manuscript to TPH, which indicated an interest in publishing it. However, as time passed and his story was still not published, Banzi offered the manuscript to the Kenya-based magazine *Taifa Weekly* with which he already had published a few short stories. It serialised his novel under the title *Zika Tuone* (Bury if you can) in eleven instalments between January and March 1973 (Lepine 1988: 418-419). In light of this serialisation, TPH refused to publish the text in book form. Only after a change in management did TPH publish the book under the title *Zika Mwenyewe* in 1975. Obviously, editors were powerful gatekeepers who could use their power to place obstacles in the way of authors.

*Titi la Mkwe* also grew from a short story dealing with the conflict between traditional and modern ways of living, as exemplified by its question of whether magic is ethically permissible and appropriate to solve problems. The novel is more refined than *Zika Mwenyewe*, with the main character Ena in particular



multi-layered and convincing. Her inner struggle is comprehensible, and there is ample room for fear and other emotions in the narrative.

Banzi's expansion of two short stories into novels, the serialisation of one of his stories, and the publication of a collection of previously published short stories are reminiscent of the "rotational approach" of Faraji H.H. Katalambulla, another early Tanzanian writer and editor (Reuster-Jahn 2016b: 231-232). Katalambulla used the term "rotation" to refer to his use and re-use of plots in different literary forms such as radio plays, dramas, short stories, novels, and photo-novels. He stressed that this way he could extract the most from a story. Moreover, this method allowed him to fill his magazine *Film Tanzania* with his own stories. As Katalambulla was striving to minimise production costs, he thus avoided paying outside contributors. Katalambulla clearly perfected this rotation method, and Banzi's reworking of stories echoes it. However, more research would be needed to find out if this approach was typical for early Tanzanian writers.

A full picture of Banzi's career must include mention of a manuscript which never saw the light of the day as a book. Banzi submitted the manuscript of the novel *Nimeolewa* (I am married) to the East African Literature Bureau (EALB), jointly owned and managed by the member states of the East African Community. According to Banzi, the EALB promised to publish the novel. When the East African Community split up in 1977, however, the manuscript got lost. While Banzi had kept a copy for himself, he now says that the topic it deals with is no longer relevant as the *ujamaa* era has become history. This manuscript, he feels, could only be published after a profound revision.

### **The 1990s – new freedoms and new opportunities for a seasoned writer**

With the political and economic changes towards multiparty democracy and economic liberalism, new economic opportunities emerged for Tanzanians and new freedoms of expression were possible. This process started in 1985 when President Julius Nyerere stepped down as president of the country. His successor, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, soon became known as Mzee Ruksa (from *ruhusa* meaning "permission") because of his liberal orientation. Numerous newspapers and magazines sprang up, giving new parties a platform or acting as their mouthpiece. The News Agency Act of 1992 allowed private news agencies, and the Broadcasting Services Act of 1993 allowed private

broadcasting. These new liberties were not only used for political purposes but also for talking publicly about matters that previously were considered either too private or indecent. A number of magazines and pamphlets turned their attention to questions of sexuality and sexual relationships, stimulated in part by fear of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This resulted in a large wave of publications on previously taboo topics, clearly reflecting the need of the public for more information (Reuster-Jahn 2014).

Banzi read the signs of the time and returned to the arena of publishing, this time with his son as a partner. They registered the publishing company Rahaleo Publishers and started a series of pamphlets called *Fujo za Walimwengu* (The mess of people). These pamphlets, written by Banzi under a pseudonym, comprised short stories on marital problems such as unfaithfulness. They offered advice for overcoming such problems, above all by paying more attention to each other and enjoying a better sex life. The language of the stories is sprinkled with colloquialisms, sometimes juicy but never vulgar. The dialogues in particular are lively, and much figurative language is used. The series' first issue entitled *Kandanda Kitandani* (Soccer in bed) was published in 1990, another issue entitled *Kwa Nini Mumeo Ananipenda* (Why your husband loves me) came out in 1993. The pamphlets were marketed by the publishers themselves and sold well. However, the publishers stopped the project after three issues due to lack of time.

Banzi also tried his luck as an editor with the English-language magazine *Pals International* in 1991. Featuring education and entertainment, the magazine provided twenty-two pages of mixed content: pen-pal offers from around the world; a psychologically weighted article on shyness; a short story written by Banzi under a pseudonym; cultural news about rap music and other topics; readers' letters; a prize-winning quiz and romance stories. The magazine was, however, a short-lived and essentially unsuccessful endeavour, and no second issue followed. This was probably due to the choice of English as language of publication. In the early 1990s, entertainment had already been closely associated with Swahili.

Under the pseudonym L. J. Luanda, Banzi contributed the short story *Dying Alive* to the magazine. Here, the author tries his hand at a thriller set in Europe. The protagonist is a young man from Tanzania who has been lured to Geneva by a former girlfriend who wants to take revenge on him. She has him tortured by her accomplices and leaves him to die. However, like a deus

ex machina, a female Swiss pen-pal of his appears and rescues him. They both return to Tanzania, where they marry and start a family. In this story, Banzi seems to have been influenced by Hollywood action films, including their often unconvincing plots.

Since his retirement from civil service, Banzi has started to write another novel. According to him, it is a parable about the political developments in Tanzania in the new millennium. Undoubtedly, the fact that his first novel can now be read in translation has helped revive his spirit as a writer.

## **Conclusion**

This essay has brought into relief the history of an early Tanzanian writer who had been nearly forgotten for three decades. The literary span of his writing ranged from the popular to the middle-brow. As such he was able to bridge the gap between readers looking for light reading and those wanting more reflective content. Banzi's history is characterised by an exceptional willingness to invest effort and money into furthering his abilities and skills. Simultaneously, it confirms the important role of newspapers and magazines as spring-boards for emerging authors, as I had argued in previous publications (Reuster-Jahn 2016).

Alex Banzi's career can be divided into three periods. First, there was the formation and subsequent success of the 1970s and 1980s, followed by silence due to Banzi's workload as a civil servant. There then followed a short-lived attempt at popular writing under a pseudonym, stimulated by the political and economic changes of the 1990s. The writing of this period was mainly motivated by commercial considerations; however, these short stories are often stylistically appealing. Then a long period of silence followed before the third period, when Banzi started writing again after his retirement and after my translation project renewed interest in his first novel *Titi la Mkwe*.

Banzi's career has multiple traits in common with the careers of many other early Tanzanian writers. Like them, he never solely relied on creative writing for his income. Because of his employment with the civil service and the good career it provided for him, writing was always a sideline activity. In fact, there are only very few Tanzanian writers who have been able to make a sustained living from their writing: Faraji H. H. Katalambulla, Eddie Ganzel, John M. S. Simbamwene and Ben Mtobwa come to mind. Of these,

Simbamwene was his own publisher, while Katalambulla and Mtobwa were also editors and publishers of magazines. Like many other authors, Banzi used magazines as a springboard into his career and as a place to sell his texts. And like them, he was not always treated benevolently by publishers. Finally, his books shared the fate of many other once important texts: they are out of print, no longer available, and nearly forgotten.

In other respects, Banzi's history as a writer was exceptional. He did not rely on his talent alone, as did many other amateur writers, but set about the systematic acquisition and improvement of his writing skills with admirable focus and determination. He invested time and money into learning the techniques required for both the successful writing and marketing of stories. In his ambition to improve his skills, he even took up a British correspondence course and thus benefited from the democratisation of creative writing in Britain.

Alex Banzi was, of course, fortunate that his first novel *Titi la Mkwe* appeared at a time when Swahili reading material for schools was both scarce and sought after. Nevertheless, the success of this novel was ultimately based on its literary qualities, as Bertoncini Zúbková in her well-respected *Outline of Swahili Literature* (1989: 94-97) rightly observed. However regrettable it is that Banzi's Swahili novels are no longer available, thanks to the *Outline* and Bertoncini Zúbková's numerous critical insights they will not disappear. Indeed, this exhaustive review provides a much needed overview of Swahili writers and their works and is a commemoration to their achievements.

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**POESIA SWAHILI E TRADUZIONE**

**SWAHILI POETRY AND ITS TRANSLATION**



LA POESIA SWAHILI IN ITALIANO: SFIDE E SOLUZIONI TRADUTTIVE  
PER I VERSI DI ABDILATIF ABDALLA

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Uno degli elementi centrali dell’esperienza didattica della mia *mwalimu* Elena Bertoncini Zúbková è stato l’uso della traduzione letteraria swahili-italiano, praticata da noi studenti sia durante lo svolgimento dei corsi che in forma estesa nel lavoro di tesi.<sup>1</sup> Questo esercizio era utilissimo tanto per consolidare le conoscenze linguistiche, quanto per sperimentare l’estetica della letteratura swahili accostata ad un duro lavoro di resa in italiano, e dunque di interpretazione, che ci spingeva a esplorare i meandri testuali e contestuali dell’opera in questione. A sua volta, Elena Bertoncini Zúbková è da sempre stata infaticabile traduttrice<sup>2</sup> di poesie e racconti swahili (in italiano e slovacco); in altre parole, nella sua vita l’amore per la letteratura e la traduzione è profondamente intrecciato alla sua attività didattica. A livello personale, lo considero un dono che mi ha introdotto alla pratica della traduzione letteraria

<sup>1</sup> La maggior parte degli studenti di Lingua e Letteratura Swahili che si sono succeduti negli anni ha tradotto un’opera swahili. Io stessa per l’elaborato conclusivo della laurea quadriennale ho tradotto il romanzo *Utengano* (Separazione, 1980) di Said Ahmed Mohamed, lavoro successivamente pubblicato (Mohamed 2005). Trovandomi, dal 2013, a insegnare Lingua e Letteratura Swahili presso l’Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”, sto tentando di mantenere questa unica “tradizione di traduzione”, pur essendo mutate non poco le condizioni dell’insegnamento, per il crescente numero di studenti iscritti a corsi di laurea storico-politologici, e per gli effetti della riforma del percorso universitario, ora suddiviso in una laurea di primo livello in cui la tesi è sostituita da un succinto *PowerPoint*, e una specialistica dove molti iscritti sono principianti di swahili. In appendice è riportata la lista delle traduzioni letterarie swahili-italiano assegnate nel corso del tempo e conservate presso lo studio nella sede di Palazzo Corigliano.

<sup>2</sup> Le traduzioni di opere letterarie swahili da parte di E. Bertoncini Zúbková, pubblicate su rivista o in forma di libro, sono elencate nel presente volume.



intesa come forma di piacere e strumento conoscitivo, per il quale, e non solo, le sono infinitamente grata.

Durante il periodo del dottorato, e anche negli anni seguenti, ho continuato a tradurre canzoni e poesie swahili, riportate in diversi lavori (tra cui Aiello 2006, 2007).<sup>3</sup> Tuttavia, per lungo tempo non sono più riuscita a dedicarmi, per esigenze familiari, per precarietà lavorativa, per necessità di concentrarmi su prodotti della ricerca più riconosciuti in ambito accademico, alla pratica traduttiva sistematica destinata alla pubblicazione, fino al 2016, da quando ho partecipato a due progetti dedicati alla traduzione e diffusione della poesia swahili. Il primo progetto, portato avanti in collaborazione con Irene Brunotti<sup>4</sup> e in dirittura d'arrivo, consiste nell'edizione e pubblicazione di *Shuwari*, seconda raccolta poetica (*diwani*) dell'anziano poeta di Tumbatu<sup>5</sup> Haji Gora Haji, con relativa traduzione in lingua inglese, mentre il secondo, condotto in collaborazione con Roberto Gaudio,<sup>6</sup> è stato dedicato alla traduzione italiana di poesie scelte composte da due autori di lingua swahili, Abdilatif Abdalla e Euphrase Kezilahabi. Questi lavori, entrambi corredati da introduzione e apparato critico interamente bilingui, mi hanno coinvolto moltissimo, innanzitutto per il rapporto umano e la stima che mi legano ai poeti, e per la convinzione mia, e delle persone con cui ho collaborato, che la loro poesia sia da diffondere e far conoscere anche ad un pubblico non swahilofono. Ciò nondimeno, le riflessioni sulla traduzione poetica sviluppate in questo saggio partono dal secondo lavoro, per il quale mi sono

<sup>3</sup> In realtà nel contesto swahili non esiste una netta linea di demarcazione tra canzone e componimento poetico, per diversi motivi, innanzitutto poiché la poesia swahili, nonostante abbia una lunga tradizione manoscritta in *ajami* e un notevole corpus scritto in caratteri latini, viene recepita e diffusa principalmente in modo orale, primario e secondario, attraverso una lettura/recitazione in forma cantilenata (Vierke 2011: 41); d'altra parte le canzoni con accompagnamento musicale si basano, anche oggi, su testi composti seguendo le usuali norme poetiche. Inoltre, l'ambiguità si riscontra anche a livello lessicale, in quanto la parola *wimbo* (pl. *nyimbo*) si riferisce tanto a una particolare categoria prosodica (*bahari*), tanto in maniera generica a qualunque tipo di canzone, il cui testo può essere composto anche in un metro irregolare o in un'altra forma prosodica (Bertoncini Zúbková 2000: 9), sempre più spesso lo *shairi* (pl. *mashairi*). Le caratteristiche di queste categorie saranno descritte dettagliatamente più avanti.

<sup>4</sup> Docente di Lingua e Cultura Swahili presso l'Università di Leipzig, ex studentessa di E. Bertoncini Zúbková e compagna di studi e di vita universitaria.

<sup>5</sup> Tumbatu è la terza isola, per grandezza, dell'arcipelago di Zanzibar, dopo Unguja e Pemba.

<sup>6</sup> Attualmente assegnista di ricerca presso l'Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale".

cimentata con la traduzione delle poesie di Abdalla, poiché ho voluto concentrarmi su un processo traduttivo più lineare, che parte dalla lingua fonte swahili per giungere alla mia lingua madre, l'italiano, a differenza dell'altro progetto, in cui, lavorando con una lingua straniera, l'inglese, sono stati necessari diversi passaggi e la collaborazione di più persone.<sup>7</sup> Inoltre, poiché l'inglese non solo non è la mia lingua materna, ma è uno strumento di lavoro e di comunicazione quasi esclusivamente utilizzato in contesto accademico, la componente emozionale e quel senso di naturalezza che deriva dal lavorare con il linguaggio del proprio vissuto sono stati ovviamente meno presenti, mentre hanno avuto un ruolo importante nella traduzione dei componimenti di Abdilatif Abdalla che verrà trattata nelle seguenti pagine (ed è anche un punto fondamentale per comprendere l'uso della lingua da parte del poeta, come argomenterò più in avanti).

Qui di seguito, prima di addentrarmi nella trattazione delle strategie traduttive adottate in questo lavoro, e di alcuni problemi specifici e relative soluzioni, descriverò con maggiori dettagli il progetto di pubblicazione nell'ambito del quale sono nate le mie traduzioni, e tratterò un quadro sintetico della vita e dell'opera di Abdilatif Abdalla.

### **Ushairi na Uhuru: proporre la poesia swahili ai lettori italiani**

Il volume preparato in collaborazione con R. Gaudio, dal titolo *Ushairi na Uhuru. Poesie scelte di Abdilatif Abdalla e Euphrase Kezilahi/Mkusanyo wa tungo za Abdilatif Abdalla na Euphrase Kezilahi* (di seguito in breve *Ushairi na Uhuru*), è stato pubblicato presso le edizioni universitarie "L'Orientale" (Aiello & Gaudio 2017). L'idea iniziale della pubblicazione è nata con l'intento di rendere omaggio alla presenza di questi due grandi poeti presso la nostra università, in occasione delle giornate di studi "*Ngoma na Vailini - The worlds of Swahili poetry II*" (31 maggio - 1 giugno 2017) dedicate alla poesia swahili, alla sua traduzione e alla sua performance. Questa circostanza, inoltre, ha fatto maturare in noi il desiderio di comunicare una parte

<sup>7</sup> In particolare Ahmed Mgeni, di Zanzibar, autore di racconti swahili, critico letterario e insegnante di inglese in pensione, che ha cortesemente riletto le traduzioni e ci ha dato diversi consigli, e soprattutto la madrelingua che ha curato la revisione, Nathalie Arnold Koenings, antropologa americana con una lunga esperienza sul campo a Pemba, conoscitrice della lingua swahili, scrittrice e traduttrice, attualmente docente di Fiction Writing presso lo Hampshire College (U.S.A.).

della ricchezza della poesia swahili ai lettori/uditori italiani, partendo dai partecipanti alle giornate di studi, ma con l'aspirazione di coinvolgere un pubblico più ampio attraverso letture in spazi pubblici non accademici.<sup>8</sup> La scelta dell'italiano, che pur non essendo definibile una lingua 'minore' per status letterario e fattori storico-politici, di fatto non è una lingua che possa raggiungere una vasta platea internazionale così come accade con l'inglese, è stata motivata dalla voglia di coinvolgere un pubblico vicino, sebbene ristretto, presso il quale le letterature africane sono ancora poco conosciute, specialmente per quanto riguarda le produzioni in lingue autoctone.<sup>9</sup> La raccolta contiene anche due versioni in napoletano del poeta Mimmo Grasso, una per ogni autore scelto. L'uso del dialetto è stato al tempo stesso una forma di sperimentazione traduttiva – che oltretutto offre una possibile soluzione alla sfida della resa del linguaggio dialettale di Abdalla, su cui mi soffermerò più avanti –, e un tentativo di stabilire connessioni con il territorio in cui siamo cresciuti e dove ha sede l'Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale".

Questo lavoro a due mani, pur se di piccole dimensioni, mira inoltre a trasmettere sia la bellezza che la complessità linguistica, culturale e artistica della poesia swahili contemporanea. Abbiamo scelto, quindi, di tradurre in italiano i componimenti di due poeti d'origine e stile diversi: Abdilatif Abdalla viene da Mombasa, metropoli costiera del Kenya, e scrive seguendo la prosodia swahili, mentre Euphrase Kezilahabi proviene dall'isola di

<sup>8</sup> A conclusione degli *Study Days*, il primo giugno 2017, si è tenuto un *reading* con i due poeti e i traduttori presso il PAN (Palazzo delle Arti di Napoli), spazio gentilmente concesso dall'Assessorato alla Cultura del Comune di Napoli. Della serata è stato realizzato un video che sarà prossimamente reso fruibile online (su una pagina web in costruzione dedicata allo studio della Lingua e Letteratura Swahili presso l'Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"). Inoltre, nel mese di aprile 2018 ho partecipato con Abdilatif Abdalla a due altri *reading*, presso il Festival Internazionale della Letteratura di Venezia *Incroci di civiltà* e il Festival *Poetry Vicenza*.

<sup>9</sup> Produzioni solitamente trascurate dalla critica occidentale (e non solo in Italia). Analizzando la ricezione della letteratura africana nei Paesi occidentali, dagli anni Sessanta fino alle varie fasi di studi postcoloniali a partire dagli anni Ottanta, appare evidente che i discorsi critici (che influenzano anche le scelte editoriali) hanno sostanzialmente privilegiato la scrittura in lingue europee, trascurando invece la prosa moderna in lingue africane, sulla base di una opposizione pregiudiziale tra letteratura tradizionale, associata alle arti verbali composte in lingue locali, e letteratura moderna, scritta nelle ex lingue coloniali ed influenzata dalla tradizione narrativa occidentale (Barber 2010: 672).

Ukerewe, nella zona continentale della Tanzania, e scrive poesia in versi liberi, influenzato dalla letteratura orale della sua regione e dalla letteratura straniera. Le poesie di Kezilahabi hanno innescato un lungo dibattito, ancora vivo, tra “tradizionalisti” (*wanamapokeo*) e “riformisti” (*wanamapinduzi*), che ha visto coinvolti numerosi poeti e critici dell’Africa orientale. La pubblicazione di *Kichomi* (Dolore dilaniante, 1974), difatti, prima raccolta in versi liberi apparsa in Tanzania, scatenò la reazione negativa di molti poeti e critici,<sup>10</sup> i quali ritenevano che componimenti di questo tipo fossero difettosi (*guni*) in quanto non seguivano le tradizioni prosodiche costiere, e non andassero pertanto inclusi nel corpus letterario swahili. Considerando che quasi tutti i poeti riformisti<sup>11</sup> provenivano dalle regioni continentali, e non erano di prima lingua swahili, mentre molti tradizionalisti erano della costa, il dibattito ha fatto emergere – spesso semplificandole – tensioni culturali tra “veri swahili” e “parlanti swahili”, con tutti i suoi risvolti a livello linguistico (la purezza della lingua), religioso (Islam/Cristianesimo) e culturale (accuse reciproche di influenze straniere, occidentali per quanto riguarda il verso libero, arabe per quanto riguarda la poesia della costa). Limitarsi a questo schema contrappositivo, tuttavia, appare riduttivo, in quanto non tiene conto del fatto che altri protagonisti del verso libero sono originari della costa swahili, come Ebrahim Hussein<sup>12</sup> in Tanzania e, in Kenya, Alamin Mazrui, e viceversa alcuni noti autori di poesia tradizionale sono nati ben lontano da essa.<sup>13</sup> Al tempo stesso, sarebbe anche fuorviante associare la difesa dell’identità linguistica, culturale e letteraria swahili a delle precise posizioni politiche, come ben dimostrano, ad esempio, la figura di Saadan Kandoro, membro del TANU (Tanganyika National Union) e acceso indipendentista, o le posizioni anti-autoritarie e progressiste di Abdalla, come vedremo più avanti. Negli anni Settanta si giocava, in effetti, anche un altro tipo di scon-

<sup>10</sup> Tra i quali Ibrahim Noor Shariff, Shihabuddin Chiraghdin, Kimani Ruo e Tigiti Sengo. Per un’analisi approfondita del dibattito si veda il saggio di A. Mazrui (2007: 45-82).

<sup>11</sup> Come Mugyabuso Mulokozi e Kulikoyela Kahigi in Tanzania, Kithaka wa Mberia in Kenya.

<sup>12</sup> E. Hussein già nel 1968 aveva recitato in pubblico (all’università di Dar es Salaam) una poesia in versi liberi, *Ngoma na Vailini* (Tamburo e violino); in seguito si è dedicato prevalentemente al teatro, nell’ambito del quale ha comunque continuato a sperimentare l’uso del verso libero, specialmente nelle opere *Jogoo kijijini* (Il gallo nel villaggio) e *Ngao ya jadi* (Lo scudo degli avi), pubblicate assieme nel 1976.

<sup>13</sup> Ad esempio Saadan Kandoro, nato a Ujiji, e Mathias Mnyampala, originario di un villaggio nei pressi di Dodoma.

tro, generazionale e identitario: i giovani poeti che praticavano il verso libero, così come i critici che li difendevano,<sup>14</sup> tutti provenienti dall'ambiente accademico, stavano elaborando una concezione della letteratura swahili maggiormente inclusiva e aperta, che rifletteva i dibattiti intellettuali dell'epoca e pratiche di costruzione di identità collettive più ampie, nazionali e trans-nazionali. La nostra scelta, quindi, per questa prima pubblicazione di poesie swahili in traduzione italiana, è stata quella di mostrare due poetiche diverse e per certi versi antitetiche, tentando di restituire in italiano le peculiarità delle poesie originali, e al tempo stesso lasciare emergere le loro numerose connessioni, che raramente affiorano nei commenti critici, fortemente dualistici, sulla poesia swahili della post-indipendenza: entrambi i poeti, infatti, testimoniano l'imperativo esistenziale della poesia vissuta come ricerca di verità e libertà. Nelle loro poesie, il vissuto, l'esperienza è al centro dell'ispirazione, soprattutto l'esperienza del dolore. Un altro legame è la comune frequentazione dell'università di Dar es Salaam negli anni Settanta, e la condivisione di un contesto di vivaci e appassionati dibattiti intellettuali, nel quale si è sviluppato un rapporto personale tra i due poeti, come testimoniano le foto che arricchiscono il volume.

### **Abdilatif Abdalla, poeta in politica<sup>15</sup>**

Il mio lavoro di traduzione, come descritto sopra, nasce dunque per far assaporare al lettore italiano la bellezza della poesia swahili e, nello specifico, far conoscere un protagonista della letteratura contemporanea e una figura di grande rilievo sotto molti punti di vista: letterario, nel ruolo di artista e esperto (*mtaalamu*) della tradizione poetica swahili, politico, in quanto attivista che ha pagato a caro prezzo le sue critiche esplicite al governo e che ha continuato a impegnarsi negli anni della diaspora, e umano, per la sua capacità di non lasciarsi sopraffare dal trauma dell'esperienza in carcere, per la sua resilienza e il carisma che hanno sempre un forte impatto sul pubblico e ispirano le giovani generazioni in Kenya.

<sup>14</sup> Tra cui Farouk Topan, scrittore e accademico di Zanzibar, autore dell'introduzione a *Kichomi*.

<sup>15</sup> Allusione al titolo di una recente pubblicazione, *Abdilatif Abdalla: Poet in Politics* (2016), a cura di Rose Marie Beck e Kai Kresse, che raccoglie gran parte degli interventi presentati durante il Symposium tenuto nel maggio 2011 in onore di Abdilatif Abdalla a seguito del suo pensionamento.

Nato a Mombasa nel 1946, nella vita di Abdilatif Abdalla la pratica poetica e l'attivismo civile e politico sono un binomio inscindibile, come è vero da secoli per tanti poeti swahili, a partire da Muyaka,<sup>16</sup> uno dei suoi principali modelli letterari. Nella sua formazione hanno avuto un ruolo fondamentale il nonno, Ahmad Basheikh bin Hussein, poeta e insegnante, e i suoi fratelli maggiori, Ustadh Ahmad Nassir Juma Bhalo, noto poeta, e Sheikh Abdilahi Nassir, uomo politico e dotto islamico, nel trasmettergli quell'insieme di conoscenze culturali, poetiche, religiose e politiche che è costitutivo delle società swahili cosmopolite della costa est-africana (Beck 2016: 4). Subito dopo l'indipendenza, Abdalla, mentre lavorava in un ufficio amministrativo municipale di Mombasa, divenne un membro attivo del KPU (Kenya People's Union), partito d'opposizione ben presto dichiarato illegale e bandito nel 1968 (Nyaigotti-Chacha 1992: 5). In una serie di pamphlet fatti circolare proprio in quell'anno, ciclostilati in swahili che arrecavano la firma WASIOTOSHEKA (gli scontenti/insoddisfatti), espresse forti critiche nei confronti del partito al governo, il KANU (Kenya African National Union), guidato da Jomo Kenyatta, culminate nello scritto *Kenya: Twendapi?* (Kenya: dove stiamo andando?). Il documento accusava il partito al potere di pratiche illegittime degne dei tempi coloniali per sopprimere il dissenso (anche durante la tornata elettorale), nonché di essere divenuto elitario, dittatoriale e oppressivo al pari del regime dell'apartheid in Sudafrica (Kresse 2016: 21), concludendosi con un appello esplicito ai concittadini per rovesciare il governo del KANU. L'autore venne immediatamente arrestato, accusato di sedizione e condannato a tre anni di carcere in regime d'isolamento presso la Kamity Maximum Security Prison a Nairobi. Durante la prigionia era severamente vietato l'uso della penna, ma con la complicità di una guardia, Abdalla riuscì a scrivere di nascosto, sulla carta igienica, delle pagine di diario in prosa e trentanove poesie, il suo diario in poesia, che venivano fatte recapitare a suo fratello maggiore. Dopo il suo rilascio, proprio lui, Sheikh Abdilahi Nassir,<sup>17</sup> allora in una posizione influente presso la

<sup>16</sup> Muyaka bin Haji al-Ghassaniy (Mombasa 1776-1837) era un mercante, spesso in viaggio verso lontane destinazioni (Madagascar, Aden, Oman, India e Persia). Protagonista della vita politica dei suoi tempi, fu intimo amico dei Mazrui, specialmente di Abdalla b. Hamed (1814-1823), il primo a rifiutare di pagare tributo a Sayyid Said, sultano di Oman e Zanzibar (Bertoncini Zúbková 2000: 26).

<sup>17</sup> Durante la prigionia del giovane Abdalla egli ha anche curato la pubblicazione del suo *Utenzi wa maisha ya Adamu na Hawaa* (Poema sulla vita di Adamo e Eva, 1971).

casa editrice Oxford University Press (Kresse 2016: 23), fece pubblicare la raccolta, che uscì nel 1973 con il titolo *Sauti ya Dhiki* (La voce dell'agonia). Ironicamente, nel 1974 il volume vinse il premio letterario che porta il nome di Kenyatta, lo stesso presidente autocrate che lo aveva incarcerato. Da allora il poeta ha vissuto per lunghissimi anni in esilio, dapprima in Tanzania, dove è stato ricercatore (e lessicografo)<sup>18</sup> presso l'università di Dar es Salaam fino al 1979, poi a Londra dove ha lavorato per la sezione di lingua swahili della BBC, e successivamente come redattore nella rivista *Africa Events*. In quegli anni, insieme a altri esuli, tra cui Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Abdalla proseguì il suo attivismo politico, dapprima nel London Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners, e poi nelle fila dell'United Movement for Democracy in Kenya (wa Thiong'o 2016: 14), denunciando i soprusi del regime di Arap Moi, perpetrati nell'indifferenza dell'Occidente. Dal 1995 vive in Germania, dove ha insegnato presso l'università di Lipsia fino al 2011, e dove vive tuttora nella città di Amburgo.

A partire dalla sua scarcerazione, Abdalla si è dedicato prevalentemente alla scrittura giornalistica e saggistica<sup>19</sup> (pubblicando articoli in swahili e inglese su diverse riviste e libri, spesso attorno al tema del rapporto tra scrittore e società, tra poesia, etica e difesa dei diritti), mentre molto più raramente sono apparse sue produzioni letterarie, tra cui poesie, uscite su alcune riviste,<sup>20</sup> e lavori di traduzione, individuali e in collaborazione.<sup>21</sup> Partecipa regolarmente in Europa a diverse manifestazioni scientifiche e culturali

<sup>18</sup> A. Abdalla ha infatti fatto parte del team che ha lavorato al dizionario di swahili standard pubblicato nel 1984 dal TUKI (Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili), il Dipartimento di Studi Swahili dell'università di Dar es Salaam.

<sup>19</sup> Nel sopracitato volume *Abdilatif Abdalla: Poet in Politics* (Beck & Kresse 2016) sono stati ripubblicati quattro suoi scritti, tre in swahili e uno in inglese: *Kenya: Twendapi?, Wajibu wa Mshairi katika Jamii yake, Matatizo ya Mwandishi wa Jamii katika Afrika Huru, The Right and Might of a Pen*.

<sup>20</sup> Ad esempio le poesie *Upambaukao hutwa*, uscita su *Lugha yetu*, 35 e 36 (1979-1980), e *Na yazinge mazingiwa*, pubblicata sulla rivista *Zinduko* (1978). Una sua sola poesia in inglese è circolata pubblicamente (rimanendo in forma di manoscritto), *Peace, Love and Unity for Whom?* (1989), duro atto di accusa nei confronti del presidente Moi (Kresse 2016: 28).

<sup>21</sup> Ad esempio, la traduzione swahili, intitolata *Upweke*, della poesia olandese *Morgen* di Bert Schierbeek, compiuta durante la sua partecipazione al festival "Poetry International", tenutosi a Rotterdam nel 1991 (Samsom 2011: 2), o la collaborazione con Alena Rettová alla traduzione swahili dell'opera teatrale *Die Vernissage* dell'autore ceco Vaclav Havel, pubblicata con il titolo *Uzinduzi* (2006).

relative alla lingua e letteratura swahili<sup>22</sup> e, dalla fine della dittatura di Moi, il poeta viene spesso invitato in Kenya in occasione di eventi culturali, premi letterari, festival e conferenze, dove le sue poesie vengono ancora recepite con grande interesse e attenzione,<sup>23</sup> grazie alla sua poetica in cui convivono imprescindibilmente *engagement* e raffinatezza stilistica, passione politica e ricerca estetica, stilemi di una tradizione classica a lungo sedimentata e creatività, sensibilità moderna, urgenza espressiva, in un connubio che cattura il lettore/uditore e mette alla prova chi si accinga a tradurne i componimenti.

### Sfide e soluzioni traduttive per i versi di Abdilatif Abdalla

Nel volume *Ushairi na Uhuru* sono stati proposti al lettore italiano otto componimenti per ciascuno dei due autori. Sette delle otto poesie di Abdalla derivano dalla raccolta poetica *Sauti ya Dhiki*, mentre *Ukurasa bikira* (Pagina vergine) è stata composta più recentemente, e ci è stata gentilmente offerta dall'autore al quale avevamo chiesto un testo poetico ancora non pubblicato da tradurre.<sup>24</sup> All'inizio del lavoro, la prima questione che mi si è posta davanti è stata come selezionare un mini-corpus per la raccolta, affrontata con la consapevolezza che, così come ogni progetto editoriale in sé, ciascuna opera di selezione ha un peso determinante sulla ricezione della poesia di un autore. La linea seguita è stata quella di conciliare tre esigenze: dar spazio alla mia esperienza estetica nella fruizione delle poesie, tenere in conto i tempi del lavoro, e offrire ai lettori una scelta di componimenti che riflettesse le diverse anime del *diwani* (sconforto, solitudine, nostalgia della famiglia e dell'amata, così come resilienza, forza morale, denuncia politica),

<sup>22</sup> Abdalla, ad esempio, partecipa regolarmente al *Swahili Colloquium*, un convegno annuale dedicato agli studi swahili che si tiene da trent'anni in Germania, le prime edizioni a Francoforte e in seguito presso l'università di Bayreuth.

<sup>23</sup> Molti video girati durante queste manifestazioni sono visibili su youtube; un esempio interessante di rilettura in chiave contemporanea della sua opera è la drammatizzazione della sua poesia dialogica *Mnazi: Vuta n'kuvute* (Palma da cocco: Tira e molla), tratta dalla raccolta *Sauti ya Dhiki* (Abdalla 1973: 17), realizzata da tre giovani attori durante il Festival della Cultura di Lamu nel 2009 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2TJZrs4G0Q>).

<sup>24</sup> Le origini di questa poesia si trovano in *Upweke*, traduzione swahili ad opera di Abdalla della poesia olandese *Morgen* di Bert Schierbeek, compiuta durante la sua partecipazione al Festival Poetry International, tenutosi a Rotterdam nel 1991. Da questa traduzione l'autore ha poi sviluppato una nuova creazione poetica, tradotta in inglese da R. Samsom in occasione di un seminario a Berlino (Samsom 2011: 4).



ma anche la sua varietà metrica e stilistica, nonché la dimensione fortemente dialogica della poesia swahili, come sarà approfondito più avanti.

Il passo successivo nel processo traduttivo è stato decidere come rendere due tratti fondamentali della poetica di Abdalla, ossia l'uso della varietà swahili di Mombasa (*kimvita*) e il rispetto della prosodia classica swahili. Questi due elementi, come detto precedentemente, negli anni della post-indipendenza lo identificavano come poeta tradizionalista e gli valsero il plauso di molti poeti e critici swahili della costa (si veda ad esempio l'introduzione di Shihabuddin Chiraghdin a *Sauti ya Dhiki*), che interpretavano come forma di affermazione culturale, in reazione alle influenze culturali occidentali, il suo linguaggio e le forme poetiche in rima e metrica regolare. Mi sembra, tuttavia, che associare il poetare di Abdalla ad una posizione identitaria difensiva, avversa ad altri mondi swahilofoni, sarebbe decisamente fuorviante, riducendo a una posizione ideologica chiusa ciò che per il poeta ha invece una connotazione primariamente esistenziale, di connessione alla propria famiglia, al proprio ambiente, al proprio retaggio culturale. Ecco perché durante gli anni terribili della prigionia la scrittura poetica è divenuta per lui, come racconta spesso in pubblico,<sup>25</sup> un'ancora che lo ha salvato dalla pazzia, nonché, come sottolineato da molti critici (Nyaigotti-Chacha 1992, Kresse 2016, Walibora Waliaula 2016), uno strumento politico di resistenza e sfida nei confronti di un governo che tentava di annichilirlo, come uomo e attivista, e a cui Abdalla rispondeva con la propria voce, con la propria lingua madre, con la propria identità culturale, anche in antitesi alle politiche linguistiche del Kenya che promuovevano principalmente l'inglese o una forma di swahili standard a lui estranea e creata artificialmente a partire dall'epoca coloniale.<sup>26</sup>

Per quanto riguarda la resa del linguaggio dialettale, la scelta che ho adottato è stata quella di non preservarlo, utilizzando per le mie traduzioni l'italiano, non solo perché avevo in mente un pubblico più ampio, ma soprattutto per evitare un linguaggio per me innaturale, che avrebbe totalmente tradito l'essenza della poesia di Abdalla. In teoria, difatti, avrei potuto

<sup>25</sup> L'ultima volta è stata in occasione del trentesimo *Swahili Colloquium* (26-28 maggio 2017, università di Bayreuth).

<sup>26</sup> Nel 1930 fu fondato l'*East African Inter-Territorial Language Committee*, organismo coloniale addetto al processo di standardizzazione della lingua swahili e della sua nuova ortografia in caratteri latini. Venne selezionata a tal fine una forma dialettale di riferimento, il *kiunguja*, dialetto parlato nella città di Zanzibar e dintorni (Mazrui 2007: 23).

utilizzare il dialetto della mia città, ma, pur essendo nata a Napoli, il napoletano non è mai stato una lingua del mio vissuto, al di là dell'accento, qualche parola o intercalare, dunque ho escluso l'idea di lavorare con questo vernacolo, di cui non ho sufficiente padronanza. Tuttavia, pensando in particolare ad alcune poesie, nella mia mente risuonavano le sonorità del napoletano, che mi sembravano molto adatte a esprimere la forza ed esuberanza espressiva degli originali swahili, ecco perché ho proposto la traduzione dialettale della poesia *Kuno kunena* (Questo parlare) al poeta Mimmo Grasso, il quale ha creato, sulla base del mio lavoro, un testo che si pone a metà strada tra una traduzione e una riscrittura, dal titolo *'O pparlà*. Per mostrare un esempio della differenza tra le due versioni, riporto qui in basso la resa in italiano e quella in napoletano (Aiello & Gaudioso 2017: 57) dei primi due versi della poesia (*Kuno kunena kwa nini, kukanikomeya kuno? /Kwani kunena kunani, kukashikwa kani vino?*):

Ma questo parlare perché, mi ha qui imprigionato?  
Perché 'sto parlare com'è, ch'è con rabbia castigato?  
I' pe pparlà mo stongo ccà nzerrato,  
pe stu pparlà mo m'hanno mazzariato.

Per concludere queste osservazioni che muovono dall'uso del dialetto in *Sauti ya Dhiki*, proprio il lavoro di traduzione mi ha mostrato con evidenza una caratteristica del linguaggio di Abdalla che non avevo colto appieno nelle precedenti letture, ossia quanto esso sia fortemente localizzato, per l'uso del *kimvita*, ma abbia al tempo stesso una dimensione universale, a causa del suo lessico sostanzialmente privo di *realia* e riferimenti locali particolari, a eccezione di qualche nome di luogo e di alcuni richiami religiosi (come le invocazioni al Profeta), a differenza di molte altre poesie e opere swahili che richiedono, pertanto, una riflessione attenta sul trattamento traduttologico delle specificità culturali.

Venendo ora all'altro tratto distintivo della poesia di Abdalla per cui ho stabilito preliminarmente un approccio traduttivo, ossia l'utilizzo della prosodia tradizionale swahili, in questo caso ho optato per la preservazione della metrica e dello schema delle rime degli originali. Questo tipo di strategia traduttiva è stato talvolta criticato, ad esempio da André Lefevere nel volume *Translating poetry: seven strategies and a blueprint* (1975), sia perché concentrarsi su un singolo aspetto può far perdere di vista l'insieme del testo, sia perché la resa

delle rime nella lingua d'approdo potrebbe risultare meccanica, se non addirittura caricaturale (Bassnett 2013: 84). Ciò nonostante, sin dagli esordi di questo lavoro ho sentito l'esigenza di conservare sia la regolarità metrica che la struttura delle rime<sup>27</sup> dei componimenti originali, mettendo così in atto un procedimento di straniamento o xenofilizzazione<sup>28</sup> per alcuni motivi che esporrò qui di seguito. Innanzitutto, l'uso di rime e schemi metrici (*vina na mizani*) è a mio avviso un elemento centrale di queste poesie poiché è alla base non solamente della prosodia praticata lungo la costa, come è stato detto più sopra, ma della stessa estetica poetica nella cultura swahili, in quanto proprio la rigidità e i limiti imposti dai generi tramandati, ciò che agli occhi dei poeti innovatori appariva artificioso e un freno alla creatività (Kezilahabi 1983: 146), rappresentano per il poeta swahili l'incentivo alla creazione verbale, non un esercizio formalistico ma il piacere del giocare con la lingua e con i rimandi culturali di una produzione assimilata fin dall'infanzia.<sup>29</sup> Inoltre, il fatto di tradurre in italiano, la cui tradizione poetica, analogamente a quella swahili, ha costruito le rime (esterne e interne) sulla base di un sistema di sillabe perlopiù aperte, oltre a presentare una varietà di forme metriche che, seppur diverse, sono ugualmente basate sulla quantità sillabica, ha fatto sì che la riproduzione della prosodia originale, anche se ovviamente complessa, non mi risultasse troppo ostica né culturalmente estranea, consentendomi di praticare la traduzione dei versi di *Sauti ya Dhiki* non in maniera tecnica, fredda, ma con una "inventiva sprigionata dalle regole" non molto dissimile dall'approccio dei poeti swahili. Il tentativo di conciliare la regolarità prosodica ad una resa del senso dei versi ha richiesto, in effetti, un notevole lavoro per cui mi sono anche avvalsa delle licenze linguistiche e ortografiche del linguaggio poetico italiano, ma che si è fondato principalmente sulla ricerca lessicale e sul gioco sintattico. Nell'ambito della ricerca lessicale, oltre alle possibilità offerte dalla varietà sinonimica, in qualche raro caso mi sono concessa delle forme di domesticazione, come nella strofa qui sotto riportata,

<sup>27</sup> A differenza di Andrea Saggiomo che, sia nel lavoro di tesi (vedi appendice) sia in un articolo uscito su *Smerilliana* (2007: 73-104), preserva la stessa lunghezza dei versi originali e la loro struttura bipartita, ma non la regolarità della rima.

<sup>28</sup> Ossia la scelta di presentare al lettore qualcosa di poco familiare. L'opposizione tra straniamento o xenofilizzazione e addomesticamento o localizzazione, *foreignization* e *domestication* nella terminologia anglosassone introdotta da Lawrence Venuti, è una questione cruciale per la traduzione (Eco 2003: 172-174).

<sup>29</sup> Come mi è stato confermato anche dal poeta Haji Gora Haji, che ha parlato del compito di "modellare la lingua affinché prenda forma in metro e rima" (Intervista del 30 luglio 2016).

dalla poesia *N'shishiyelo ni Lilo* (A questo io m'afferro), in cui la parola swahili *ngome* (fortezza) è stata tradotta come “bastiglia”, con l'iniziale minuscola a intendere un uso generalizzato della parola (Aiello & Gaudio 2017: 48-49):

*Kweli menibaidisha, na huko kwetu mjini*  
*Pia menitenganisha, na walo wangu nyumbani*  
*Kuja kuniadhibisha, kwa kunileta ngomeni*  
*Yote sababu ni nini? Ni kwamba mesema kweli*

Il vero m'ha isolato, dalla città mia per miglia  
 Inoltre m'ha separato, da casa, dalla famiglia  
 Castigare mi ha fatto, portare alla bastiglia  
 Perché 'sta condizione mia? Perché ho detto il vero

Un altro esempio si trova nella traduzione della poesia *Nakukumbuka* (Ti ricordo), dedicata alla sua donna, il cui verso finale “*Mwombe uhai Moliwa, na njema hali*” (lett. Prega il Signore per la vita, e una buona condizione) è stato tradotto, per coerenza prosodica con il resto della quartina, “Che non veda gli Elisi, prega ‘1 Clemente’” (Aiello & Gaudio 2017: 62-63). Il riferimento agli Elisi, pur essendo chiaramente una forma di domesticazione, ha dal mio punto di vista il pregio di far emergere nel testo italiano un riferimento dotto, un elemento di ‘classicità’ che compare spesso in questa raccolta poetica, per le sue frequenti allusioni, non percepibili dal lettore italiano, ai versi di poeti del passato, come Fumo Liyongo<sup>30</sup> e soprattutto il conterraneo Muyaka. Nella traduzione sopra riportata si nota anche come alcuni elementi siano stati talvolta spostati da un emistichio all'altro, ma mai oltre il confine del verso, nel rispetto di un altro dei cardini della prosodia swahili, ossia il concetto di *kujitosheleza* (essere autosufficienti), per cui ogni strofa dovrebbe avere in sé un senso compiuto, e possibilmente anche ogni verso dovrebbe essere finito, senza forme di *enjambement* (Vierke 2011: 25). Questa tecnica, però, è stata utilizzata solo di rado, cercando di riservarla ai momenti più narrativi, presenti nei componimenti più lunghi, ed evitandola accuratamente in quelle strofe più liriche e dense, costruite spesso proprio sulla struttura bipartita dei versi, suddivisi in due emistichi, e sui

<sup>30</sup> Liyongo Fumo wa ba-Uriy di Shaka (isola di Pate), vissuto tra il XII e XIV secolo, è il primo poeta swahili di cui si conosce il nome. La sua storia, con molti tratti leggendari, fu messa in versi nel Novecento da Muhammad Kijumwa, ma esistono molti componimenti attribuiti a lui ed altri che si riferiscono a episodi della sua vita (Bertoncini Zúbková 2000: 15).

parallelismi. Un buon esempio è la poesia *Siwati* (Non mollo), in cui il senso della poesia prende forma e forza dal ritmo poetico (Vierke 2017: 44), dove determinazione e perseveranza corrispondono organicamente alla ripetizione ossessiva della forma verbale *siwati* in posizione anaforica, ribadita con diversa specificazione in ogni emistichio iniziale<sup>31</sup> (anche grazie a varie assonanze e consonanze), ed espansa nella seconda parte del verso, così come nell'estratto riportato di seguito (Aiello & Gaudio 2017: 58-59):

*Siwati ngaadhibiwa, adhabu kila mifano*  
*Siwati ningaambiwa, 'tapawa kila kinono*  
*Siwati lililo sawa, silibanduwi mkono*

Non mollo pur se punito, con pene d'ogni guisa  
 Non mollo pur se attratto, con ogni grassa promessa  
 Non mollo quel ch'è giusto, mai staccherò la presa

All'interno degli emistichi, invece, ho spesso operato inversioni dell'ordine sintattico nel testo originale. Tenendo presente che nella lingua swahili l'ordine neutro degli elementi, come in italiano, è soggetto - verbo - oggetto, nella traduzione è capitato sia di sostituire all'ordine enfatico/poetico del testo swahili una disposizione lineare dell'italiano, sia il contrario. Un esempio del primo caso è l'incipit della seconda strofa della poesia *N'shishiyelo ni Lilo* (A questo io mi afferro): "*Walinena walimwengu, wa zama zilopisiye*" (lett. Dissero gli uomini, delle epoche passate), tradotto "Gli uomini dissero, in quel tempo passato" (Aiello & Gaudio 2017: 46-47), mentre due strofe più avanti troviamo il procedimento inverso, con "*Wameniona mbaya, kumshinda Firauni*" (lett. Mi hanno visto cattivo, più del faraone) che, sempre per rispettare la struttura della strofa, viene reso "Malvagio mi hanno visto, persino più del faraone" (ibidem). Sempre per attenermi allo schema prosodico del testo di partenza, in alcuni casi ho adoperato dei procedimenti di traduzione meno letterale, ad esempio aggiungendo elementi che espandono il nucleo semantico centrale, come nella sopracitata poesia *N'shishiyelo ni Lilo*, in cui il verso "*Baruwa sitakikani, kwandika wala kwetewa*" (lett. Lettere non mi è permesso, scrivere né ricevere) è stato reso "Lettere posso ai cari, mai scriver né ricevere" (Aiello & Gaudio 2017: 48-49). In un solo caso ho adoperato una strategia di metaforizzazione, precisa-

<sup>31</sup> Tranne che nell'ultimo verso di ogni strofa, quello in cui la rima cambia, non più ab ma bc.

mente in un verso della poesia *Ukurasa bikira* (Aiello & Gaudio 2017: 66-67), in cui la domanda “*Umenuna?*” (lett. Sei imbronciato/a?), al fine di preservare la rima, è stata resa tramite l’immagine della nuvola, che rinvia all’espressione rannuvolarsi (essere rabbuiato, scuro in viso, assumere un atteggiamento preoccupato):

*Chamba: “Nena, na mimi nakusikiza  
Au guna, aula ninong’oneza  
Umenuna? Basi ngaa niapiza!”*

Dico: “Parla, ed io sto ad ascoltare  
O brontola, o meglio puoi sussurrare  
Tal nuvola? Ora mi puoi bestemmia!”

La strategia traduttiva di preservare la struttura prosodica dei componimenti swahili ha consentito, inoltre, di fare emergere, almeno in parte, la varietà metrica di *Sauti ya Dhiki*. Nella raccolta i componimenti rientrano in due principali categorie prosodiche swahili: *wimbo*, terzine di versi di varia lunghezza, con rima finale e una o più cesure (Shariff 1988: 45), e in maggioranza *shairi*, poesie composte da strofe di quattro versi o più divisi in due emistichi, con la stessa rima interna e esterna (non per forza centrale) nei primi tre versi, e diversi schemi possibili di rima nell’ultimo. Il numero di sillabe è comunemente sedici (otto più otto), ma possono essere anche dodici (sei più sei o quattro più otto) (Shariff 1988: 49). Queste due categorie poetiche hanno subito nel tempo un certo processo di uniformazione, in particolare lo *shairi*, che a partire dall’epoca coloniale è divenuto un potente mezzo di comunicazione “ordinaria” e dibattito pubblico, diffuso anche in periodo post-indipendenza, specialmente in Tanzania, tramite giornali e radio (Topan 1974: 176). La pubblicazione del libro di Amri Abedi, *Sheria za kutunga mashairi* (Le regole per comporre poesia, 1954), scritto con l’intento di prevenire un deterioramento della tradizione poetica swahili ad opera di tanti poeti neofiti, ha avuto l’effetto di promuovere un po’ in tutto il modo swahilofono una riduzione della varietà di categorie prosodiche utilizzate e una standardizzazione delle stesse, soprattutto lo *shairi*, che viene composto oramai quasi solamente in quartine di sedici sillabe, e con pochissime varianti nell’ultimo verso rispetto allo schema di rime più diffuso, ossia ab/ab/ab/bc. Nella raccolta *Sauti ya Dhiki*, Abdilatif Abdalla si mostra immune a questa forma di omologazione, utilizzando una grande varietà stilistica, sia per quanto riguarda le poesie in forma di *wimbo* (o *tathlita*), sia per quanto riguarda i *mashairi*, per i quali ado-

pera sette diversi schemi metrici (Nyaigotti-Chacha 1992: 120-123). Nella nostra antologia, ho cercato di far emergere anche questa caratteristica della poetica di Abdalla. Vi appaiono, infatti, due diversi tipi di terzine: versi di dodici sillabe ripartite in quattro più otto, con lo schema di rima ab/ab/ab, nelle poesie *Mamba* (Il coccodrillo) e *Ukurasa bikira* (Pagina vergine), e versi di tredici sillabe ripartite in otto più cinque, di nuovo con lo schema ab/ab/ab, nella poesia *Nakukumbuka* (Ti ricordo). Per quanto riguarda i *mashairi*, ho incluso quartine della tipologia più diffusa, ossia quartine di sedici sillabe con cesura centrale e schema delle rime ab/ab/ab/bc, come in *N'shishiyelo ni Lilo* (A questo io mi afferro), *Siwati* (Non mollo) e *N'sharudi* (Son tornato), quartine sempre di sedici sillabe divise in due emistichi di uguale lunghezza ma con schema di rime ab/ab/ab/c/d, come in *Kuno Kunena*,<sup>32</sup> e infine la forma detta *msuko* (Walibora Waliaula 2009: 218), composta da tre versi di sedici sillabe con cesura centrale, più un verso finale “tronco” di sole otto sillabe, e schema di rime ab/ab/ab/b, nel componimento di una singola strofa *Tuza moyo* (Placa l'animo).

Data la natura del testo poetico, in cui le sottili relazioni che legano i vari aspetti dell'espressione e del contenuto sono particolarmente fitte e sofisticate, avendo la forma nei diversi ambiti (linguistico, metrico, fono-simbolico) una sostanza che concorre in modo dominante a costruire l'insieme testuale e l'interazione dei suoi vari livelli di senso (Eco 2003: 53-56), il traduttore si trova nella difficile condizione di non poter restituire interamente in una lingua diversa quel “tutto che si tiene”,<sup>33</sup> e la sfida della traduzione si gioca principalmente sulla scelta di quali livelli privilegiare, di quali siano le relazioni di senso fondamentali e di come ricostruirle, almeno in parte. In alcuni casi, purtroppo, può succedere che un aspetto dell'espressione che incide profondamente sulla sostanza poetica non riesca a essere trasposto nella lingua d'arrivo, come è il caso della poesia *Kuno kunena* (Questo parlare), in cui l'indignazione per il trattamento rabbioso subito dopo aver esposto pubblicamente le proprie idee, e la resilienza nel continuare ad ogni costo a esercitare il proprio diritto di espressione, toccano le corde dell'animo del lettore/uditore<sup>34</sup> attraverso l'andamento fonico del testo, principalmente co-

<sup>32</sup> In questa poesia di due strofe, inoltre, la parola rimante in posizione c nella prima strofa, ossia *kunena* (parlare), corrisponde alla parola in posizione d nell'ultima, oltre che al nucleo del titolo.

<sup>33</sup> Allusione alla celebre formula di de Saussure *tout se tient* (tutto è in relazione con tutto).

<sup>34</sup> *Kuno kunena* è una delle poesie che il poeta recita spesso in pubblico, si veda ad esempio il video all'indirizzo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0soJOZjjCc4>.

struito, oltre che su un gioco sapiente di assonanze, sulla ripetizione ossessiva di due suoni consonantici, *k* e *n*, presenti nella parola *kunena* (parlare), in *kukanikomeya* (imprigionarmi), in *kani* (rabbia), etc. (Aiello & Gaudioso 2017: 56-57):

*Kuno kunena kwa nini, kukanikomeya kuno?*  
*Kwani kunena kunani, kukashikwa kani vino?*  
*Kani iso na kiini, na kuninuniya mno*  
*Kanama nako kunena, kwaonekana ni kuwi*

Ma questo parlare perché, mi ha qui imprigionato?  
 Perché 'sto parlare com'è, ch'è con rabbia castigato?  
 Una rabbia senza perché, che mi ha sì indignato  
 Caspita questo parlare, malvagio può apparire

Pur avendo cercato di riprodurre parzialmente l'effetto della ripetizione, principalmente quella della consonante *p*, è chiaro che il testo non rende pienamente quell'incedere duro e incalzante che deriva dalla natura stessa dei suoni e dalla struttura agglutinante della lingua swahili, pur mantenendo comunque un ritmo ossessivo favorito dalla cesura e dalle rime.

Le poesie della raccolta *Ushairi na Uhuru* presentano al lettore italiano anche due caratteristiche fondamentali della poesia swahili legate alla sua natura intrinsecamente dialogica, in particolare l'uso dei *mafumbo* (singolare *fumbo*), cioè messaggi velati, enigmatici, e la pratica del *kujibizana* (a volte definita anche *malumbano* o *mashindano*), ossia la composizione di una poesia al fine di suscitare una risposta o reazione da parte di altri poeti, in una sorta di confronto a distanza – e a volte anche di rivalità (Shariff 1988; Bierstecker 1996; Samsom 1996).

Come osservato da Ken Walibora Waliaula (2009: 229), l'uso di un linguaggio figurato (metafore, allegorie ecc.) da parte di Abdilatif Abdalla, se da un lato risponde a una esigenza di sicurezza, per sviare il controllo degli addetti alla censura, dall'altro coesiste con altri bisogni artistici e culturali del poeta, ossia la manipolazione creativa del linguaggio e il dialogo con il suo pubblico, coinvolto in un lavoro attivo di interpretazione testuale, così come espresso nella poesia *Mamba* (Il coccodrillo) (Aiello & Gaudioso 2017: 60-61), la cui strofa iniziale esprime chiaramente l'imperativo morale della parola, la ricerca della bellezza della lingua, e il rapporto di interazione con il lettore, definito



attraverso due forme verbali etimologicamente correlate al concetto di *mafumbo*, ossia *-fumba*<sup>35</sup> (chiudere, parlare velatamente) e la sua derivazione<sup>36</sup> *-fumbua* (svelare):

*Nami nambe, niwe kama waambao*  
*Niupambe, upendeze wasomao*  
*Niufumbe, wafumbuwe wawezao*  
*Kuna mamba, mtoni metakabari*  
*Ajigamba, na kujiona hodari*  
*Yuwaamba, kwamba 'taishi dahari*

Ch'io parli, sì come i parlatori  
 Che l'abbelli, e piaccia ai lettori  
 Che lo veli, lo svelin gl'intenditori  
 Tronfio spunta, un coccodrillo nel rivo  
 Ei si vanta, e si considera bravo  
 Ei vi conta, ch'in eterno sarà vivo

La poesia conclude il suo *fumbo* riflettendo sulla transitorietà della vita<sup>37</sup> e immaginando la morte del coccodrillo, che i critici hanno identificato in Kenyatta, ma a volte anche interpretato come emblema dell'autocrate africano post-coloniale (Walibora Waliaula 2009: 232), un atto profondamente audace e sovversivo da parte di un poeta imprigionato.

<sup>35</sup> *Mashairi* che sottopongono al pubblico un enigma incentrato su un animale, letteralmente *kufunga na kufungua nyama* (legare e sciogliere un animale), sono una tradizione molto antica nella poesia swahili. Probabilmente sono iniziati a Lamu, dove venivano recitati durante le cerimonie *gungu* (Abdulaziz 1979: 51). Questa pratica, comunque, rinvia anche al genere swahili dell'indovinello, comune anche a altre culture africane. Il rimando all'oralità è marcato nella poesia attraverso il ricorso al verbo "parlare" nel primo verso, e alla parafrasi di un proverbio, "*Hakuna lenye mwanzo lisilokuwa na mwisho*" (Non c'è nulla che ha un inizio senza una fine), nell'ultimo verso della poesia, che recita "*Maadamu, lenye mwanzo lina mwisho*" (In quanto, ciò che ha un inizio ha una fine).

<sup>36</sup> Tramite l'estensione *-u-*, detta "contraria" (Bertoncini Zúbková 2009: 156).

<sup>37</sup> Transitorietà e impermanenza come attributi quintessenziali della vita umana sulla terra sono concetti cardine della poesia classica swahili (e della riflessione filosofica islamica), che ritroviamo ad esempio nel poema *Al-Inkishafi* (L'indagine) di Sayyid Abdalla bin Nasir (circa 1820) (Bertoncini Zúbková 2000: 22).

*Akumbuke, siku yake ikifika*  
*Roho yake, ajuwe itamtoka*  
*Nguvu zake, kikomoche zitafika*

Sia memore, il suo giorno arriverà  
 'l suo essere, sappia che s'allontanerà  
 Del potere, il termine arriverà

Come accennato più sopra, un altro ambito in cui si manifesta la dialogicità della poesia swahili è la pratica del *kujibizana*, del botta e risposta tra poeti, un dialogo sfasato nello spazio e nel tempo che lungo la costa swahili può svilupparsi in veri e propri dibattiti poetici (Samsom 1996: 2). Nell'antologia *Ushairi na Uhuru* ho incluso anche un esempio di questa prassi poetica, cioè la poesia *Tuza moyo* (Placa l'animo), risposta a una persona (probabilmente il fratello, Ustadh Ahmad Nassir Juma Bhalo) che gli aveva fatto recapitare una poesia<sup>38</sup> in cui lo incoraggiava ad avere pazienza e ad affidarsi alla preghiera:

*Akhi tuliza mtima, uwate kusunoneka*  
*Hakuna lisilokoma, siku 'kifika 'tatoka*  
*Kusubiri ni lazima, na kumuomba Rabbuka*  
*Wasiya wako 'meshika*

Fratello mio placa'l core, finiscila di soffrire  
 Non v'è che non h'a finire, un giorno potrò uscir  
 Aspettar è di dovere, e invocar il Signore  
 Ho colto 'l tuo ammonire

Come considerazione conclusiva di questo saggio, un'altra grande scommessa per il traduttore è come restituire nella lingua d'arrivo non solo le varietà geo-linguistiche di alcuni termini, ma anche la loro complessità cognitiva, culturale e semantica, esigenza che dà luogo a continue negoziazioni nel corso del processo traduttivo. Nella poesia succitata, ad esempio, troviamo due

<sup>38</sup> *Subira huvuta kheri, ukisubiri ni mno/Nawe zidi kusubiri, wekeze mbingu mikono/Uombe alo Qahari, inshallah hukosi neno/Ushike wasiya huno* (La pazienza porta la felicità, se hai pazienza sarà tanta/E tu continua ad averne, rivolgì le braccia al cielo/Prega Allah, se Dio vuole ce la farai/Cogli la mia ammonizione) (Abdalla 1973: xiii).

sinonimi che in swahili indicano il cuore, *moyo* e *mtima* (il secondo termine è usato soltanto nei dialetti swahili settentrionali). Il cuore riveste un ruolo cruciale nella codifica delle espressioni metaforiche emozionali in swahili (Tramutoli & Bosire 2014: 100; si veda anche il saggio di Tramutoli in questo volume), come anche in italiano, e spesso i termini *moyo* (cuore) e *roho* (anima) sono intercambiabili in entrambe le lingue. Nella traduzione italiana, la scelta è stata di tradurre il termine *moyo* nel titolo della poesia come “animo” e *mtima* nell’incipit come “cuore”, in modo tale da rendere conto sia della diversità linguistica nel testo originale, seppure in maniera imperfetta in quanto non è più distinguibile la variante regionale, sia della complessità dell’uso figurato di questa parola, intesa come *locus* delle emozioni e dell’anima.

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## Appendice

Opere swahili in traduzione italiana riportate in appendice di tesi di laurea e conservate presso l'Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale" (in ordine cronologico per anno accademico):

- Hussein, Ebrahim, *Kinjeketile* (1969), trad. Gaia Maria Conti, a.a. 1981-82.
- Kezilahabi, Euphrase, *Rosa Mistika* (1971), trad. Rita Vassallo, a.a. 1986-87.
- Mukajanga, Kajubi, *Mpenzi* (1985), trad. Graziella Acquaviva, a.a. 1990-91.
- Racconti orali raccolti nel villaggio di Tongoni (Tanzania): "Kanji danji", "Mohamed bin Zuwera"; "Maskini, watoto wake saba na jini ya bahari"; "Mohamed akili nyingi"; "Kisiki kya mkunazi"; "Kigano cha Nuru Sanaa"; "Shehe", trad. Ciro Marzio, a.a. 1991-92.
- Mkangi, Katama, *Mafuta* (1984), trad. Marisa Barile, a.a. 1994-95.
- Mohamed, Mohamed Suleiman, *Kiu* (1972), trad. Paola Sacco, a.a. 1994-95.
- Balisidya, Ndyanao, *Shida* (1975), trad. Antonella Francone, a.a. 1996-97.
- Mohamed, Said Ahmed, *Utengano* (1980), trad. Flavia Aiello, a.a. 1996-97.
- Mohamed, Said Ahmed, *Tata za Asumini* (1990), trad. Irene Brunotti, a.a. 1997-98.
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- Mohamed, Mohamed Suleiman, *Nyota ya Rehema* (1976), trad. Valentina Auricchio, a.a. 2001-02.
- Adam, Adam Shafi, *Vuta n'kuvute* (1999), trad. Maria De Meo, a.a. 2001-02.
- Lihamba, Amandina, *Mkutano wa pili wa ndege* (1992) trad. Graziella Moffa, a.a. 2002-03.

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- Mohamed, Said Ahmed, *Kisa katika nuru* (1988) trad. Pompea Nocera, a.a. 2003-04.
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- Hussein, Ebrahim, *Mashetani* (1973) trad. Samuel Barubiriza, a.a. 2003-04.
- Mohamed, Said Ahmed, *Amezidi* (1995) trad. Emanuela Izzo, a.a. 2003-04.
- Kezilahabi, Euphrase, *Dunia uwanja wa fujo* (1975) trad. Corrado Cossetti, a.a. 2003-04.
- Kezilahabi, Euphrase, *Kaputula la Marx* (1978) e “Cha mnyonge utakipika hadharani” (1992); Ruhumbika, Gabriel, “Wali wa ndevu” (1992); Mugyabuso Mulokozi, “Siri ya bwanyenye” (1992) trad. Chiara Mammarella, a.a. 2003-04.
- Mohamed, Said Ahmed, *Kivuli kinaishi* (1990) trad. Maria G. Di Molfetta, a.a. 2004-05.
- Racconti orali tratti da *Swahili tales as told by natives of Zanzibar* (1870) di E. Steere: “Kititi na Fisi, na Simba”; “Mbwa na Paka”; “Kisa cha Sungura na Cheche”; “Simba na Kulungu”; “Sungura na Tembo” trad. Barbara Bifulco, a.a. 2004-05.
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Mgeni, Ahmed, “Mzee Muhammedi kaingia mjini” (1981) trad. Pierpaolo Medusa, 2016-17.

Kezilahabi, Euphrase, “Mayai waziri wa maradhi” (1978) trad. Emiliano Minerba, a.a. 2016-17.

IL GENIO DELLA LETTERATURA SWAHILI:  
HUSSEIN E KEZILAHABI A CONFRONTO

ROBERTO GAUDIOSO  
(Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”)

Qui mira e qui ti specchia,  
Secol superbo e sciocco,  
Che il calle insino allora  
Dal risorto pensier segnato innanti  
Abbandonasti, e volti addietro i passi,  
Del ritornar ti vanti,  
E proceder il chiami.  
Al tuo pargoleggiar gl’ingegni tutti,  
Di cui lor sorte rea padre ti fece,  
Vanno adulando, ancora  
Ch’a ludibrio talora  
T’abbian fra se. Non io  
Con tal vergogna scenderò sotterra;  
Ma il disprezzo piuttosto che si serra  
Di te nel petto mio,  
Mostrato avrò quanto si possa aperto:  
Ben ch’io sappia che obbligo  
Preme chi troppo all’età propria increbbe.  
(Giacomo Leopardi, *La Ginestra, o fiore del deserto*)

\* Non ho mai avuto l’occasione d’essere studente della professoressa Zúbková Bertoncini. Quando ho iniziato il primo anno di studi swahili, lei insegnava agli studenti dell’ultimo anno prima del suo pensionamento. Devo, però, ringraziarla dell’attenzione nei miei confronti, fin già dai primi anni di studio e in seguito, è stata sempre un punto di riferimento e confronto. Nonostante gli studenti non possano beneficiare più di un insegnamento diretto della Bertoncini, devono a lei se è possibile tale insegnamento e se i materiali di studio sono tutti in italiano, elemento fondamentale per la didattica. Inoltre, le sue dispense di letteratura sono utilissime per tracciare la storia e i generi della letteratura swahili.



Genio qui non solo è cifra di una scala valoriale, quanto più di cose che accomunano Ebrahim Hussein ed Euphrase Kezilahabi. Genio è il nume tutelare latino, *Genius loci* è l'entità che è a protezione della casa, della famiglia, di una tradizione; nonché termine usato in architettura ad indicare l'insieme dei significati, materiali e immateriali, che costituiscono il carattere di un luogo. In questo senso Hussein e Kezilahabi appaiono, perché riformatori, assai lontani dall'idea di "nume tutelare". Sono rivoluzionari, non per questo però geni; ciò che li rende tali è la loro estetica e il loro pensiero, la continua ricerca di forme e materia. Oggi dopo cinquant'anni dalla rivoluzione letteraria in Tanzania, Hussein e Kezilahabi appaiono ancora come degli scapigliati, due eccezioni della letteratura swahili, e, in quanto eccezioni, in modo diverso innalzati o accantonati, malnoti o non riconosciuti. Eppure, non ci sono altre opere se non quelle di Hussein e Kezilahabi che, come si direbbe oggi in architettura, per contemporaneità, complementarietà e vicinanza potrebbero essere definite *geni loci* della letteratura swahili. Sono contemporanei: Hussein del '43, Kezilahabi del '44; entrambi iniziano a scrivere alla fine degli anni sessanta. Hussein nasce da una famiglia musulmana colta e indipendentista nella città costiera di Kilwa che ospita tra le più importanti rovine della Tanzania, testimonianza di un ricco passato tra il XIII e il XV sec., Kezilahabi, invece, era figlio del capo villaggio di Namagondo ad Ukerewe, isola del Lago Vittoria di pescatori e contadini, cristianizzata ma caratterizzata ancora oggi da vivi elementi estranei alle religioni monoteiste dominanti oggi in Tanzania. Kezilahabi e Hussein sono due intellettuali, accademici; Hussein lo è stato fino ad una parte della sua vita. Le loro opere, creative o di critica, sono caratterizzate da un pensiero complesso e profondo, segno del tempo trascorso a pensare e a dialogare su tutto; nemmeno la forma delle loro opere trova scampo, è così che risultano continui innovatori. Hussein scrive per lo più drammi, Kezilahabi poesie e romanzi.

I *geni loci* della letteratura swahili, però, nonostante la qualità delle opere non sono mai diventati canone, esempio per gli scrittori swahili successivi. Di questo si è lamentato Euphrase Kezilahabi durante la lunga intervista che gli ho fatto nel 2015 a Gaborone. Allora replicai che magari nessuno esplicitamente l'ha seguito, ma che è stato un apripista per diversi generi letterari, lui ha insistito che in poesia nessuno l'ha seguito. Da un certo punto di vista è certamente vero, se si escludono i poeti della sua generazione sulla quale ha certamente influito (Mulokozi, Kahigi, Said Ahmed Mohamed e, forse, anche Kithaka wa Mberia), i nuovi poeti o scrivono in inglese o si rifanno al verso classico swahili, spesso enfatizzando attraverso quest'aspetto (ma non solo)

l'appartenenza identitaria. È un'operazione di senso contrario rispetto a quella di Kezilahabi e Hussein, la cui poetica è fortemente innovatrice, alla ricerca di forme e temi che si coniugassero col loro pensiero, la scelta di scrivere in swahili per loro non è mai stata una scelta regressiva. È vero che per Hussein il swahili è lingua madre e per Kezilahabi è una scelta consapevole della lingua della detribalizzazione, ma entrambi sono consci dell'internazionalità e multiculturalità dei parlanti swahili e colgono l'importanza di una ricerca artistica piena, intesa non solo come espressione culturale, ma come studio e formazione. A maggior ragione per Hussein si può dire che il suo percorso è stato più solitario, forse più radicale ed enigmatico. Si potrebbe sintetizzare con la felice formula usata da Alain Ricard<sup>1</sup> nel suo saggio su Hussein (2000: 90): "Sheik Ebrahim: Actor and Martyr". È sorprendente e triste notare come a quasi vent'anni dal saggio di Ricard, il suo grido d'allarme sull'isolamento di Hussein resti quasi totalmente inascoltato. Ricard coglie bene l'esperienza esistenziale ed estetica di Hussein (2000: 32).

*Ebrahim Hussein experiences the contradiction in East African societies in an intense way. He tries to go beyond them by going deeper into a poetic vein, at the risk of being obscure. When he reaches a certain artistic maturity, the political debate becomes more Manichean and violent. As for him, he doesn't have the resource of exile: he cannot cut himself loose from his language and his world. Faced with the refusal to discuss or to stage his own works, he can only stay and suffer in silence, but does not resign himself to this sad fate.*

In questo senso Hussein è decisamente stato accantonato. Diverso il fato di Euphrase Kezilahabi, che ha dovuto, forse, affrontare non meno difficoltà. Siamo spesso portati a dividere in modo manicheo la letteratura swahili tra classicisti e riformisti, ma Kezilahabi si è attirato anche le critiche dei riformisti. Mlinzi Mugyabuso Mulokozi (1975: 105), commentando la prima raccolta di poesie di Kezilahabi *Kichomi* (Dolore Dilaniante, 1974), la biasima per il suo troppo criticismo, in quanto scoraggerebbe l'azione.

<sup>1</sup> Qui vorrei ricordare Alain Ricard, che da poco ci ha lasciati. Non ci lascerà però il suo forte contributo all'africanistica. Il suo saggio su Hussein rappresenta uno sprone non solo dal punto di vista del contenuto, ma anche della forma, che ha saputo fare dell'aneddoto personale e della forma discorsiva strumenti d'analisi e divulgazione come raramente è stato fatto nella critica letteraria swahili.

*Any writer who is really concerned about their welfare should give them hope and encouragement, not discouragement and despair. He should also give prescription whenever possible. For, to paraphrase Marx, the point is not to understand how bad the situation is, but to change it. Unfortunately, this important element is all but lacking in this otherwise epoch-making collection. I call it epoch-making because it is the first thorough attempt by a Swahili poet to deal critically and profoundly with contemporary social problems pertaining to the building of a new society in Tanzania and Africa in general. Furthermore, it is the first published attempt to depart radically from the old, rather outmoded Swahili prosodic rules – to free Swahili Poetry from the shackles of feudal “elegance”.*

Come direbbe il poeta italiano Giacomo Leopardi “obblio/preme chi troppo all’età propria increbbe”, Hussein è stato accantonato e Kezilahabi innalzato alla “complessità” di filosofo creando una scusa fittizia per tra-lasciare anche la sua poesia; in spregio dei motivi che hanno portato Kezilahabi alla rivoluzione del verso libero e del registro colloquiale in poesia. Questa fama di scrittore complesso, oscuro ed ermetico trova il suo apice nell’ultima produzione narrativa: *Nagona* (1990) e *Mzingile* (Il labirinto, 1991). Allo stesso modo *Mashetani* (I demoni, 1971) di Hussein è stato fortemente criticato per l’oscurità della sua opera durante la conferenza *Zinduko* tenutasi a Dar es Salaam nel 1974 sulla libertà dello scrittore. Accantonando gran parte del pensiero kezilahabiano, infatti, il romanzo più studiato diviene oggetto di un’incomprensione totale. *Rosa Mistika* (1971) sarebbe per diversi studiosi e studenti un romanzo moraleggiante che, attra-verso il cattivo esempio della protagonista Rosa<sup>2</sup>, vorrebbe ammonire le adolescenti tanzaniane, stravolgendo così il pensiero progressista di Kezilahabi, tra l’altro esplicito all’interno della stessa opera. Ad esempio laddove critica apertamente il metodo “educativo” del padre di Rosa (1971/2003: 9):

[Zakaria] Non comprendeva che Rosa non era in un buon gruppo di coetanei e che la rigidità non era adatta; non sapeva che le ragazze avessero bisogno di una certa libertà dai loro padri; non sapeva che

<sup>2</sup> Non voglio qui fare la storia della ricezione di tale romanzo, basti qui accennare che si tratta di un romanzo censurato a pochi mesi dall’uscita e che viene fortemente criticato (per esempio in *Zinduko* 1974), ma che da oltre vent’anni si è attestato come romanzo moraleggiante.

picchiare sua figlia non era tra i suoi compiti e che le sue opinioni riguardo al matrimonio non erano appropriate; lui, non sapeva che Rosa aveva la necessità di conoscere i ragazzi.<sup>3</sup>

Altrettanto malnota è l'opera probabilmente più conosciuta di Hussein: *Kinjeketile* (1969). Mulokozi<sup>4</sup> (1974) che tocca tutti i punti fondamentali di *Kinjeketile* trascura però di delineare il carattere del protagonista. Mulokozi mostra nelle sue opere, sia creative sia accademiche, una forte militanza, ritiene che la letteratura sia un mezzo, a differenza di Hussein e Kezilahabi. Infatti, nel suo saggio su *Kinjeketile*, pur evidenziando i motivi profondamente laici dell'opera, non coglie, tuttavia (e forse non vuole) l'essere dubbioso del protagonista, un antieroe, quasi contrario all'azione del dramma. Mulokozi ha bisogno che *Kinjeketile* resti l'eroe della prima rivolta tanzaniana: orgoglio nazionale e africano. Forse un ultimo cenno va fatto riguardo ai motivi che rendono *Kinjeketile* e *Rosa Mistika* le opere più note

<sup>3</sup> [Zakaria] Hakufahamu kwamba Rosa alikuwa katika rika baya na kwamba ukali ulikuwa haufai; hakufahamu kwamba mabinti wanahitaji uhuru fulani kutoka kwa baba zao; hakufahamu kwamba kwa kumpiga bintiye alikuwa akiingilia utawala usio wake na kwamba kuhusu maoni ya ndoa yeye alifaa kidogo sana; hakufahamu kwamba Rosa alihitaji kuwafahamu wavulana. Le traduzioni dal swahili non accompagnate dal nome del traduttore sono mie.

<sup>4</sup> Ciò che vorrei sottolineare citando Mulokozi è come la ricezione di Kezilahabi e Hussein sia problematica anche considerando uno scrittore e poeta favorevole alle loro innovazioni. Solitamente si è portati a considerare due blocchi distinti: classicisti e riformatori, senza leggere le particolarità dei singoli pensatori. Mulokozi è certamente tra i più produttivi e competenti specialisti in campo swahili, però il suo lavoro tradisce la sua ferma posizione, politica più che letteraria, rispetto al compito celebrativo della letteratura, in quanto, ciò si può desumere già dai passi citati, dovrebbe celebrare l'indipendenza degli stati africani, sia per il popolo che dovrebbe essere incoraggiato, sia come gesto d'orgoglio rispetto a chi finora ha considerato l'Africa come "paese" incivile. Un esempio dell'ottimismo militante di Mulokozi è la sua poesia *Afrika* (1973: 11-13): [Afrika] Inasonga mbele, hairudi nyuma./Yakusanya heri, mali na heshima./[...] Kwa furaha nasema bila hamaki./Kuwa mbele ni raha tu bila dhiki./[...] Na uzuriwe umezidi kufana./Hii ajabu nani ataikana? Traduzione in italiano della studentessa Miriam Chiusolo che ha tradotto questa poesia durante il mio laboratorio di traduzione della poesia swahili e recitato la stessa durante la conferenza di poesia Swahili *Ngoma na Vailini* dell'Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale": [Africa] Non torna indietro, si spinge avanti con ardore, raccogliendo successo, ricchezza e onore, L'Afrika sfavilla, Oggi a ieri non assomiglia, [...] Lo annuncio con gioia senza rancore, Che davanti c'è quiete e non dolore, [...] E la sua bellezza continua a fiorire/Chi tale meraviglia potrà smentire?

di Hussein e Kezilahabi. Il motivo in realtà coincide con l'equivoco interpretativo dei due lavori. Esclusivamente per la loro trama, infatti, questi due lavori si prestano particolarmente a studi di genere, culturali e post-coloniali, che però tendono ad estrapolare la trama dal complesso dell'opera e a considerare paratesto, contesto storico-culturale, eccetera, più che il testo nella sua complessità o in relazione con altri testi; contesto letterario o come lo definisce Karin Barber: "textual tradition" (2007: 5).

*Text, very often, reflect upon themselves. In this way they offer a unique insight into their own operations as acts of cultural instauration. [...] They are set up to be interpreted: as a challenge, a puzzle or a demand. And the means to interpret them – the repertoires of arguments, analyses, explanations, expansions and inter-textual linkages – are themselves a tradition, and one that can be just as important and revealing as the textual tradition itself, with which it is symbiotically linked. The exegesis is part of the process by which the text is established; and because it is explicitly analytical and interpretative, it has the capacity to reveal something of the inner processes of instauration.*

In questo senso questo articolo propone una lettura comparativa di alcune opere di Kezilahabi e Hussein al fine di delineare un terreno comune di riflessione e prassi poetica.

### **Estetica e Corpo: per una poesia laica**

Hussein e Kezilahabi sono sempre stati ben coscienti di questo limite della critica swahili, forse è anche per questo che la loro poetica si è fatta con gli anni più filosofica, ermetica o simbolica, basti pensare a *Mashetani* (che non a caso segue *Kinjeketile*) o a *Nagona*;<sup>5</sup> come a spingere il lettore a compiere un lavoro ermeneutico, contro la pigrizia intellettuale di un approccio troppo descrittivo o rappresentativo, che alienano (quindi decontestualizzando) la letteratura dalle altre arti. È significativo notare come i tre tra i più grandi scrittori swahili siano d'accordo sul ritardo della critica letteraria swahili.

<sup>5</sup> Qui per Kezilahabi non sono in grado di ipotizzare un fenomeno di ricezione del pubblico o degli studiosi con una conseguente reazione dell'autore, perché *Rosa Mistika* è stato per lungo tempo censurato.

Durante il *Swahili Colloquium* del 2017 a Bayreuth, lo scrittore e studioso swahili Said Ahmed Mohamed afferma che la critica letteraria swahili è di gran lunga in ritardo rispetto agli studi linguistici. Mohamed riconosce come causa di questo ritardo gli approcci letterari che spingono il critico a sezionare la letteratura e ad analizzare una singola parte, più che l'intero complesso dell'opera. Kezilahabi già negli anni '70 si era accorto che l'atteggiamento degli studiosi di letteratura swahili tradiva altri scopi (1976: 121):

È triste notare come finora nessuno abbia analizzato la poesia swahili in modo letterario e, finora, non è stato pubblicato un solo libro di critica di poesia swahili; sebbene sia evidente che la poesia nella letteratura swahili abbia un posto così rilevante rispetto agli altri generi. Ci sono diverse ragioni per le quali l'analisi letteraria rimane indietro.<sup>6</sup>

Per Kezilahabi cifra della letteratura è la vita, ovvero la letteratura non è rappresentazione di qualcosa (1985: 228-229), ma è un evento vissuto ("event lived" 1985: 221). Per questo motivo lo studioso si dovrebbe avvicinare al testo non come ad un oggetto, ma come a qualcosa da esperire con tutti i sensi. Per lo scrittore di Namagondo c'è una linea di demarcazione netta tra la conoscenza e la comprensione. Quest'ultima implica una conoscenza esperienziale, percezionale, relazionale, mentre la prima tende a porre una distanza tra il conoscente e l'oggetto da conoscere, è basata sulla comunicazione (1985: 241). Per questo motivo la comprensione evita l'oggettificazione del conosciuto. Infatti, per Kezilahabi (1976: 121), vissuto così il testo può emergere dalla pagina e agire sul corpo del lettore o spettatore: "Un poeta competente proverà ad usare tutti i mezzi atti a far visualizzare al lettore ciò gli è detto, può eccitare il suo corpo o addirittura fargli sentire l'odore del sangue o di una capra (per esempio)."<sup>7</sup> In questo senso, attraverso la percezione fisica e viva del lettore dovrebbe essere

<sup>6</sup> *Ni jambo la kusikitisha kuona kwamba mpaka sasa hajatokea mtu wa kuyachambua mashairi ya Kiswahili kifasihi, na mpaka sasa hakijatika kitabu chochote cha uhakika wa mashairi ya Kiswahili, ingawa ni dhahiri kwamba ushairi umechukuwa sehemu kubwa sana katika Fasihi ya Kiswahili ukilinganisha na maandishi ya kawaida au michezo. Kuna sababu kadhaa ambazo zimedanya uchambuzi wa mashairi ya Kiswahili ubaki nyuma.*

<sup>7</sup> *Mshairi mashuhuri atajaribu kutumia vyombo hivi vyote ili aweze kumfanya msomaji aone picha ya mambo yanayozungumziwa mwake; anaweza kusisimua mwili au hata kumfanya msomaji asikie harufu ya damu au bebero (kwa mfano).*

evitata l'oggettificazione del testo, ovvero attraverso la comprensione (che in Kezilahabi è esperienza 1985: 228-229). Similmente Ebrahim Hussein (1988: III) sottolinea la percezione e comprensione del lettore, come processo tutto immanente al testo, e la differenza tra la comprensione testuale e un dato scientifico.

Comprendere, seguire e rispettare questa operazione significa contemplare la rifrazione di suono e significato nel testo; questo vuol dire dare vita alla letteratura. È chiaro che il pensiero si parte dal suono e ritorna nel suono. Allo stesso modo il pensiero si parte dal pensiero e torna nel pensiero. Questa circolarità è la vita della letteratura. Nella scienza ci sono diverse operazioni e la scienza interpreta diversamente ciò che è vita e ciò che è morto.<sup>8</sup> Capire queste operazioni è comprendere il rapporto che ci deve essere tra letteratura e scienza. Capire questo rapporto è rifiutare che la letteratura sia un concetto scientifico.<sup>9</sup>

Quindi per Hussein l'opera è da considerare in senso olistico, cioè costituita inscindibilmente dalle sue parti, ognuna delle quali concorre al suo significato e inalienabili l'una dall'altra. La concezione immanentista di Hussein è sorretta anche da una concezione sensistica ed esperienziale della sua opera, come sostiene Ricard (2000: 19). Esempio di questa poetica è la sua poesia *Ngoma na Vailini* (Tamburo e Violino, Abdulaziz 1979: 105):

*Huo, huo mpwitopwito wa ngoma  
Unachemsha damu yangu na  
matamano yaliyo ladha  
Damu iliyopozwa na kubembeleza  
Na vailini nyororo, vailini inayonita  
kwa huzuni yenye furaha*

Qui ora del tamburo il palpitio  
Abbrucia il sangue, assaporante è il  
desiderio  
rassereno e cullato il sangue  
dal dolce violino, il suo richiamo  
gioiosa tristezza

<sup>8</sup> Rendo così in italiano, ma in swahili Hussein usa *maiti* che vuol dire cadavere, corpo morto. Non credo che l'accezione di corpo per il testo sia casuale.

<sup>9</sup> *Kuelewa, kuiuata na kuiheshimu operesheni hii, kutaamuli juu ya matamshi na juu ya fikira ni kuiweka hai fasihi. Ni wazi kuwa fikira hutoka kwenye matamshi na kurudi kwenye matamshi. Vilevile fikira hutoka kwenye fikira na kurudi kwenye fikira. Duara hili huwa hai katika fasihi. Katika sayansi kuna operesheni nyengine na sayansi inatafsiri vingine nini hai na nini maiti. Kuzielewa operesheni hizi ni kuelewa uhusiano ambao unaotakiwa uwepo baina ya fasihi na sayansi. Kuuelewa uhusiano huu ni kukataa kuwa fasihi ni kielezo cha dhana ya sayansi.*

*Sasa nachemka na kupwitapwita*  
*Sasa nna furaha na kuburudika*  
*Mdundo wa maisha*  
*Raha ya nafsi*  
*Wapi niende?*

Ora abbrucio e palpito  
 ora gioisco mi distendo  
 il battito della vita  
 la gaiezza dell'anima  
 andare dove?

*Lazima ni-swali,<sup>10</sup> lazima niabudu*  
*Nimuabudu Allah*  
*Lakini ataisikia sauti yenye panda*  
*Sauti inayotokana na mwenye kuvaa*  
*Kanzu na msalaba?*

È dovere l'in-vocazione? devo adorare  
 Allah adorare  
 ma ascolterà una voce incrinata  
 voce proveniente da chi veste  
 il caftano e la croce?

Questa poesia è stata solitamente tradotta e interpretata sulla base delle opposizioni tamburo/violino, piacere carnale/piacere dello spirito, Islam/Cristianesimo. La mia interpretazione si discosta da queste, tutte possibili, ma che mi sembra riducano la complessità del testo. Tali opposizioni, per me, sono del tutto esteriori, sono un espediente retorico – forse anche drammatico, visto che Hussein era solito interpretare le sue poesie –, ma non quello che ritengo sia il senso della poesia. Infatti, citando e seguendo l'interpretazione di Bertoncini Zúbková e utilizzando la versione di Abdulaziz,<sup>11</sup> Ricard (2000: 116-117) mostra un fondamentale accordo con questi studiosi. Abdulaziz nella sua traduzione, per mantenere l'opposizione nella seconda strofa, traduce il verso swahili “*Raha ya nafsi*” (piacere dello spirito) con “*The quiet pleasure of the mind*”, ovvero aggiunge la parola “*quiet*” (quieto), che nel testo swahili non c'è. Nella seconda strofa non c'è solo quel depotenziamento, ma anche il tradurre “*Sasa nna furaha*” (adesso sono felice/ora gioisco) con “*Now I soothed*” (adesso sono confortato, sollevato); ovvero più che un sentimento di “gioia”, come tra l'altro l'aveva tradotto nella prima strofa nell'espressione “*huzuni yenye furaha*”, “*sad mixed with joy*”, qui il traduttore mostra un composto conforto. L'interpretazione di Ricard e la traduzione di Abdulaziz sono basate tutte su una possibile scelta che, come giustamente afferma Bertoncini (in Ricard 2000: 116), il poeta non corre il rischio di fare. Ma siamo sicuri che ci sia una scelta da fare? Questa emerge chiaramente mettendo al centro della propria interpretazione

<sup>10</sup> In Abdulaziz (1979: 104-105) c'è il trattino *ni-swali*, mentre in Topan (1974: 180-181) non c'è. Qui traduco dalla versione di Abdulaziz.

<sup>11</sup> In realtà le interpretazioni di Abdulaziz, Bertoncini, Ricard e Topan (1974) sono sostanzialmente in accordo tra loro.



questa opposizione. Abdulaziz segna questa divisione traducendo nell'ultima strofa *sauti yenye panda* con "divided voice". È vero che *njia panda* sta ad indicare un incrocio, quindi una strada o qualcosa che si divide, ma come forma verbale *-panda* significa anche ascendere, salire, scalare. Abdulaziz enfatizza proprio l'opposizione, scegliendo di tradurre come voce divisa, più che come voce all'incrocio, che potrebbe essere plausibile considerato l'ultimo verso della seconda strofa *wapi niende?* (andare dove?). Abdulaziz, inoltre, traduce il titolo della poesia *Ngoma na Vailini* come *Drums versus the Violin*, sottolineando un'opposizione; se Hussein avesse voluto sottolineare l'opposizione avrebbe potuto utilizzare *au/ama* (o) oppure *dhidi* (contro). Credo poco plausibile che l'opposizione sia il nucleo di questa poesia, né che ci sia una scelta da fare tra gli elementi messi in gioco dall'autore. In particolare non credo Hussein abbia mai pensato di diventare cristiano. Si potrebbe obiettare che la croce è un simbolo, leggere quindi croce e caftano come simboli dei due schieramenti nel contenzioso sulla poesia swahili, ossia versi liberi vs. poesia classica. Ma questa interpretazione mi convince poco, prese in considerazione le opposizioni della prima strofa; tamburo e violino per che cosa stanno? Tamburo simboleggia l'africanità e il violino la cultura occidentale? Però entrambi vengono usati nella musica *taarab* della costa swahili e, in realtà, nella musica occidentale tamburi e percussioni sono presentissimi. Non violini, forse, ma diversi strumenti a corde con arco sono presenti in tutta l'Africa (l'*orutu* dei Luo, per esempio, è uno strumento a corde suonato con un archetto). C'è opposizione tra il ribollire del sangue *unachemsha damu* (nella mia traduzione "abbrucia il sangue") e il richiamo del violino misto di tristezza e gioia? Il ritmo della vita è in opposizione al piacere dell'anima? Ciò che qui l'io lirico esprime, già nel qui ed ora iniziale (*Huo, huo*), è una concezione olistica dell'esistenza ricondotta all'interezza del corpo e coscienza, quasi da poter dire con Abraham Olivier, parafrasando Merleau-Ponty, "I do not have a body, but rather I am my body" (2007: 12). Il protagonista di questa lirica è certamente lui, il corpo col pulsare del cuore (*mpwitopito* e *kupitwapitwa*), il ribollire del sangue (*umechemsha damu* e *nachemka*), il desiderio che è già nell'assaporare (*matamania lenye ladha*), il rasserenamento (*iliyopozwa*) e l'esser cullato (*bembelezwa*). È quasi una descrizione di un amplesso, di un climax e della discesa del desiderio, ma non il venir meno della carnalità. Né *huzuni* né *furaha* né *burudika* suggeriscono una opposizione alla carnalità esperita dal tamburo, né si riferiscono ad una felice contemplazione religiosa

perché c'è *huzuni*. È vero che *raha* può indicare anche il piacere della contemplazione divina/religiosa, ma qui questa gaiezza investe il corpo, per intero, anima e corpo, altrimenti perché alla stessa sfera sarebbe associata *furaha* e *burudika*? L'opposizione è solo apparente, perché, come sottolineavo prima né si è mai posta una conversione di Hussein al cristianesimo (che io sappia), né Hussein è così ingenuo da poter associare una delle due sfere soltanto ad una religione. È una voce all'incrocio, più che divisa; è una voce rotta, incrinata dalle emozioni, più che ferma ad un incrocio. Ancora una volta Hussein ci dà un indizio per farci capire che è tutto giocato sul corpo: la ripetizione di *sauti* e la scelta di *inayotokana* (che proviene da) in luogo di *ya* (di) o *kutoka* (da) enfatizza il movimento della voce, il suo provenire dal corpo. Del resto una delle prime cose che Hussein fa dire a Kinjeketile (1969: 15) è “*Tutakuwa mwili mmoja na, kama ilivyo katika mwili, kidole kikijikwaa, mwili mzima unahisi maumivu*” (Saremo un corpo solo e, com'è nel corpo, se un dito si graffia, tutto il corpo sente dolore).<sup>12</sup> Se in più proviamo ad immaginare l'Hussein attore-poeta dare corpo a questa poesia, allora, forse possiamo restituire alla complessità, forse non priva di contraddizioni, la vivacità del corpo. Ho proposto a Farouk Topan di chiudere con questa poesia il *Swahili Colloquium XXX*,<sup>13</sup> ha accettato entusiasta. Topan, prima di leggere la poesia, ha spiegato come Hussein la

<sup>12</sup> Non posso qui soffermarmi sulla concezione del dolore e del corpo, ma vorrei sottolineare come questa frase è tutt'altro che ingenua, non un artificio retorico del profeta per unire in battaglia gli uomini, Kinjeketile nel dramma di Hussein non convince nessuno, se non rispetto alla sua rivelazione, erano gli uomini che, disperati, avevano bisogno di credere ad un'ideologia che, infatti, li ha fatti perire. Questa concezione del corpo, dell'unità del corpo, anche come metafora dell'unione del Tanganyika contro i tedeschi, ritorna spesso in questa opera e rappresenta una condizione indispensabile alla libertà. Il filosofo sudafricano Abraham Olivier (2007: 54-57) spiega bene questa concezione del corpo: “I do not say, my pain is about my leg as if I am separated from my leg, as if I am mind and my leg is body, but rather I say, my leg hurts; I am a body and if my body is in pain, if my leg hurts, I am in pain. [...] We see: pain cannot be reduced to location in my body; even if parts of my body are hurting or undergoing changes when I feel pain, it is my body that is in pain. To say I have a pain in my leg means my leg hurts, I am hurt, my perception is disturbed. [...] The person in pain is a body in pain and this is a body that performs the neural processes responsible for pain processing.” Qui non posso soffermarmi su questa questione, la tratto in modo più ampio nella mia tesi di dottorato *The Voice of the Text and its Body. The Continuous Reform of Euphrase Kezilahabi's Poetics* in uscita nel 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Il *Swahili Colloquium XXX* si è tenuto a Bayreuth dal 26 al 28 maggio 2017.

recitava. Aveva una grossa croce al collo e un caftano bianco, strappato perché si vedesse la pelle. Il caftano era diviso in quattro, due parti nere e due lasciate bianche. Hussein recitando si dirigeva a destra e sinistra simboleggiando il dibattersi dell'io lirico tra tamburo e violino. Poi si fermava e inchinava pronunciando il primo verso dell'ultima strofa. L'opposizione, quindi, come dicevo esiste, ma la ritengo più un espediente retorico-drammatico, altrimenti come leggere lo strappo del caftano che lasciava intravedere la pelle, il corpo? Il corpo non è mai citato in questa poesia, ma è costantemente presente attraverso le sue reazioni e percezioni. Si realizza come parola in un altro lavoro di Hussein *Kinjeketile* (1969), che è un dramma della parola più che dell'azione (nella sezione seguente mi soffermerò su questo aspetto). Il corpo è cifra fondamentale nella rivoluzione attuata da Hussein e Kezilahabi. Non a caso una delle prime poesie di Kezilahabi è *Bikira Mwenye Huzuni* (Vergine addolorata 1974: 3) dove il corpo e la sensualità assumono un ruolo di rilievo, non solo come sensazione, ma come cognizione.

*Miaka kumi ya uchovu  
Mapenzini na msichana  
Aliyeishi pangoni  
Ilikuwa imepita kwa huzuni.*

Dieci anni di sfinimento  
in amore d'una giovane  
un antro per dimorare  
tristezza li aveva attraversati.

*'Sababu, buibui alikuwa kwa uchawi  
Amekwisha fuma usiku  
Ule wavu wa ubikira  
Mlangoni.*

Giacché ebbe d'un ragno la stregoneria  
intessuto già in oscurità  
la tela della verginità  
su la soglia.

*Halafu buibui, kanisa, alikuwa  
Amekwisha wasomea kitabu cha zamani  
Na kusema aliweza kumwoa; lakini  
Bila, kwa nguvu  
Za shetani, kwanza  
Kuvunja ule wavu wa uchawi.*

Poi che il ragno, la chiesa, ebbe  
già letto il libro antico  
e detto la può sposare; ma  
che non sia, per volontà  
del diavolo, prima  
franta la stregata tela.

*Vema. Lakini namna gani kwa nguvu  
Za Mungu, angeweza  
Kuingia hilo pango la upweke  
Bila kwanza kuvunja  
Huo wavu wa uchawi?*

Bene. Ma in che modo, per volontà  
di Dio, si potrebbe  
penetrare l'antro della solitudine  
senza prima frangere  
la stregata tela?

*Ndoa ni jambo la kawaida  
 Au ujuzi fulani usojulikana  
 Ambao hausailiki  
 Na akili za binadamu?*

Un'usanza il matrimonio  
 o un sapere insondabile oscurità  
 imperscrutabile  
 dalla mente umana?

Il divieto del sesso prematrimoniale, qui, emerge come l'incomprensibile. Kezilahabi qui si oppone all'intellettualismo e lo spiritualismo di tale divieto in favore di una conoscenza basata sull'esperienza. Il mito della verginità è definito qui *uchawi* (magia, stregoneria), nell'ultima strofa inoltre si enfatizza la questione della conoscenza (anche corporale) che, infatti, risulta essere il climax che parte dalla strofa precedente nella quale l'io lirico chiede in che modo "si potrebbe/penetrare l'antro della solitudine/senza prima frangere/la magica tela?" Anche se precedente di anni, questa poesia si presenta in consonanza con l'idea di Kezilahabi dell'*understanding*, della comprensione (corporale-diretta) in opposizione alla conoscenza mediata fondata sulla comunicazione, sull'*ipse dixit*. In questa poesia, infatti, si può notare l'opposizione tra corporalità e libri, la tristezza è data dalla tela (imene) stregata dalla lettura dei libri (*kitabu cha zamani*, il libro vecchio; potrebbe riferirsi alla Bibbia nella sua interezza o soltanto all'antico testamento). Ricard sottolinea bene come anche Hussein fosse vicino a questa idea, ad una conoscenza fisica del testo, data dalla prassi, dall'esperienza (2000: 24).<sup>14</sup> Inoltre, Ricard si sofferma in più passi sul laicismo di Hussein, per esempio evidenzia la distanza tra l'esperienza intellettuale e artistica di Hussein e quella militante di Sengo; Hussein condanna apertamente le manifestazioni politiche di religione (2000: 7). Questo dimostra che negli anni '70 Hussein e Kezilahabi avevano, in qualche misura, già molte riserve sulle tendenze dominanti nell'ambito della critica letteraria swahili. C'è una continuità storica generazionale e tematica con le opinioni espresse ad inizio del paragrafo rispetto al ritardo della critica letteraria swahili: Said Ahmed

<sup>14</sup> Mi prefiggo di approfondire tale aspetto nei prossimi lavori, certamente, però, il fatto che performasse le sue stesse poesie sembra metterci su questa strada. Ricard (2000: 19): *Ebrahim Hussein views the theatre through the eyes of a playwright and an actor: he has a great reputation as an actor. Performance, staging and theatre are notions that are very close in his oeuvre, and which he does not separate from poetry. He is hostile to the confusion between ritual and theatre: if heroic recitation is a form of show, it is not a ritual form: speech is performed, power is also portrayed on stage. [...] Ebrahim Hussein is not a manufacturer of myths. We do not find the proposition in his writing that celebrations like initiation rites are forms of drama.*

Mohamed nel 1917, Hussein nel 1988, Kezilahabi nel 1974. Per la verità Hussein già nell'introduzione a *Kinjeketile* (1969: V) ricordava: "Poiché l'arte e la storia sono cose diverse. Un'opera d'arte non deve essere criticata in base agli errori storici, ma se si scontra con le leggi<sup>15</sup> dell'arte."<sup>16</sup> Un principio tanto immanentista dell'arte (del testo in questo caso) – espresso anche nel passo del 1988 di Hussein dove afferma che la comprensione e la vita della letteratura si dà da un circolo ermeneutico tra suono e significato del testo – non può che essere un principio laico.<sup>17</sup> Mulokozi (1974: 47-48) esprime bene il laicismo di Hussein nel suo saggio su *Kinjeketile*.

In questo modo Ebrahim Hussein riesce a trattare in modo esaustivo uno degli argomenti di questo dramma: lo scontro tra la scienza e la superstizione. [...] Un grande insegnamento che ne ricaviamo qui è che in questo secolo, il XX, nessuna

<sup>15</sup> Ovviamente qui non si riferisce alla prosodia classica, ma all'estetica in generale, della ricerca artistica, non interpreterei, quindi, in senso normativo. Del resto come sottolineano bene Kahigi e Mulokozi (1979: 10): "*Mashairi ya mtiririko si 'huru' hata kidogo, yanazo mbinu, kunga na kanuni yake, na si rahisi kuyatunga. Ila katika kanuni zake hizo kuna uhuru mkubwa wa kubuni na kutunga. Kanuni yake kuu, ambayo kila mtungaji wa shairi yabidi aitimize, kanuni ambayo ndiyo roho ya mashairi haya, na roho ya fasihi kwa jumla, ni kwamba muundo wa shairi lazima uamuliwe na kufungamana na mawazo, mtiririko wa hisia, na makusudio ya mtunzi.*" (Il *mtiririko* (poesia scrosciante) non è libera per niente, ha una sua strategia, ratio e modalità, e non è facile comporla. Ma nelle sue modalità c'è molta libertà di creazione e composizione. Il suo canone che ogni poeta deve osservare, che è l'anima di queste poesie, e anima della letteratura in generale, è che la struttura della poesia deve accordarsi ed essere legata al pensiero, allo scorrere delle emozioni e all'intenzione dell'autore.)

<sup>16</sup> *Kwani sanaa na historia ni mambo mbalimabali. Sanaa haihesabiwi kuwa imekosa ikiwa haipatani na historia bali hutolewa makosa ikiwa imegongana na 'sheria' za sanaa.*

<sup>17</sup> Enzo Melandri (2004: 56) sottolinea filosoficamente come alla questione ermeneutica sia da sottintendere un laicismo di base: "Non si capisce come sia potuto applicare alla Bibbia il canone ermeneutico "*den Autor besser zu verstehen, als...*" senza concludere, come Nietzsche, a un ateismo postulatorio. Il fatto che ciò non sia avvenuto (nemmeno con Bultmann) indica che nell'esegesi teologica Dio è concepito come un principio di anomalia, il quale trascende sempre i risultati delle operazioni interpretative. Ma l'analogia è un principio laicistico, intollerante di ogni compromesso, e che perciò ripropone sempre da capo il compito di una riduzione dell'anomalia. Al limite, solo l'ateismo – concepito non in maniera anonima, bensì come tesi di teologia razionale – può risolvere le aporie ermeneutiche che le precedenti interpretazioni anomalistiche hanno introdotto nella Scrittura." Non posso qui dilungarmi sulla questione dell'analogia, che occuperà le mie ricerche nei prossimi anni; un iniziale lavoro sull'analogia, la lettura del testo e la letteratura swahili è stato pubblicato in *AIOO* 77 (Gaudio 2017: 3-32).

nazione può vincere una guerra basandosi sull'ideologia della superstizione o della religione. Gli strumenti principali sono la politica e la scienza.<sup>18</sup>

Questo laicismo emerge dalle parole dello stesso protagonista. Kinjeketile infatti dubita della sua profezia e dell'arma (l'acqua) che avrebbe dovuto proteggerli dalle armi dei tedeschi (1969: 33): "Oppure accordiamoci in questo modo, quando guiderai gli uomini in battaglia, fai conto che non c'è nulla come l'acqua. Pianifica gli uomini a seconda della loro forza, non andare allo sbaraglio dipendendo dall'acqua."<sup>19</sup> Quindi gli uomini dovrebbero far affidamento solo sulla loro forza, sulle loro possibilità, non sulla fede. Che la questione del laicismo, dell'interpretazione letteraria e della ricerca estetica della letteratura swahili siano collegate è una concezione anche kezilahabiana. Kezilahabi nello stesso articolo del 1976 esprime con preoccupazione quest'aspetto (1976: 126-129). Kezilahabi indica proprio come reazionarie queste forze (1976: 129):

Molti tra i poeti famosi amano utilizzare questa parola "sapienza". Questa parola induce molti poeti a considerarsi come persone dalle quali, non appena aprano la loro bocca attraverso la penna, discenda veramente sapienza. Proprio per questo motivo molta poesia swahili è di biasimo e censura.<sup>20</sup>

### La parola del silenzio: libertà e azione

La libertà intesa come libertà civile e laicismo "*lazima nitamke kwa nguvu/Hapa nilipo sina uhuru!*" (devo pronunciare con forza/qui dove sono non ho libertà! Kezilahabi 1974: 36), sia come indipendenza, è un tema

<sup>18</sup> Kwa njia hii Ebrahim Hussein anafaulu kuietekeleza dhamira yake mojawapo ambayo inajitokeza sana katika mchezo huu – ile ya kuonyesha mgongano kati ya sayansi na ushirikina. [...] Fundisho kubwa tunalolipata hapa ni kwamba katika karne hii ya ishirini hakuna taifa linaloweza kushinda vita kwa kutegemea itikadi za ushirikina au dini. Nyenzo kuu ya karne hii ni siasa na sayansi. Si ricordi quanto detto nell'introduzione, nonostante il dubbio sulla sua stessa rivelazione e nonostante Kinjeketile tenti di fermare l'azione del dramma, il protagonista per Mulokozi resta un eroe e nel suo saggio non fa menzione a questo aspetto del protagonista di Hussein.

<sup>19</sup> "Au, tupertane hivi, utapoongoza watu vitani fanya kama hakuna kitu kama maji. Panga watu nguvu zao siyo wende hovy hovy tu kutegemea maji"

<sup>20</sup> Wengi kati ya washairi wetu mashuhuri wanapenda sana kutumia neno hili hekima. Neno hili limefanya washairi wengi wajifikirie kama watu ambao mara tu wafunuapo vinywa vyao kwa uwezo wa kalamu, basi hekima inaaminika. Na hili ndilo jambo ambalo limefanya mashairi mengi ya Kiswahili yawe ni ya maoni na marudi.

costantemente problematizzato nelle opere di Kezilahabi e Hussein. Nella sua ultima raccolta di poesie *Dhifa* (Banchetto 2008) Kezilahabi dedica almeno due poesie ai dittatori africani (2008: 31).

*Kama wajiona ni wewe pekee  
Uwezaye kufikiri  
Ulikufa karne nyingi zilizopita.  
Kilichobaki ni wako mweweseko.  
Wale uliowakemea, uliowaweka ndani  
Uliowadhulumu na uliowaua  
Mawazo yao sasa milizamu  
Ambamo watoto hucheza kwa furaha  
Na kunawa shombo uliloliacha.*

Se credi d'esser il solo  
a saper pensare  
sei morto diversi secoli fa.  
ciò che resta è il tuo farneticare.  
Coloro che hai denigrato e rinchiuso  
che hai represso e ucciso  
acqua zampillante le loro idee  
dove i bimbi giocano felici  
e lavano la puzza di pesce da te lasciata.

*Madaraka ni ndoto isiyotegemewa.  
Ni kuvaa kofia juu ya gari wazi  
Lendalo mbio kuvuka mto wa haki  
Ambao daraja lake limechukuliwa  
Na mafuriko ya sharia ulizovunja,  
Ambalo breki zake ni roho za watu  
Na matairi yake ni mafuvu manne  
Ya wale uliowaita vichwangumu  
Haini namba wani wa fikra zako.*

L'autorità è inaspettato sogno.  
È attraversare il fiume dei diritti  
spazzato via il ponte dal diluvio delle leggi  
che hai violato  
sfrecciando su una cabrio con in testa un cappello  
i suoi freni degli uomini le anime  
le sue ruote quattro teschi  
di chi hai chiamato testadura  
il tradimento number uàn dei tuoi pensieri.

Kezilahabi pone qui importanti questioni rispetto alle libertà individuali, mostrando nella prima strofa la repressione del dittatore. Le sue parole sono precise e nette, nell'ultima strofa non parla generalmente di diritti violati. I diritti nella raccolta del 2008, così come nella raccolta del 1974 nella poesia *Mto wa Haki* (Il fiume del diritto), sono un fiume, forse, l'elemento naturale sottolinea l'inalienabilità dei diritti, per la vita (l'acqua), e il flusso la sua inarrestabilità, il suo continuo cammino. Il ponte, la costruzione umana su questo fiume distrutta dal dittatore, potrebbe essere la costituzione, l'insieme delle leggi o l'istituzione statale stessa. Ma più preciso in termini libertari e di stato di diritto è che il diluvio che ha spazzato via il ponte è causato dalla violazione delle leggi, perché, a guardar bene, non è un semplice elenco delle violazioni compiute dal un dittatore. Un dittatore ha spesso il potere di cambiare o cancellare delle leggi, anche uno stato democratico può violare le proprie leggi, ma cessa di essere uno stato di diritto. Kezilahabi si spinge quindi non solo a difendere genericamente la libertà e la democrazia, o il diritto alla vita, ma la vita del diritto necessaria alla libertà, alla democrazia e

alla vita. Una simile posizione è espressa con chiarezza da Julius Nyerere, primo presidente, eroe dell'indipendenza e teorico del socialismo africano. In un discorso<sup>21</sup> quando ormai s'era dimesso, dice:

Lo sviluppo deve aver relazione con le persone, deve essere misurato su quello che fai per le persone. [...] Se è *people centred* non puoi parlare solo del fatto che siano sazi (essere sazi è bello), che si vestano bene, devi parlare della loro istruzione, della salute, del sistema di trasporti, ma parlare anche della loro cultura e, allo stesso modo, della loro libertà: *democracy*. Se c'è sviluppo le persone sono libere. In questi tempi c'è un dibattito sulla questione democratica. Ma non dibattiamo sulla democrazia, ma su altre cose, non criticiamo la democrazia in sé. Dibattiamo sulle posizioni stupide, ma sulla libertà delle persone non possiamo litigare. Le persone non possono dirsi progredite se nella loro terra non possono viaggiare liberamente, se temono, hanno paura, pensano che un mattino sentendo bussare alla porta arrivi qualcuno per rinchiuderli in prigione. Uno stato come questo non si può dire progredito, se non c'è la libertà delle persone. [...] Nel rispettare i diritti umani e rispetto al fatto che i nostri stati abbiano lottato per l'indipendenza per portare i diritti umani, non possiamo, per la verità, vantarci molto sulla questione della democrazia. Gli stati del sud, abbiamo tanto degradato i diritti umani. Molti dittatori di oggi sono i nostri, sì molti dittatori al mondo oggi sono delle nostre parti: Africa, Asia, America latina. E per dire la verità ora stanno restando per lo più in Africa. Degradare così tanto la vita delle persone, maltrattarli, sottovalutare e ignorare le persone, è una caratteristica più consuetudinaria dai noi al sud.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Non sono in grado di stabilire con certezza la data e il luogo di tale discorso, ritengo però che sia successivo al 1985, quando cioè lasciò ad Ali Hassan Mwinyi la guida del paese, ma non quella del partito. La mia fonte è un video dal titolo *Mfumo mpya Uchumi duniani* (Il nuovo sistema economico mondiale) postato dalla pagina facebook Yericko Nyerere il 12/09/2017 alle ore 9:56. <https://www.facebook.com/100000057246937/videos/1941412519203971/?id=100000057246937>.

<sup>22</sup> *Maendeleo hayana budi yawe na uhusiano na watu, hayana budi uyapime umefanya nini kwa watu [...] Kama ni people centre huwezi kutaja kwamba wanashiba sana (kushiba ni kitu kizuri) ama wanavaa vizuri, lazima utaje elimu yao, afya yao, usafiri wao, lakini tutaje pia utamaduni wao, tutaje vilevile mambo ya uhuru wao: democracy. Kama kuna maendeleo watu wana uhuru. Siku hizi tunabishanabishana na mambo ya democracy. Lakini tunachobishana sio democracy, ila juu ya mambo mengine, hatubishani kuhusu democracy yenyewe. Tunabishanabishana juu ya misimamo ya kijingajinga, lakini juu ya uhuru wa watu hatuwezi kubishana. Watu hawawezi kusema wana maendeleo na katika nchi yao hawawezi kutembea kwa uhuru, wanaogopa, wana hofu, wanadhani asubuhi yoyote wakisikia mtu mlangoni kwakwakwa wanafikiri akaja mtu anawapeleka kufunga.*



Per Nyerere, come per Kezilahabi, la vita del diritto è necessaria alla libertà e al progresso dei cittadini. Nyerere lega la democrazia alla libertà e ai diritti umani, per quest'ultimi, dice, gli stati africani hanno lottato per l'indipendenza. Fa così autocritica del suo governo, dicendo che sul progresso libertario, democratico e dei diritti civili "non possiamo, per la verità, vantarci." Critica, inoltre, molti leader africani che definisce dittatori. Anche Kezilahabi nella sua tesi di dottorato del 1985, sottolinea come l'enfasi sul moralismo, spiritualismo e mitizzazione dell'origine da parte dei leader africani sia un'azione fascista (1985: 357-358).

*Africa has been plagued with philosophies of origin. In the Western world this very philosophy culminated in Nazi Germany, and we know the consequences of this philosophy. The oldest is not necessarily the nearest to our true Being, neither does it have a mandate to rule the present. It does not greatly matter whether we are the real true heirs to the "Stolen legacy". What matters is what we are. A philosophy of origins is a Fascist enterprise. Philosophies of origins are another error. The third error concerns moralism. We have, in the past, put too much emphasis on moralism and spiritualism. [...] There is no causa prima for Africanness and blackness. Since no one is responsible for our Being African and Black no moral facts can be attached to these questions. [...] We have noted that through the glorification of illusory traditional qualities of African society, our leaders create mythologies of a magnificent past and refuse to confront those very institutions which are by their nature retrogressive.*

Kezilahabi, come Nyerere, difende la libertà di pensiero e di espressione. Nella sua *ngonjera*<sup>23</sup> *Dakika 15 za Uzalendo* (15 minuti di Patriottismo 1974: 51), infatti, sembra criticare il soldato che indaga così a fondo.

*Nchi ya namna hiyo haiwezi kusema ina maendeleo, nchi haina uhuru wa watu. [...] Katika mambo ya kuheshimu haki za binadamu pamoja na kwamba nchi zetu hizi ni nchi ambazo zimepigania uhuru kwa kutaka kuleta haki za binadamu, lakini, kwa kweli, katika jambo la democracy hatuwezi kujivuna sana. Nchi ya kusini, tumepuza sana haki za binadamu. Madikteta wengi sasa hivi ni ya kwetu, ndiyo madikteta wengi wa duniani sasa hivi ni ya kwetu, wapo katika Africa, Asia, Latin America. Na sasa kusema kweli wanaanza kubakia Afrika zaidi. Kupuuzaupuza tu maisha ya watu hivi, oneaonea watu tu, kutojalijali watu hivi, tabia za namna hii zipo zaidi kwetu katika kusini.*

<sup>23</sup> Componimento dialogato in versi molto in voga durante l'Ujamaa di Nyerere per la propaganda politica, questo è l'unico componimento di Kezilahabi che dichiaratamente segue un genere tradizionale.

ASKARI:

*Hei Hei! nyinyi watu, njianini mwasemani?  
Elezeni kila kitu, mlichio nacho kichwani,  
(Tajiri anainama)  
Wavitazama viatu, unacho nini moyoni?  
Meno wauma kakatu, unayo hasira gani?  
TANU hunayo imani, watu wamekuwa vitu!*

SOLDATO:

Hei hei voi in strada! Cosa dire?  
Riferite ogni cosa vi giri in testa  
(Il ricco si china)  
Ti guardi le scarpe e cos'hai nel cuore?  
Il dente duole fratello nostro, perché sei  
arrabbiato?  
Non hai fiducia nel TANU, le persone  
sono diventate cose!

Questi versi confrontati con le parole di Nyerere sulla libertà di camminare e sulla paura d'essere arrestati appaiono non solo come finzione poetica, ma nella loro concretezza e assumono, quindi, la loro cifra critica al regime. Questa critica emerge anche dall'oggettificare le persone e dal con-trollo della libertà d'espressione e sin anche di pensiero. Anche Hussein in *Kinjeketile* (1969: 26-27) mostra come anche per lui la libertà di pensiero sia fondamentale.

Non ha senso ottenere la libertà<sup>24</sup> se poi saremo schiavi d'altri signori che c'entrano nella testa e per usarci a loro piacimento. Se questo Seyyid Said può controllare il nostro cervello senza che ce ne accorgiamo, può utilizzarci incoscienti, allora lui è un nemico più grande del tedesco. Ci può controllare anche se è lontano dalla nostra terra. Aspettiamo d'avere un'armata grande, avremo la forza, la nostra forza non quella esterna. Combatteremo e vinceremo. Attendi.<sup>25</sup>

Anche appena dopo la sua rivelazione/profezia, *Kinjeketile* esprime dubbi al riguardo di una profezia che promette libertà ma anche un nuovo padrone (Hussein 1969: 24).

Non portare la lampada vicino. Spegni questa luce... Dissero che avrebbero portato la luce... per eliminare l'oscurità... Ma ho compreso, ho compreso che la loro luce è più pericolosa di questa oscurità. Meglio

<sup>24</sup> N.B. in swahili libertà e indipendenza si traducono in *uhuru*, mentre emancipazione e liberazione in *ukombozi*.

<sup>25</sup> *Haina maana kupata uhulu ili baadaye tuwe watumwa wa mabwana wengine, watupande vichwani na kutumia wapendavyo. Ikiwa huyu Seyyid Said anaweza kutumiliki akili zetu bila sisi wenyewe kujua, akaweza kututumia bila kujua, basi yeye ni adui mkubwa kuliko Njelumani. Anaweza kututawala hali yupo nje ya nchi. Tungoje tutapata jeshi kubwa, tutakuwa na nguvu, siyo nguvu za watu wa nje bali nguvu zetu. Tutapigana na tutashinda. Ngojea.*

questa oscurità, meglio la schiavitù del corpo che la schiavitù del pensiero portata da questa luce.<sup>26</sup>

In *Kinjeketile* il colonialismo tedesco è legato alla schiavitù del corpo, ma non è chiaro a cosa si riferisca con schiavitù del pensiero (*utumwa wa akili* schiavitù della mente). *Dikteta* di Kezilahabi e nel discorso di Nyerere appena citato sono successivi al regime di Nyerere, mentre *Kinjeketile* e *Kichomi* (1974) sono pubblicati e scritti durante il regime di Nyerere. Quindi le critiche al potere politico nazionale riscontrabili in queste prime opere sono da imputare all'*Ujamaa* di Nyerere. Del resto, nel discorso citato, è lo stesso Nyerere che sottolinea le stesse criticità. In questo senso, i dubbi di *Kinjeketile* sulla sua stessa profezia, sebbene il dramma sia ambientato ben prima della liberazione del TANU, potrebbero essere critiche al governo di Nyerere. Ovvero, il profeta *Kinjeketile*, invece, che essere l'antesignano eroe della libertà, diventa il profeta dei limiti del governo del TANU. La metafora della luce ingannevole è utilizzata anche da Kezilahabi. Ho sempre interpretato la poesia *Nondo* (La falena 1988) in senso filosofico esistenziale, ma la vicinanza tra alcuni versi di *Nondo* con le parole appena citate di *Kinjeketile* gettano nuova luce sul significato di questi versi (2008a: 14).

|                                           |                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Nje kuna giza, nao bundi</i>           | Fuori c'è buio e le civette                              |
| <i>Kama askari jasiri waimba</i>          | come soldati di ventura cantano                          |
| <i>Wimbo wa woga na kifo:</i>             | la canzone della paura e della morte:                    |
| <i>Walituletea mwanga kutulia gizani.</i> | Ci hanno portato la luce per mangiarci nell'oscurità.    |
| <i>Nami kama bundi msituni naitikia:</i>  | E io come una civetta nella foresta strido:              |
| <i>Kutulia gizani walituletea msitu.</i>  | Per mangiarci nell'oscurità ci hanno portato la foresta. |
| <i>Ndani kuna vifo viso mtetezi.</i>      | Dove ci sono morti senza protettore.                     |

Qui c'è la stessa opposizione luce/oscurità e il riferimento a qualcuno che porta la luce. Quindi anche per Kezilahabi la luce può ingannare. Si noti la singolare vicinanza estetica dei due testi: in Hussein "*Walisema wataleta muangaza... kutoa kiza*" (Dissero che avrebbero portato la luce... per eli-minare l'oscurità) e in Kezilahabi "*Walituletea mwanga kutulia gizani*" (Ci hanno portato la luce per mangiarci nell'oscurità.), nel verso successivo in Hussein "*Lakini nimetambua, nimetambua kuwa muangaza wao una hatali zaidi. Afazali kiza hiki.*" (Ma ho

<sup>26</sup> *Usilete taa kalibu. Ondoa muangaza... Walisema wataleta muangaza... kutoa kiza... Lakini nimetambua, nimetambua kuwa muangaza wao una hatali zaidi. Afazali kiza hiki. Afazali utumwa wa mwili kuliko utumwa wa akili unaoletwa na muangaza.*

compreso, ho compreso che la loro luce è più pericolosa di questa oscurità.) e in Kezilahabi “*Nami kama bundi msituni naitikia:/Kutulia gizani walituletea msitu./Ndani kuna vifo viso mtetezi.*” (E io come una civetta nella foresta strido:/Per mangiarci nell’oscurità ci hanno portato la foresta./Dove ci sono morti senza protettore). Kezilahabi quasi riscrive Hussein trasportando nel suo testo la stessa metafora della luce portata per ingannare. Nella poesia *Safari* (Il viaggio 1988) a tale inganno, l’io lirico manifesta l’esigenza di oscurità (2008a: 7).

*Wakati nisafiripo kwenda mawioni usiku  
Nitazichuma karanga zote zing’aazo angani  
Na kuziweka ndani ya mifuko iliyotuna.  
Nitakapofika nitafungua kinywa kwa chapati  
Ya dhahabu kabla haijapoa kilimani;  
Halafu hapatakuwa na mwanga tena,  
Kwani taswira na sitiari zote za nuru  
Hazikutufikisha pasipo giza.  
Kwa hiyo basi kama mkulima kipofu  
Nitapanda mbegu gizani.*

Il tempo del mio viaggio verso l’alba la notte  
coglierò tutti i baccelli lucenti in cielo  
e li metterò nel fondo delle mie tasche  
finché piene ad uno ad uno li mangerò.  
Quando arriverò aprirò la bocca per il *chapati*  
d’oro prima che si freddi sulla collina;  
dopo non ci sarà più luce,  
tutte le immagini e le metafore della luce  
non ci hanno condotto dove non c’è oscurità.  
Per questo allora come un contadino cieco  
spargerò semi nell’oscurità.

Finora ho letto anche tale poesia come espressione esistenziale ed estetica di Kezilahabi e l’ho confrontata con Heidegger e Nietzsche, ma la metafora della luce ingannatrice ci porta all’unica poesia esplicitamente politica di Kezilahabi in *Karibu Ndani* (Accomodati 1988), ovvero *Azimio* (Dichiarazione 2008a: 27), riferita alla Dichiarazione di Arusha alla quale, in questa poesia, un seminatore cieco ha dato vita.

*Azimio sasa ni mabaki ya chakula  
Kwenye sharubu za bepari  
Kalamu inayovunja  
Katika mfuko wa mwanafunzi  
Vumbi zito  
Baada ya ng’ombe kupita. [...]   
Kilichosalia sasa  
Ni punje za ulezi  
Zilizosambazwa kangwani  
Na mpandaji kipofu.*

La Dichiarazione sono adesso i resti di cibo  
Nella barba del riccone  
La penna che perde  
Nella tasca dello scolaro  
La densa polvere  
Dopo il passaggio della mandria. [...]   
Ciò che è rimasto adesso  
Sono chicchi di miglio  
Sparsi nel deserto  
Da un seminatore cieco.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Questa traduzione è stata realizzata da Elena Bertoncini Zúbková (2002: 132); le restanti traduzioni di questo articolo sono mie.

Qui è chiaro che la luce non ha soltanto una valenza filosofica, ma sia una concreta critica a Nyerere. La luce, quindi, come nel *muangaza* di Kinjeketile, potrebbe essere metafora anche della torcia della libertà (*mwenge*), e quindi prefigurare già nelle prime opere delle critiche a Nyerere. Se le critiche del 1988 di Kezilahabi appaiono più chiare e nette, non è solo perché nel 1988 c'era maggiore libertà di criticare il regime trascorso, ma perché c'era maggiore evidenza dei suoi limiti. I riferimenti alla "torcia dell'indipendenza" non devono essere prese come icona o simbolo, sono riferimenti possibili di una metafora che non esauriscono il loro significato come critica. D'altra parte le critiche in *Kinjeketile* e *Kichomi* sono appena accennate, non solo per paura del regime, ma perché, come abbiamo visto citando Nyerere, Hussein e Kezilahabi condividevano con Nyerere fondamenti e finalità per la vita civile del paese. Quindi i due autori preferiscono far emergere queste critiche come dubbio, più che come aperta critica. Resta chiaro, infatti, che per due laici e libertari come Kezilahabi e Hussein le limitazioni alla libertà e i soprusi dei soldati potevano destare solo perplessità. Inoltre, per quanto fossero laicamente convinti che il continente africano avrebbe dovuto essere indipendente e svilupparsi con le proprie forze, non fanno della loro africanità un'ideologia. Infatti, le conclusioni della tesi dell'85 di Kezilahabi esprimono apertamente questa possibilità, e la metafora di Hussein della luce che tenta di controllare la mente umana sembra riferirsi anche a questo tramite il riferimento allo spirito africano. La rivelazione (la luce) gli viene da uno spirito Hongo, quindi da una credenza animista africana (probabile simbolo dell'africanità) che gli dice che saranno liberi dai tedeschi per essere governati dal sultano di Zanzibar Sayyid Said rendendo problematica tale profezia. La signoria di Sayyid Said potrebbe essere interpretata come critica di chi voleva enfatizzare l'elemento arabomusulmano come unico elemento identitario swahili. È probabile che Hussein sentisse già rischiosi i discorsi intorno all'essenza africana, su una differenziazione ontologica e razziale dell'umanità. Del resto è quello che ricorda Kezilahabi nelle conclusioni della sua tesi appena citate. Il superamento del tribalismo è una preoccupazione costante sia di Hussein, in *Kinjeketile* viene più volte ripresa questa questione (1969: 6,14-17, 25, 29, 41), sia di Nyerere, il quale sia per le sue scelte politiche sia nei discorsi successivi l'ha sempre combattuto. Infatti, in un discorso<sup>28</sup> sul Rwanda

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=6TuNQOm4NFc>

Nyerere afferma la sua preoccupazione rispetto al tribalismo e all'ingresso della religione nella politica.

Cercare una leadership attraverso la religione o il tribalismo divide le persone. Il lavoro di un capo è unire le persone. [...] Queste cose fomentano l'odio tribale e religioso e se iniziano e gli diamo spazio non le governeremo. Vi sorprenderete per come vi preparerete a scannarvi e se si arriva a questo livello, nessuno dirà "basta".<sup>29</sup>

Anche Kezilahabi, come abbiamo visto citando la sua tesi, è contrario ad ogni tribalismo. Questo appare particolarmente chiaro in *Wimbo wa Unyago* (La canzone dell'iniziazione 2008b: 17).

*Ishi kijana ishi, ishi maisha yako*  
*Wazee waliishi yao*  
*Sasa yamebaki kwako.*  
*Ukabila ni utumwa*  
*Olewa msichana olewa*  
*Olewa chaguo lako*  
*Hiari ni haki asilia*  
*Achaguaye embe bichi*  
*Ajua lini litaiva.*

Vivi giovane vivi, vivi la vita tua.  
 L'anziano visse la sua  
 adesso resta a te.  
 Tribalismo è schiavitù  
 sposati ragazza sposati  
 sposa la tua scelta  
 diritto naturale è la volontà  
 chi sceglie un mango acerbo  
 sa quando maturerà.

A differenza di quello che crede Mulokozi, il criticismo di Kezilahabi ha come obiettivo l'azione. È chiaro che Kezilahabi qui spinge i giovani verso una scelta libera e responsabile. L'azione è una preoccupazione costante del poeta di Ukerewe. Nella poesia *Nondo* che ho comparato precedentemente con un monologo di Kinjeketile ho sottolineato delle forti connessioni filosofiche ed estetiche, ma negli ultimi versi Kezilahabi va oltre la dualità espressa da Kinjeketile "Meglio questa oscurità, meglio la schiavitù del corpo che la schiavitù del pensiero portata da questa luce", tentando di sintetizzare pensiero e azione (1988/2008a: 14).

<sup>29</sup> *Kutafuta uongozi kwa kutumia dini au kutumia kabila inagawa watu. Kazi ya uongozi ni kujenga watu wawe kitu kimoja. [...] Mambo haya ya kuchochea chuki ama za ukabila ama za udini yakianza na tukiypa nafasi hayana simile. Mtashangaaa jinsi mnavyoandaa kuchinjiana na ikifika kiasi hicho hakuna mtu kukema, hakuna atakavyosema "acheni".*

*Usingizi unaanza kunipata.*

*Ninapotea kwatika bahari ya ndoto*

*Ndani ya msitu uliofungama*

*Ambamo kufikiri bila vitendo ni kuwa msaliti.*

Il sonno inizia a comprendermi.

Naufrago nel mare del sogno

nell'intimo della foresta che s'infittisce

dove pensare senza agire è tradire.

L'io lirico di *Nondo* si spinge ad invocare una sintesi: il sogno che diventa realtà attraverso la coincidenza di pensiero (parola) e azione. Nonostante Hussein mantenga una formale dualità, questo elemento di sintesi è anche al centro delle ultime parole di Kinjeketile, che assume il sapore di una profezia laica, perché questa volta non c'è nessun intervento/interferenza della religione o superstizione (Hussein 1969: 49).

Sai domani cosa diranno? Il signor ufficiale cosa dirà ai bambini – ai nostri bimbi Kitunda – dirà che ciò che abbiamo fatto era un errore. Combattere un errore? Combattere per la nostra terra un errore? Vuole che lo aiuti a dimostrare che abbiamo sbagliato. No. Se lo dirò, domani, da sud a nord gli uomini lasceranno la battaglia. Non avranno più coraggio. No! Non dirò questa parola. La parola è nata. I nostri bambini la diranno ai loro bambini. I nostri nipoti l'ascolteranno. Un giorno questa parola non sarò sogno, ma realtà.<sup>30</sup>

Kitunda prova a chiedere a Kinjeketile quale fosse la parola da tramandare, ma Kinjeketile non proferisce parola. L'opera si chiude nel silenzio di questa profezia. Appare abbastanza chiaro che il silenzio potenzi la profezia e il momento drammatico. Appare altresì chiaro che, per quanto detto finora, la parola che Kinjeketile non pronuncia è *uhuru* (libertà) intesa non solo come indipendenza, ma come libertà del corpo e della mente. Il silenzio è la necessità espressa da Kinjeketile dopo l'errore della rivelazione della parola "*maji*" (acqua) (1969: 33).

L'uomo genera una parola – la parola acquista forza – diventa grande – grande così grande che vince in grandezza e forza l'uomo che l'ha

<sup>30</sup> *Unajua kesho watasema nini? Bwana afisa atawaambia watoto – watoto wetu Kitunda – atawaambia kuwa tuliyoifanya sisi makosa. Kupigana makosa? Kupigania nchi itakuwa makosa? Anataka na mimi ninsaidie niseme kweli tulikosa. Hapana. Kesho nikisema, watu kusini, kaskazini, wataacha kupigana. Watakuwa hawana moyo. Hapana! Sitasema neno hilo. Neno limezaliwa. Watoto wetu watawaambia watoto wao neno hilo. Wajukuu wetu watalisikia. Siku moja neno hilo halitakuwa ndoto, bali ukweli.*

generata. Lo fa cadere. La parola che è generata dall'uomo arriva a governarlo.<sup>31</sup>

L'uomo viene sovrastato dalla sua stessa parola che porterà gli altri uomini alla disfatta, all'eccidio. Allo stesso modo Kezilahabi in *Karibu Ndani* (1988) tratta le metafore della luce e della parola, così come abbiamo visto in particolare nelle poesie *Nondo* e *Safari*. L'io lirico nella raccolta di poesie ha bisogno di ritornare ad un'azione creativa/generativa del silenzio, ciò è espresso in *Ngoma ya Kimya* (La danza del silenzio 1988/2008a: 43)

*Nao upepo ukinifundisha lugha ya  
kimya  
Maana yule mwanamke  
amekwishajifungua.*

E se il vento mi insegnerà la lingua  
del silenzio  
vorrà dire che quella donna ha già  
partorito.

Il silenzio in Hussein e Kezilahabi, come giustamente affermava Ricard su Hussein, non è rassegnazione. Per spiegare questo silenzio il saggio di Heidegger *In cammino verso il linguaggio* sembra particolarmente adatto (1973: 130-170).

Là dove la parola manca s'è insinuata una frattura, una demolizione. [...] Non esiste cosa là dove manca la parola, la parola cioè che di volta in volta nomina le cose. [...] Il Dire originario, come quello che infonde il moto al quadrato del mondo, aduna ogni cosa nella prossimità dell'esser l'uno di fronte all'altro, e questo adunare è silenzioso, come silenzioso è il temporalizzare del tempo, lo spazializzare dello spazio, come silenzioso è il gioco dello spazio del gioco temporale. Quell'adunare con appello silenzioso, con cui s'identifica il movimento nel mondo del Dire originario, noi lo chiamiamo il suono della quiete. Esso è: il linguaggio dell'essenza. [...] Venir meno qui significa: la parola possibile a pronunciarsi ritorna nel silenzio, là donde essa trae origine e possibilità, ritorna nel suono della quiete che, in quanto Dire originario, infonde movimento

<sup>31</sup> *Binadamu huzaa neno – neno hushika nguvu – likawa kubwa – kubwa, kubwa likamshinda binadamu kwa ukubwa na nguvu. Likamuangusha. Neno ambalo limezaliwa na ntu likaja kuntawala ntu yule aliyelizaa.*



alle regioni del quadrato del mondo, instaurando tra loro la prossimità. Questo venir meno della parola è l'autentico passo a ritroso sul cammino del pensiero.

In questo senso il silenzio non è rinuncia, ma è volto a generare e creare l'azione. Il silenzio è *poiesis* (poesia e creazione). Così la parola poetica stessa tende a superare la dualità di pensiero/azione e si fa profezia laica, come quella di Kinjeketile. La parola poetica diventa silenziosa, è un cammino a ritroso verso il pensiero che mette in gioco il fruitore dell'opera, il suo atto di lettura e comprensione del silenzio. In questo senso l'opera di Kezilahabi e Hussein è già azione, perché spinge il lettore attraverso i limiti del linguaggio (che sono anche i suoi) e perché campo della possibilità ermeneutica. La poesia di Hussein e Kezilahabi tenta di sintetizzare le opposizioni, è un appello al divenire, quindi all'avvenire, alle possibilità dell'esistenza e alla volontà degli uomini.

## Conclusioni

In questo articolo ho mostrato la vicinanza tra due tra i più grandi scrittori e pensatori in lingua swahili: Ebrahim Hussein ed Euphrase Kezilahabi. Nella parte introduttiva mi sono soffermato sulla fortuna dei loro testi. In particolare mi sono soffermato sulla ricezione di Mlinzi Mugyabuso Mulokozi, in quanto quest'ultimo era decisamente schierato con Hussein e Kezilahabi sulla questione della prosodia swahili, ma non di meno mostra una certa distanza nell'occuparsi di Hussein e Kezilahabi. In particolare nel periodo post-indipendenza e del progetto socialista nazionale di Nyerere, per Mulokozi risultava poco appropriato il criticismo dei due poeti, bisognava incoraggiare il popolo. Ho, quindi, mostrato la base laica di Hussein e Kezilahabi che applicavano ad ogni campo del sapere e del creare, così la loro concezione estetica, la loro poetica risulta essere simile sotto molti aspetti. In particolare ho accennato alla rilevanza del corpo nella loro opera. Il corpo risulta essere fondamentale non solo come elemento poetico, anche cognitivo. Il laicismo e l'idea del sensismo (del corpo quindi) come strumento ermeneutico-cognitivo sono applicati anche nella teoria letteraria come approccio immanentista-sensista del testo. Nell'ultima parte ho mostrato delle connessioni tra i testi di Kezilahabi e Hussein, in particolare delle opere *Karibu Ndani* (1988) e *Kinjeketile* (1969). Elementi quali libertà,

luce, azione e silenzio sono stati confrontati; da ciò è emersa la loro valenza letteraria, filosofica e politica. Infatti, grazie al confronto con un discorso di Nyerere è emersa la cifra dell'importanza che Kezilahabi e Hussein davano alla libertà, alla democrazia e al diritto.

Questa vicinanza politica e intellettuale, che per Hussein e Kezilahabi è anche estetica, rende ancora più emblematica la scarsa ricezione dei due tra le nuove generazioni, in particolare fra gli scrittori swahili attuali. Ciò resta enigmatico perché la critica e la storicizzazione della letteratura swahili celebrano Hussein e Kezilahabi come rivoluzionari, come coloro che hanno fatto rinascere o, quanto meno, cambiato sensibilmente la letteratura swahili; ebbene se è così qual è la ricezione dei loro lavori tra la nuova generazione di scrittori? Esperienze estetiche quali quelle di Hussein e Kezilahabi, che propongono come fondamento e scopo della propria ricerca la libertà, appaiono oggi difficili come allora, su questo piano, così come affermava Nyerere, la Tanzania ancora oggi non ha fatto nessun passo in avanti.

Meno probabile, ma a parer mio più necessaria e urgente, appare la loro ricezione tra un vasto pubblico. Seppure i programmi scolastici non prediligono le loro opere e l'acquisto e la lettura tra i cittadini tanzaniani resta un'attività per pochi, la possibilità di riconoscere nelle opere di Kezilahabi e Hussein il *genius loci* della letteratura swahili, ora ci sarebbe, considerata la sensibile diminuzione dell'analfabetismo. Purtroppo, oggi come negli anni '70, la rivoluzione estetico-letteraria di Hussein e Kezilahabi appare essere ancora d'altri tempi: quelli futuri.

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ANGALIYA BAHARINI, MAI YALIYOKO PWANI: THE PRESENCE  
OF THE OCEAN IN MAHMOUD AHMED ABDULKADIR'S POETRY

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The idea for this paper came to me while heading off to the university on a unexpectable hot day in Bayreuth. While longing for “my sea” and its water, my mind wandered to Mahmoud Mau’s poetry and the meaning and prominence of *bahari* for a poet born on an island like Lamu. Ustadh Mau’s poetry is an inspiring field of research, one that I have become more familiar with over the years since getting to know him in 2014, in the course of my Ph.D. research. The contents of this paper make reference to early remarks of his that I had saved in my notebook in 2014, along with other interviews that I had conducted with Ustadh in April 2016, when I presented a paper on the social commitment of Mahmoud Mau’s poetry at the African Literature Association conference in Atlanta.<sup>1</sup> Finally, Ustadh Mau never tired of answering further questions that I addressed to him while preparing this contribution.<sup>2</sup>

\* When I travelled to Lamu in August 2014, I was captivated by the beauty of this port island, its language, people and scents. Elena Bertoncini knew that I travelled there, and asked me for some pictures of the island, which she had hitherto never visited. If nowadays even her Italian *wajukuu* (grandchildren) enjoy Swahili poetry, its places and its language, it is after all thanks to her: *asante sana, Mwalimu*.

<sup>1</sup> Most of the English translations presented in this paper are first drafts, courtesy of the indefatigable mind of Clarissa Vierke, in collaboration with Ustadh Mau, Jasmine Mahazi and myself, produced during the lovely time we spent with Mahmoud Mau in Bayreuth in 2015. These memories have been recorded in Mahmoud Mau’s poem *Zijara Ujerumani* (A Visit to Germany). All the material which has been generously provided to us by Mahmoud Mau is kept at the DEVA archive in Bayreuth. The idea for an anthology of Ustadh Mau poetry is a forthcoming project. In the cases wherein the translations come from other sources, it is explicitly specified in footnote.

<sup>2</sup> My heartfelt thanks to Flavia Aiello for having invited Mahmoud Mau to Naples in occasion of the first conference on Swahili literature at the University of Naples

Before looking at the *bahari* in Mahmoud Mau's poetry, I will briefly introduce his life, as some of his life's threads are intertwined with his oeuvre, and this will aid in understanding and drawing nearer to his way of life and of making poetry.

### **Ustadh Mau: Maisha**

Any study of Mahmoud Mau's poetry must take into account his hometown, Lamu, the island where he was born and raised. Like in biology and as attested by Uexküll, every organism is not only adapted to (*angepasst*) but also entirely fitted into (*eingepasst*) its environment (Cassirer 1992: 23-24), it is the same if we consider Mahmoud Mau's life. Indeed, his oeuvre is totally imbued by a *Merknetz* (receptor system) and a certain *Wirknetz* (effector system) both generated by and linked with his alma mater.

Although he worked in Tanzania for two years – from 1971 to 1973, as a shopkeeper in the Manzese area of Dar es Salaam – and despite his love of travelling, he can't imagine himself living in a better place than Lamu. The joy (*raha*) that he feels every time he returns from a journey is unexplainable (*haielezeki*) for him.<sup>3</sup> He compared it to the joy in someone's heart when they are about to see their love again: "*Ile raha ninao sikia haoelezeki na bila ya safari raha hiyo siwezi kuipata nikama ile raha anao sikiya mtu aliokuwa mbali na mpenzi wake wakati anapokuwa hurudi kwenda kukutana na mpenzi*" (Mau 2017).<sup>4</sup> He is simply proud of and grateful for the place where he lives and where his parents, Ahmed Abdulkadir Abdulatif and Barka Aboud Mbarak, raised him. While, on the one hand, it is needless to say that we have no power to decide either where we are born or who our parents are, Mahmoud Mau declares that, even if he had this power, he wouldn't have chosen another place or other parents.

"L'Orientale", and to my friend Roberto Gaudioso for having joined Mahmoud Mau's voice with those of other poets from our home town.

<sup>3</sup> *Mimi sioni mahala bora kwangu mimi zaidi ya hapa amu nami napenda sana safari kwa sababu unapo fika wakati wakurudi amu basi ile raha ninao sikia haoelezeki nabila yasafari raha hiyo siwezi* (Mau 2017). "I can't imagine a better place for me than here at my home in Lamu. I love travelling very much, because when you come back to Lamu after having travelled, well, the joy which I feel, I can't explain it to you and without travelling I couldn't feel it."

<sup>4</sup> "That joy which I feel is inexplicable, and if I did not travel I could not experience this joy. It is like the joy that a person feels when he/she is far from his lover and then comes back to see his/her lover."

On Lamu and by his community, he is considered a social philanthropist: he is an imam, a teacher and chairman of the Lamu Muslim Youth, and for his contributions to national development, he has been awarded the Head of State's Commendation. He often uses his poetry to comment on pressing social and political issues: the poem *Kimwondo* (The Shooting Star, 1975), for instance, was composed at the time of the election campaigns and the selection of candidates for the parliamentary seat of Lamu East in 1975 (Amidu 1990).<sup>5</sup> He wrote the short poem *Mama Musimlaumu* (Don't Blame the Mother, 2006) to raise public awareness of an event too easily condemned by newspapers in 2006: a mother had abandoned her newborn baby in the bush, who was then found by a stray dog.

Mahmoud Mau's being "many things" (Timammy 2014: 85) befits his status as a multi-faceted poet. He indeed writes about a broad range of topics, prompted by different sources of inspiration: the books in his library, his private life, or the people of different generations whom he knows and is inspired by or asked to write about. *Wasiya wa Mabanati* (Advice to the Young Girls; 140 stanzas), a poem composed in 1974, was written at a time when customs were under threat. Poets like Ustadh Mau would plead for the respect of customs and culture. In composing his own admonitory *utendi* to young girls, Mau was inspired by the Arabic pamphlet *ya-Banati*, composed by 'alī al-Ṭaṇṭawī in 1954, which he had read earlier.<sup>6</sup> Ṭaṇṭawī's text was meant to warn young ladies not to let themselves be deceived by men in matters of love. However, the poem *Wasiya wa Mabanati* is not a general admonition to stick to one's customs, but was inspired by a specific incident: a young woman from his own island had lost her honour. Furthermore, it builds on a tradition of admonitory, didactic poetry: roughly a century before, another admonition in the form of a didactic poem (*wasiya*), the *Utendi wa Mwana Kupona* – which later became one of the most venerated poems of Swahili classical *tendi* compositions – was composed and addressed to a young woman, the author Mwana Kupona's daughter. The poetess, who was born in Siu but spent her

<sup>5</sup> Mahmoud Mau was writing on behalf and in support of Mr. Mzamil O. Mzamil, vehemently urging people to vote for him rather than for the rich Bwana Abubakar Madhubuti (see Amidu 1990:43).

<sup>6</sup> Ṭaṇṭawī is a Syrian writer whose grandfather was Egyptian; he moved first to Syria and then to Egypt. He died in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in 1999, at the age of 90. His *ya-Banati* has been published in Pakistan and translated into Urdu and Farsi.

adulthood in Lamu, her mother's hometown<sup>7</sup> (Romero 1997: 32), used the poem of Mwana Kupona (Werner & Hichens 1934; Allen 1971) to impart advice on how to behave in society, with the aim of preserving moral values, such as those the poet Mahmoud Mau recalls in *Wasiya*.

Before *Kimwondo* and *Wasiya*, the first poem that he had composed for public recitation (*mahali pa umma*) was titled *Miaka Kumi ya Uhuru* (Ten Years of Independence), written on the tenth anniversary of Kenya's independence in 1973. A man who liked the poem awarded him five shillings for his performance.<sup>8</sup> Although he recited his first poem in public and has participated in many other performances,<sup>9</sup> Mahmoud Mau himself prefers writing to reciting. However, he knows well the advantages of recorded poems, which can reach a larger audience (Mau 2016; see also Mau & Frankl 2013: 2). In fact, his compositions have been recorded and distributed all along the coast; for instance, the *Wasiya wa Mabanati*, as chanted by Said Karama, has gained popularity also in Mombasa (see Kresse 2011).<sup>10</sup> Not only Karama, but other singers have also worked to "give voice" (*kutia sauti*) to his compositions: *Ramani ya Maisha ya Ndowa* (A Map of Married Life, 2006) was sung by Fakhrouddin Muhsin; *Uzinduzi* (Awakening, 2000), by Abdurahman Mustafa, a man from the Comoro. Mau's expertise in the Kiamu language and Swahili poetry, along with his astonishing knowledge of the Arabic language, textual sources and Muslim doctrine, have made him the authority to consult, and his library a meeting point where he has supplied several scholars and researchers with information and material.

His private library, which he has created over the years, is a special place for him. It is full of books, stacked high on every shelf, in Swahili, English and

<sup>7</sup> The plaque affixed outside her house, in the Mta Muini area of Lamu, reads as follows: "Above here, in about 1880, Mwana Kupona wrote her *utendi*." Mahmoud Mau kindly provided me with a photo of the plaque, which allowed me to re-read it and to quote it here.

<sup>8</sup> *Mtu mmoja alipenda shairi hili na akanitua shilingi tano. Alipoa bashishi shilingi tano* (my transcript of the *Encyclopédie des Littératures en Langues Africaines*/ ELLAf video at <http://ellaf.huma-num.fr/contenu/kiswahili-bila-mipaka/> minutes 12.55-13.28).

<sup>9</sup> To name but a few: the Jukwani Festival, Nairobi 2009; RISSEA, Mombasa 2014; Chuo Kikuu cha Kimataifa cha Kiislamu Africa, Sudan; Iwalewa Haus, Bayreuth, 2015; Berlin and Hamburg Universities, 2016; UNIOR, 2016; Zanzibar, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> An audio version of another popular poem, *Kiswahili*, has also been recorded by Mathieu Roy in 2005 (see Roy 2013: 45-56). In contrast to *Wasiya wa Mabanati*, this audio version has been recited by Ustadh Mau himself.

Arabic. He began to order Arabic-language books from Cairo when he was around sixteen years old. Mahmoud Mau's joy lies in his books, and this joy permeates his library: *Raha yangu iko kwenye zitabu. Ndio maana nimetenga sehemu hii [makataba] niwe yangu, mimi peke yangu na vitabu vyangu*.<sup>11</sup> Mahmoud Mau's library contains plenty of journals and books about Chinese culture as well, which has always fascinated him. Even his nickname, "Mau", comes from his support of Mao Zedong, and only later was it associated with the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya (at which point, to avoid trouble with the government, he changed his nickname from "Mao" to "Mau").

Not only books, but also people have fostered his interest in and love of poetry. Mahmoud Mau's father, Ahmed Abdulkadir Abdulatif – the last born from his grandfather Abdulkadir Abdul Latif and Hadidja – known by the nickname "Gandhi" both for his intelligence and for being like the Mahatma – was a poet himself.<sup>12</sup> Mahmoud Mau still keeps a poem that his father composed especially for him, *Hapo Zamani za Jana* (Once Upon a Time). The poem features the same tone and theme of paternal advice that one finds later on in the poem that Ustadh Mau composed for his son Abud in 2000, *Haki za Watoto* (The Children's Rights), which addresses all the parents in the community.<sup>13</sup> Mahmoud Mau started reading his father's poetry when he was a young boy, and this made him start appreciating and composing poetry on his own. Another factor that

<sup>11</sup> My transcript of Ustadh Mau's interview for the *Kiswahili Bila Mipaka* corpus video, ELLAf, minutes 17.7–12. "Books are my joy. This is the reason why I have set apart this section [the library] for myself, so that I can be alone with my books."

<sup>12</sup> On his mother's side, the poetic talent can be traced back to his *nyanya*, or grandmother, who was also a poetess, although she mainly composed her poems orally without writing them down. Mahmoud Mau still remembers the poem his grandmother composed when the telephone arrived in Lamu. Mahmoud Mau's grandfather Abdul Kadir Abdul Latif originally from Poona in India, came to Lamu when his wife died and was employed by the government as an engineer. Known for being a good Hanafi Muslim and a very devoted person, Abdul Kadir Abdul Latif has been a close friend of Habib Swaleh, the "Mwenye Mkuu" of the Riyadah Mosque and the Maulidi celebration on Lamu. Mahmoud's grandfather and later on his father, contributed a lot with the construction of the Riyadah Mosque (see Salvadori 1996: 34-35).

<sup>13</sup> Like the *Waisya wa Mabanati*, *Haki za Watoto* was sung by Karama and is available from many shops in Lamu and Mombasa. A copy of it, provided by Mahmoud Mau during his first visit to Bayreuth, is nowadays also kept at the DEVA archive at the University of Bayreuth.



helped to train him as a poet was the madrasa that he attended for nine years, where he learned how to chant and compose *qaṣīda* to be recited at celebrations of the prophet's birthday (*maulidi*). Like many Swahili scholars, particularly before independence, Ustadh received a Muslim education – a type of instruction often frowned upon in contemporary Kenya, despite having produced so many outstanding scholars and poets along the East African coast, where, “since the coming of Islam to the East African coast the Swahili have received their formal education in the *chuo* and the madrasa” (Frankl 2012: 3) – as opposed to the “formal education” introduced by Christian missionaries in the nine-teenth century. Even before entering the madrasa at the age of seven, he had already started learning the Qur'ān by heart with his uncle's wife, Mama Kinana. When he started his first year of madrasa, taught by Mwalimu Omar Abdallah Kirume,<sup>14</sup> the talented pupil Mahmoud Mau already knew how to read the holy book and was able to recite some suras from memory.<sup>15</sup>

It is not only his humbleness but also his immense knowledge of Muslim culture and Swahili poetry and linguistic varieties that have earned him recognition “despite the lack of formal education”, as P. J. L. Frankl (2012: 3) has pointed out. Mahmoud Mau himself neither regrets nor hides his upbringing, as is also attested in the following line from *Kilio Huliya Mwenyewe*<sup>16</sup> (Change starts at Home, 2006):

<sup>14</sup> The teachers who followed him over nine years at the madrasa are the following: Mwalimu Muhammad Sharif Said al-Beydh, Mwenye Ali Dini, Mwalimu Muhammad Ali Khatib and Ahmad Ali Khatib, Kassim Abdalla Kirume and Athan Ahmad Kirume, Ustadh Sayyid Hassan Badawy. The latter is one of the prominent religious leaders who opposed Mahmoud Mau's choice to start preaching the Friday sermon in Kiswahili (see Timammy 2013-14: 87-88). All his teachers were followers of the Tarīqa 'Alawīya, which had some influence on the poet's education until he was inspired by al-Ghazālī's doctrine, as contained in the book *Laysa min al-Islām* (It's Not Part of Islam), which signalled a turning point in Mahmoud Mau's education. This made his teachers consider him a Wahhabi. (Timammy 2013-14: 86).

<sup>15</sup> As reported by Timammy, under Kinana's tutelage, Mahmoud Mau learned “the final thirtieth of the Qur'ān” (namely *juz'* 'Ammā in Arabic) at home” (Timammy 2013-14: 86).

<sup>16</sup> The original title is namely *Kilio Huliya Mwenyewe – na mtu mbali kalia*. Clarissa Vierke in dialogue with Andrew Eisenberg opted for translating it as “Change starts at home” since a literally translation of it would have not rendered the intention and meaning imbued in the poem's composition.

|                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Nimezawa kisiwani</i>   | <i>wala nde sikutoka</i>    |
| <i>masomo ni ya chuoni</i> | <i>ndiyo niliyobahatika</i> |
| <i>wala dufu siiyoni</i>   | <i>mbee ya wailimika</i>    |

I was born on the island, never did I leave it.

My education is that of the Qur'ānic school, that is what I am blessed with.  
I do not regard myself as worthless compared to those with a school education.

Being a poet and an imam at the same time are not roles that contradict each other. In a roundtable on Islamic intellectual traditions and institutions of learning in Africa held in Bayreuth in March 2016, Mahmoud Mau recalled what the Qur'ān clearly recites in the sura of the poets, *āya* 226, in which quality poetry is praised whereas bad poetry is rejected.<sup>17</sup>

His role as a preacher, delivering the Friday sermon at the Pwani Mosque, and as a teacher in the Bandani Mosque permeates his poetic voice and his repertoire of themes, which are strongly infused with a guiding and admonishing tone. For him, all these roles share the common mission and challenge of working together for the benefit of the community<sup>18</sup> (*umma*) (Mau 2017). This principle echoes Shaaban Robert's concept of *wajibu wa mwandishi au mshairi* (the duty of the writer/poet). The point of being a poet, according to Mahmoud Mau, is to chronicle the events, both happy and sad (like the tragedy embodied in *Wasiya wa Mabanati*), that bind the community that he is part of: *Na mshairi sawa na msanii mgine anaathirika na mazingira ya jamii yake analiya wakati anapoona jamii haina raha na anacheka na kufurahi wakati anapo shuhudiya raha na furaha ya jamii yake kilio au kiteko chake kinaonekana katika kazi zake za sanaa* (Mau 2017).<sup>19</sup>

Composing a sermon (*hutuba*) implies several levels of commitment for Mahmoud Mau. Although sermons may deal with different themes de-pending

<sup>17</sup> The prophet Muhammad AS, along with Hassan bin Thabit, Kaab bin Malik and Abdulahi bin Rawaha, are the poets whom he mentioned in his talk, providing examples of poetic practices as far back as the Islamic age. The Qur'ānic *āya* he refers to is the following: "Save those that believe, and do righteous deeds, and remember God oft, and remember themselves after being wronged; and those who do wrong shall surely know by what overturning they will be overturned" (Sura 26:226; Arberry's translation 1986:381).

<sup>18</sup> *Mwalimu na khatib na mshairi wote hawa wanashirikiyana katika kutumikiya.*

<sup>19</sup> "And a poet is like any other artist who is affected by the context of his community. He cries when he finds his society unhappy, and laughs when he pays witness to joy and happiness in his society. His cry and laughter are evident in his artworks."

on the specific event the community is facing – be it Ramadan or political elections – in every case, a *hutuba* has to supply testimony (*ushahidi*) from the holy Qur’ān or from the hadith. On some occasions, as Mahmoud Mau has told me in an interview, imams also pick relevant quotations from proverbs and poetry that could be of guidance in their sermons.

On the other hand, he considers it his special duty as a teacher to address the youth. The teacher’s role in this sense is to take care of children and prepare them to become adults<sup>20</sup> (Mau 2017). Finally, being a writer entails the formidable mission of guiding (*kuwalekeza*) and advising (*kuwashauri*) people on how to go about their lives (*jinsi yakwenda maishani*) (Mau 2017).

Ever since he started composing poetry, he has typically written most of his poems in Arabic script, which to him is the natural form in which to commit his words to paper, but which makes him rather exceptional in contemporary Lamu.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, he is unique in the sense that he started to deliver the Friday sermon in Swahili, which was a very controversial choice at that time; ultimately, however, the community approved of it, and nowadays almost all the imams deliver their Friday sermons in Swahili (see also Mau & Frankl 2013: 2 ; Timammy 2014: 87-88).

Ustadh Mau also writes short poems, *mashari mafupi*, for the people who regularly knock at his library door, asking for poems to celebrate a graduation or wedding or somebody’s pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>22</sup> Mahmoud acknowledges that the community needs people who can transfer the message (*ujumbe*) that is in one’s heart or mind into a better form (*kwa ndiya nzuri zaidi*), namely poetry: *jamii huwa inawahitaji watu hawa kwasababu wanawasaidiwa katika kuwasilisha ujumbe wao kwa ndiya nzuri Zaidi* (Mau 2017).<sup>23</sup> When he writes on commission, he commits himself to the person whose behalf he is talking, and to their situation or context; he writes through the lens of the other person: *nawakati mgine anatunga kwa niyaba ya mtu au watu wangine na katika hali hii ya pili inambidi mshairi ajiweke*

<sup>20</sup> *Ni kuunda watoto na kuwatayarisha kwa maisha ya ukubwani.*

<sup>21</sup> For an example of his writing in Arabic script, see the poem titled *Kiswahili* in Mau & Frankl (2013: 1-18), in which a list of all his composition in *tendi* and *mashairi* forms is also provided.

<sup>22</sup> As attested by his daughter Azra, Ustadh Mau doesn’t even charge for these short poems.

<sup>23</sup> “The community needs this kind of people so that they may help them to transfer their message in a nice form.”

*katika mazingira ya ule mtu ambao anatumia kwa niyaba yake* (Mau 2017).<sup>24</sup>

Besides writing poems on demand, based on inspiring books or chronicling events in the community, Ustadh Mau regularly writes about his own feelings (*hisia*) and the experiences which have come to mark his life. In this respect, the poet says on his own behalf: *mshairi anatumia kwa ajili yakuelezea hisia ambazo ni zake yeye mwenyewe kwa mambo ambayo yamemtokeya yeye binafsi* (Mau 2017).<sup>25</sup>

### ***Bahari*: A multi-layered figuration and experience**

Reality is not a unique and homogenous thing; it is immensely diversified ,  
having as many different schemes and patterns as there are different organisms.

Every organism is so to speak a monadic being.

It has a world of its own because it has an experience of its own.

(Cassirer 1992: 23)

The variety of Ustadh Mau's compositions – imbued with moral values and sermonic tones, and mixed with personal notes in *mashairi* and *utenzi* form – is an inspiring and very complex area of investigation. In this paper, I will refer specifically to the presence and cultural notions of the *bahari* in Ustadh Mau's life, thoughts and poetry. How do cultural concepts shape experience, and how does experience shape cultural concepts? The ocean's presence in a port city like Lamu is woven into moral discourses on social responsibility in Ustadh Mau's poetry, as I wish to show in the poem *Bandari ina Mawimbi* (The Port has Waves); on the other hand, it is also a presence that pervades and influences the poet's private sphere and personal feelings , as in the poem *Hafi asiye timiwa* (No One Dies Before Their Time is Up, 1998), and his personal observations. Besides these two topics, an investigation into *bahari* in terms of poetic meter and rules of prosody, from Mahmoud Mau's perspective, will also be necessary; hence, the wordplay in this paper's title.

I will look at the *bahari* in Mahmoud Mau's poetry as an aesthetic idea, as advanced in Blumberger (2013). In fact, the figure of the *bahari* contains

<sup>24</sup> "On other occasions, he composes on behalf of somebody else or other people; and in that case, the poet has to make an effort to put himself into that man's context on whose behalf he composes."

<sup>25</sup> "The poet composes to explain his own feelings about his personal experiences."

an ambiguity that can be understood in different ways. On this matter, it is worth quoting Blamberger, who describes Thomas Mann's attempt to show "that interplay of figural constancy and discursive variation" with the metaphor of black piano keys amid enharmonic change (*enharmonische Verwechslung*):

A single black key on a piano can at the same time be "F sharp" or "G flat"; the note can be reinterpreted, be assigned to a different tonal context and a different function, thus allowing a change of key (*Tonalwechsel*). (Blamberger 2013: 10-11)

In Mahmoud Mau's compositions, *bahari* is subject to this change of keys. However, as opposed to the concept of death in Mann, it does not contain that "figural constancy" either, since the *word* itself already embodies two unrelated meanings: rhyme/meter and sea/ocean. As first, I wish to look at the approach to and use of *bahari* (prosody) in Mahmoud Mau's compositions in the following paragraph; I will then narrow the focus to the use of *bahari* as a metaphor in some of his poems, which will reveal the different contexts and patterns of its occurrence. As in the *al-Inkishafi* by Sayyid Abdalla bin Nasir, in which the ruined city becomes a metaphor for talking about experiences and is thus reused (much like in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, which reuses the metaphor of Joachim Ziemssen's skeleton) (see Vierke 2016), to what extent does Mahmoud Mau use the sea as a metaphor, a device for talking about experiences? Its water and its port and the feelings generated from them are components the poet exploits to add texture to his compositions. Thus, *bahari*, as a point of departure, will first be analysed for its ability to determine the "musical key" of a poem via prosody; then it will be investigated as a cultural figuration: *bahari* as the port, Mahmoud Mau's own community, and *bahari* as a very personal experience permeated by his own feelings: the metaphor of the universe and the fine line between the experiences of life and death.

What will emerge from a comparison of *bahari* in the poet's personal memories (see paragraph "*Bahari inanikumbusha*") and *bahari* as the figuration of the Lamuan community which is plugging like a *jahazi* (dhow) or in troubles because of *mawimbi* (see paragraph "*Bahari in the port-city*"), is a striking tension between Ustadh Mau's plurality of experiences and the metaphor of the ocean.

### ***Bahari*, a prosodic change of key**

The twofold meaning embodied in the technical term *bahari* in Swahili classical literature is well-known: *Kwanza, hurejelea kile kina cha mwisho katika utenzi na ambacho hakibadiliki katika utenzi au utendi mzima. Maana ya pili ni kumbo la tungo za kishairi ambalo huweza kuwa na sifa na vitanzu mbalimbali* (Wamitila 2003: 27). Indeed, as concerns the *kina* (rhyme, pl. *vina*) of the *utendi*, the term *bahari* (from the Arabic *baḥr*, بحر), literally “ocean, sea” in Swahili), denotes the monosyllabic end rhyme, which is also known as *kina cha utendi* (rhyme of the *utendi*) or *kina cha kikomo* (end rhyme). In a broad sense, the term *bahari* also refers to categories of poetry, genre as is clear from the following passage: *Sheikh Nabahany na Bibi Zaynab Mahmoud Fadhil wamenifunza juu ya bahari kumi na tatu*<sup>26</sup> [...] *Hakuna anayejua kwa hakika, ni bahari namna ngapi waliotumia Waswahili; zaidi ya bahari za aina tatu maarufu ziitwazo: wimbo au nyimbo, shairi, utenzi au utendi* (Shariff 1988: 44-45).<sup>27</sup>

In this broad sense, *bahari* echoes the meaning of the Arabic *baḥr* (meter, pl. *buḥūr*), a term that was first used in the science of metrics and rhyme. In his *Poem about metres* (*Fī buḥūr al-ši'r*), Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī says of the “meter/sea”, “Every *baḥr* has a shore” (Capezio 2013: 22). This imagery of sea and shore also applies to the *ubeti* structure: as every sea has its shore, every *ubeti* has a monosyllabic *bahari*, which flows throughout the poem. Indeed, in the *utendi* meter, while the end rhyme of the first three *vipande* changes from one stanza to the next (*aaa-*, *bbb-*, *ccc-* ...), the end rhyme of the last hemistich recurs throughout the whole poem (*-x*, *-x*, *-x* ...).

Knowing the norms of composing poetry, for Mahmoud Mau, is like knowing the grammatical norms of one's own language. However, his approach to poetry has developed in a very spontaneous way, and transcends any established schools of poetic practice. When Mahmoud Mau composed his first poem, *Wasiya wa Mabanati*, in 1974, he didn't know anything about

<sup>26</sup> Here the following thirteen meters elicited by Shariff (1988: 45): 1. *Wimbo*, 2. *Shairi*, 3. *Zivindo*, 4. *Utenzi au Utendi*, 5. *Utumbuizo*, 6. *Hamziya*, 7. *Dura Manhduma/Inkishafi*, 8. *Ukawafi*, 9. *Wajiwaji*, 10. *Tiyani Fatiha*, 11. *Wawe*, 12. *Kimai*, 13. *Sama, Mahadhi au Sauti*.

<sup>27</sup> “Sheikh Nabahany and Bibi Zaynab Mahmoud Fadhil have taught me upon thirteen meters [...] there is no one who knows with certain how many types of meters the Swahili do use; three of the most renowned meters are: *nyimbo*, *shairi*, *utenzi au utendi*. ”

the so-called *sheria za kutunga mashairi* (rules for composing poems; see Abedi 1954). In fact, the poem, meant to be a moral admonishment to Muslim youth, is known as an *utendi*, praised for its “enduring relevance” across time and place (Kresse 2011); however, it was not composed in the *utendi* form, but in the *Dura Mandhuma* genre<sup>28</sup> based on four bi-colons (*mishororo*) and of six syllables (*mizani*) per each verse (*kipande*).<sup>29</sup> The first line of the poem reads as follows:

*Sikiza mwanangu    nikupe waswiya*  
*Mimi ulimwengu    ninauweleya*

<sup>28</sup> For the description of this genre I am basically referring to the definition and explanation provided in Shariff who groups *Dura Manduma* and *Inkishafi* together and defines them as it follows: *bahari ya sita ya utungo hujulikana kwa majina mawili, yaani Dura Manduma au Inkishafi. Kwa upande mmoja, majina haya ni ya bahari yenyewe ya utungo wa aina hiyo, na kwa upande mwingine majina haya ni ya tungo maalum zilizotungwa zamani kwa bahari hiyo. Bahari hii ina beti za mishororo mine yeneye mizani sita kwa tano na vina vyake viko mwisho wa mishororo mitatu ya kila ubeti, kwa hivyo mizani ya sita ni kiwango tu* (Shariff 1988:54-55); “The sixth genre of composition is known under two names, that is *Dura Manduma* or *Inkishafi*. On one hand, these names refer to the genre itself of this kind of compositions. On the other hand, these are the names of famous compositions which have been composed in this genre/meter.”

<sup>29</sup> The term *kipande* (line) has a different meaning compared to the term *mstari*. In the general acknowledged manuscript form of all the Swahili *tendi*, the stanza is a unit that occupies one manuscript line, namely *mstari* and is written from right to left. Thus, each *kipande* is placed one after the other in a single line (*mstari*), and some scribes used to place a small, upside-down heart filled in with either black ink or a different colour to mark the caesura (*kituo*). Just as the caesura is optionally denoted, often an *ubeiti* corresponds to a single manuscript line. This one-line pattern characterises most *utendi* compositions in Arabic script. Accordingly, the *utendi* has also been described as a one-line verse that is 32 syllables long (Shariff 1988: 58). The one-line stanza arrangement in the manuscript and the visual division of the page into four equal columns is made possible by the writing of the Arabic consonant system, as only the consonants are written and the vowels most often appear only as diacritical signs above or below each consonant (*ibidem*). This accounts for a uniform length of eight consonantal characters for each *kipande*. When Roman script was introduced for writing Swahili poetry (see Krapf 1882, Frankl & Omar 1997 and Gerhard 2005), verses started to be written one on top of the other (as a quatrain), since the script, which includes both consonants and vowels, contained too many characters to fit each stanza into one line (Shariff 1988:58). The four-line layout led in turn to the misleading perception of the *ubeiti* as a quatrain based on four equal lines, although it actually consists of two bicolons (*mishororo*), as Shariff (1988: 51) and Vierke (2011: 48-50) have shown.

Mingi nyaka wangu    katika duniya  
Nawe haya yangu    hela zingaitya

Listen, my child to the advice I shall give you;  
I understand the ways of the world.  
I have spent many years on this earth;  
and what I tell you now, you should bear it in mind.<sup>30</sup>

As evident from this first stanza, the *ubeti* falls into eight verses (*vipande*, sg. *kipande*). Each *kipande* is made up of six syllables (*mizani*). Furthermore, the *ubeiti* falls into two parts (*mishororo*) made up of four verses (*vipande*) each, which consist of twenty-four syllables (*mizani*).<sup>31</sup> On the contrary, the poem *Bandari ina Mawimbi* (The Port Has Waves; 18 stanzas) is listed as one of Mahmoud Mau's shorter compositions in *mashairi* form (Frankl & Mau 2010: 16). Still, despite its brevity, the meter does not adhere to the *shairi* prosody but to the *utendi* prosodic pattern of eight syllables per verse, amounting to 32 syllables per stanza, as the first stanza shows: *Bismillahi awwali, kwa ina lake Jalali/ Twaanda yetu kauli, ya karibu kuwambiya* (In the name of God, first, in the name of the Almighty, we start our speech by welcoming you). Beyond the prosodic pattern, the very tone

<sup>30</sup> Kresse & Mahazi's translation (2011).

<sup>31</sup> For the description of the *utendi* stanza, I am adopting the technical definitions as provided by Shariff (1988) and Vierke (2010: 25): "The stanzas are the biggest independent, prosodically and graphologically separate units of the *utendi*. A stanza consists of four lines (*vipande*, sg. *kipande* "piece") of eight syllables each. The four lines are divided into two pairs (hemistichs) or bi-colons (*mshororo*, pl. *mishororo*), so that an *ubeiti* consists of two *mishororo* (which in turn consist of two *vipande* each)." As concerns the *utendi* bi-partite structure falling into two *mishororo* it is worth citing what Vierke and other scholars before her have extensively commented upon: "The *utendi* stanza can be considered as displaying a form of progressive bipartition: two rhythmic groups account for a line, two lines for a *mshororo* and two *mishororo* for the stanza, *ubeiti*. [...] For Hinawy, for instance, who considers the *utendi ubeiti* to consist of two long-lines, the division into four *vipande* which are marked by rhyme is not the decisive criterion that could turn the *utendi* in a quatrain strophic form - which he eventually calls a "pseudo-quatrain" or "false quatrain" (Hichens 1962/63: 110, 111). He rather considers the *utendi* as being derived from the long-line (long-measure) of Persian-Arabian origin: 'It is, plainly, none other than the old long-measure strophe graced by three vituo or internal rimes and one true kina or verse-end rime. It is, thus, not a true quatrain, but a single-line verse, riming with its adjacent verses and carrying three subsidiary or internal rimes of its own' (Hichens 1962/63: 120)" (Vierke 2010:48).



of this opening stanza encourages us to read it as a typical *utendi*, which typically sets the atmosphere with praises in the name of God in the first stanza. The *utendi* style of his short compositions, as he himself defines them (*mashairi mafupi*), has been also highlighted in the political verses of Kimwondo (Shooting Star), which are in fact *shairi* verses “in the *utenzi* vein” (Amidu 1996: 56).

Mahmoud Mau’s numerous roles in everyday life are also reflected in his compositions, in which he does not stick to the conventions of a specific meter or prosodic pattern. He rather lets the first line of his composition define which “*bahari* – key” the poem will bear: *mshairi mara nyingi hachegui bahari gani anataka kutunga. Anatunga na ubaiti wa kwanda ndio unamuongoza kufuwata bahari* (Mau 2017).<sup>32</sup> Thus, the poem dictates its own rules: the first stanza (*ubaiti wa kwanza*) is conceived of as the leading stanza, which dictates the meter and guides the poet’s hand. Mahmoud is referring to the natural act of composing poetry, which goes beyond any norms: the poet starts composing naturally, without any premeditated decisions. The meter does not even strictly shape the composition: *Kwetu sisi utungo waweza kuitwa utendi hata kama haukufuwata ile bahari maarufu ya utendi [...] Bahari ya utendi kawaida ni mrefu lakini mara nyingine washairi hutumiya bahari ya utendi kwa kuandika tungo fupi* (Mau 2016).<sup>33</sup> According to Mahmoud Mau’s perspective, the *utendi* genre is easier than the *shairi*, which makes it even more apt for compositions, and this is the reason why he himself recommends this genre to students of poetry (Mau 2017).<sup>34</sup>

### ***Bahari as personal experience: Bahari inanikumbusha ...***

*Bahari kwangu mimi mbali nakuwa naipenda kwa ajili ya mazowezi, lakini piya bahari inanipa utulivu wamoyo namapumziko yaro ho baharini nahisi raha ambayo haielezeki labda nikwa sababu kuwemo baharini inaikumbusha nafsi yangu wakati ule nilipokuwa tumboni*

<sup>32</sup> “Very often the poet does not choose the meter in which he wants to compose. He composes and the first stanza is the one suggesting him a meter to follow.”

<sup>33</sup> “For us a composition can be called *utendi* even if it does not follow the well-known *utendi* meter [...] The *utendi* genre is usually long but very often poets use the *utendi* genre to write short compositions.”

<sup>34</sup> *Bahari hii ya utendi nyepesi kutungiya kwa hivo mara nyingi mimi huwambiya wanafundi wa ushairi waizoweshe kwa kutumiya bahari hini.*

*kwa mama nilipokuwa nikiogeleya katika maji yalionizunguka hali ambayo akili haikumbuki wakati huo lakini bila shaka roho namoyo unakumbuka hiyo hali labda ndiyo sababu yakuhi utulivu ninapo kuwa baharini. (Mau 2017)*

In this first section, I will consider the relationship between Ustadh Mau and the sea, where he enjoys swimming and above all feels at home, but where he has also risked his life. As I wish to show in the following, Mahmoud Mau's feelings towards the sea exhibit an affinity and closeness that can be traced back to a) his memories of being a fetus in his mother's womb (the sphere labeled *Tumbo la Mama* in the diagram below); b) his reflection on God's power over this world (the sphere *Uwezo wa Mungu na mipango yake* below); c) his reflection on human beings and their lives, which find parallels in the way the sea's water "behaves" (the sphere *Mwana Adamu na mabadiliko ya maisha yake* below); and finally d) his memories of times spent together with his friends in the very early hours of the morning (the sphere *Urafiki na kushirikiana* below).

In an attempt to define how and why he feels at ease in the water in which he swims, Mahmoud Mau digs into the depth of his feelings and finds an explanation for something that can hardly be explained rationally. Beyond the merely aspect of swimming and training, the sea bestows his heart with tranquility, serenity and calmness, and allows his soul to rest (*utulivu wa moyo na mapumziko ya roho*). The joy that he feels in the water brings him back to a state that the mind cannot remember, but that lingers on in the heart and soul: the time when he was in his mother's womb (*nilipokuwa tumboni kwa mama*) and when he was surrounded by water (*maji yalionizunguka*). The sea, for Mahmoud, is the same water in which he floated before being born. *Bahari* and the mother's womb share the same universe, whose secret hides in the water that flows through us.

Beyond Mahmoud Mau's private feelings, the *bahari* also flows into a parallel dimension – namely that of God, since it is a symbol of God's power and his plans, which are never subverted, *jongo*:<sup>35</sup> *Bahari kadhalika ina nikumbusha uwezo wamungu na mipango yake isiyo kuwa na jongo [...]*<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Jongo* ni kama *kombo* (pl. *makombo*): "kombo hauko sawa sawa." Mtu anweza kusema "mti huu una jongo" (this tree has a crookedness) (Mau 2017). Among other expressions, *hapana kombo* means *hapana shaka* "there is no dispute"; *asiye kombo na tua* "he who is without crookedness nor blame", is one of the pretended quality of Muhammad (Krapf 2012 [1882]:168).

<sup>36</sup> "The ocean reminds me also of God's power and His plans which are without crookedness."

God's power can be seen in his firm plans (*mpango madhubuti*), which control the ocean as well as the regular high and ebb tides of the water, which become more evident on Lamu in some seasons (*maji ya bahari yanajaa kwa siku maalumu na yanafuma kwa siku maalumi*). Tides are very important in delineating time in Lamu. Thus the imagery evoked in this scene, particularly the ever-moving water (known as *maji makimbizi* "flowing water" as opposed to *maziwa* "stagnant water") does not come from its meaning alone, but is totally rooted in Mahmoud Mau's culture. As depicted in Prins's volume, "Tidal waters, always in flux and reflux, not only surround the islands, but are an integral part of the Lamu world" (Prins 1965: 62).<sup>37</sup>

God's power, as reflected in the natural flux and reflux and the systematicity of the ocean's water, reminds Ustadh Mau of a famous verse that still is anchored in his memory: *Angaliya baharini, mai yaliyoko pwani/Hutoka wapi mwendani, nakisa yakarejea* (Look at the ocean, the water which shores the coast. It goes out in its flow and then comes back; my translation). This verse, which likely originates from a qasida learnt by heart at the madrasa, invites one to look at the ocean's water and how smoothly it falls upon the coast, changes direction and then comes back again.

In the changing of the ocean's states, Mahmoud Mau sees the same progression that happens to every human being. He invites us to reflect on how the serenity and cruelty of the ocean are like the calmness and turmoil within our own lives. In fact, the ocean can be glad or get angry just like humans do: *Na mabadiliko yake ina nikumbusha mwana Adamu na maisha yake/ Furaha na hasira shuwari na dharuba za bahari ni sawa na utulivu na misukosuko katika maisha yetu sisi wanaadamu bahari inafurahi na piya inakasirika* (Mau 2017).<sup>38</sup> The *bahari*, described by the common adjective *shwari*, is compared to the abstract concept of *utulivu* for human beings, just as the ocean's *dharuba* parallels the people's *misukosuko* (vicissitudes; turmoils).

<sup>37</sup> As attested in Prins, the ebbing of the tide "is perceived as a downward movement when on an open beach like Malindi" while "its horizontal movement is more stressed in Lamu and elsewhere in the islands where the mass of the water has to seek a way out to see again at every ebbing tide". Thus, while on Lamu it is heard *maji yafuma* or *mai kufuma* for 'the tide ebbs', in Malindi and Mombasa the most recurrent form is *maji yapwa* or *maji kupwa*, "the water falls" (see Prins 1965 62-63).

<sup>38</sup> "And its changes remind me of the son of Adam and his life: The joy and anger, the calmness and turmoils of the ocean are like the quietness and vicissitudes in our life of human beings. The ocean rejoices and becomes angry."

Similarly, though in a more personal sphere, *bahari* is a motif that links him to friendship. What links the *bahari*, the poet's friends and himself is precisely the moments after swimming when, at the seashore (*ufuwoni mwa bahari*), they eat fish or meat with bread and weigh themselves on the last Sunday of every month: *Kadhalika kwenda baharini kwangu kunanipa fursa ya kukutana na marafiki na kujumuika nao pamoja [...] wakati tukila asubuhi baada yaguoga kila jumapili ya mwisio ya mwezi tunapima uzito natunakula samaki namkate au nyama namkate* (Mau 2017).<sup>39</sup>

This sense of serenity and completion, which makes the poet Mahmoud Mau feel blessed and grateful, finds its complete opposite in *Hafi Asiye Timiwa* (No One Dies Before Their Time Is Up, 1998; 14 stanzas). This poem rather evokes a tragedy which the poet had to face in 1998, when the roads were still flooded because of the El Niño storms of 1997 – to the extent that the buses couldn't cross the bridge over the Tana River, which had turned into a huge current (leaving its river bed). The passengers had to get off the bus and use small canoes to cross the water. Mahmoud Mau was on his way to Mombasa to visit his daughter Nadya, who attended a boarding school in Mombasa. The young man who saved his life is called Ali, a Mbajuni. At the time, he was in his twenties. The incident that occurred to him on that day left him with a strong conviction, found in the form of a refrain at the end of every stanza (*Hafi asiye timiwa ... Hafi asiye timiwa... Hafi asiye timiwa*), and finally emphasized in the last stanza with a sort of axiom: *Nna na faida moya, ambayo nimeipata: Mauti kuyakimbiya, si dawa hukufuata. Hafi asiye timiwa*.<sup>40</sup> The poem recounts an incident which almost ended in tragedy. From the very first stanzas the reader is thrust into the scenario; the poet describes how six people were put into a canoe (stanza 2, *Mwaoni twalingiya, kwa idadi watu sita*, "We got into a canoe; we were six in number"), along with the image of them looking at the captain (*nahuza*), who was untying the rope (*kamba*) as the canoe set off, following the current (*na mai kikaifuata*). From these first stanzas on, the poem depicts a risky setting that only gets

<sup>39</sup> "Similarly, for me, going to the sea gives me the opportunity to meet friends and to stay together with them [...] when we eat in the morning after swimming. Every last Sunday of the month we weigh ourselves and we eat fish with bread or meat with bread."

<sup>40</sup> "And there is one lesson that I learned from it: running away from death is not a solution; it still follows you. No one dies before their time is up."

worse and worse stanza after stanza. The particular image evoked in these lines is the one of the poet struggling in the water, moments of surfacing alternating with the sensation of sinking again. The struggles he mentions in stanza 8 (*kwa kuwana nakuteta*) were specifically caused by his carrying a heavy load (*mzigo nimebingita*) on his shoulder: *Jibaba lakilo miya, maungoni meikita / Kwa dhati meniemya, mabegani menambata / Kesa kuisaidiya, kutaka kumkukuta./ Hafi asiye timiwa*, “I was carrying a colossus of one hundred kilos on my back. He weighed heavily on me, leeching on my shoulders. I tried everything to get rid of him. No one dies before their time is up” (stz. 5). He first had to let go of the bag that he was trying to hold, because it became too heavy, which he viewed as a first sign of being unable to manage the situation: *Kauona kupoteya, kashindwa kuufuwata*, “I watched it sinking, unable to follow it.” The force of a man pushing him underwater, along with a strong current, prevented him from breathing, and brought him to the point where he thought he would die: *Shahada kaipijiya, na tamaa muhukata. Hafi asiye timiwa*, “I pronounced the last creed, and was about to give up” (stz. 7). Despite the water being portrayed as “swirling forcefully” (*mai kasi husokota*, stz.13), he was given another chance by God, which allowed him to come to the surface and shout for help. Far from that feeling of being safely at peace, surrounded by water like in his mother’s womb, in just a few seconds Mahmoud, pushed under water, feared and saw death. While trapped underwater, he unconsciously (he describes himself as without breath, after all) thought about his entire life and its end drawing near: *Mwenyewe kashuhudiya ulimwengu hunipita*, “I could see myself how the world left me behind” (stz. 10).

### **Bahari, the port-city as a social experience**

As a result of inter-port competitions and new postcolonial patterns of political and urban development, once-flourishing port cities like Lamu, Mombasa and waterfront renewals taken place in Cape Town and Dar es Salam have all been, to a greater or lesser extent, part of a process of sustainability in postcolonial Kenya and Tanzania (Hoyle 1983, 2001: 298).

As Hoyle insinuates with the phrase “once-flourishing”, along with Mombasa, Malindi and Kisumu, Lamu was one of the main ports of the East African coast (Salvadori 1996: 15):

Lamu was a well-established trade center years ago. The English and French Mission Societies which wanted to force Christianity on the people of Lamu used to buy a lot from Lamu. At present they only buy foodstuffs, the rest of their necessities being imported from Europe, and this has affected the trade in Lamu. When the Portuguese ruled the town, they built a very strong fort at great expense. You can see this fort even today in its ruined state, a reminder of the Portuguese rule. This is one of the several forts built by the Portuguese along the coast to fight their enemies.

Salvadori (ibidem), offers a portrayal of Lamu's harbour dating back to 1904; later, in the 1920s and '30s, there was also an abundance of "jahazis and mtepes, joined by the occasional dhow in the harbour;<sup>41</sup> all the administrators considered Lamu 'the most attractive coast station', although the district commissioner's house had 'no electricity or piped water [and] a multitude of bats" (Romero 1997: 202-203).

This "well-established trade center" (Salvadori 1996: 15) and "most attractive coast station" (Romero 1997: 202-203) are not exactly the loci portrayed in Mahmoud Mau's compositions such as *Jahazi* and *Bandari ina Mawimbi*. In the first poem I am going to present Mahmoud Mau uses the maritime lamuan symbol of the *jahazi* (dhow) to talk about the state of the economy of his own island which had declined. He particularly intends to portray a situation of economic stasis: *Nalikusudiya hali ya uchumi wa Lamu ulikuwa uchumi umeharibika sana*.<sup>42</sup> His inspiration came from a proverb on *tanga liembete na mongoti* (Sail attached to the mast) that he overheard in the street, uttered by a seller of *mishikaki*. The proverb is meant to describe a safe moment (*shwari*) when the *jahazi* doesn't move (*haitembei*) and the sail (*t'anga*) is attached to the mast of a sailing vessel, *mlingoti* (Kiamu, *mongoti*), since there is no wind. Ustadh reuses it to depict a moment when there is no economic hustle and bustle (*harakati za biashara*). Hearing it by chance, he had the idea to write

<sup>41</sup> As pointed out by Romero, "The *mtepe* came from the Bajun islands carrying both *mangati*, the better quality and heavier mangrove poles, and *boriti*" (1997: 202). However, this Bajuni origin was already attested in the pretious *utendi* penned down By Sheikh Nabhany Sambo ya Kiwando: *Mitepe mufahamuni / ikiundwa T'ikuuni / wakounda ni Bajuni 'waweze kusafiriya*; "The *mtepe*, you must know, was built in Pate by the Bajun folk to enable them to travel (stz. 5)" (see Miehe & Schadeberg 1979: 8-9).

<sup>42</sup> "I intended [to depict] the state of the economy in Lamu which had spoiled a lot."

the following poem, which is presented in its completeness and translated into English<sup>43</sup> for the first time here:

*Liembete na mongoti<sup>44</sup>, tanga kwa lingi shauri  
Hautukuti ukuti, imetuwama bahari  
Hata mai<sup>45</sup> hayavuti, tutapatae bandari?*

Attached to the mast are the sail due to intense calm  
Not even a twig is moving, the sea is too settled  
even the waters are not pulling, how will we reach the  
harbour?

*Ngurudi<sup>46</sup> imeshopoka, mai ng'amani<sup>47</sup> hujiri  
Haitaki kuzibika, na hata kwa misumari  
Kuyafua<sup>48</sup> tumechoka, mikonu hutuhairi<sup>49</sup>*

The stopper is out, and water is pouring in the bilge  
It doesn't want to get plugged, not even using nails  
We are tired to wash out, hands hurt us.

*Tumekosa taratibu, hatuna tena shauri  
Na bandari si karibu, hakupiti manuware  
Zimetutanda dharubu, metuzunguka khatairi*

We have lost our way, we don't have any plans  
And the harbour is not even nearby, and no vessel is  
passing by  
Difficulty has engulfed us and danger surrounds us.

*Hatuizi la kutenda, tumeshindwa kufikiri  
Kiza kingi kimetanda, kote kimepija dori  
Ni heri mwamba kupanda, kama hunu utiriri*

We don't know what to do, we have run out of ideas,  
There is total darkness completely engulfing us  
It is better to hit a coral reef than this nuisance.

*Hatuna ila Manani, wa kumuomba Jabari  
Atwegeshe nasi pwani, yapokuwa kwa kihori  
Tuokowe Rahamani, waja wako tusitiri*

We don't have except God to pray the Almighty  
May He take us near the shore, even if through a canoe  
Save us Most Merciful, protect us, your servants.

*Suwali si la jahazi, hili katika shairi  
Litambuweni wayuzi, mafundi mulo hodari  
Wa mtoni wende mbizi, muzizamiyo duri<sup>50</sup>*

The theme in the poem is not the dhow,  
Let the discerning talented artists understand,  
Let the deep-sea divers dive in pursuit of pearls.

<sup>43</sup> My heartfelt thanks to Azra, Ustadh Mau's *kipande cha ini* (Mahmoud Mau's daughter or lit. "piece of his liver"), for having gone thoughtfully to the translation of the poem and contributed to improve its English rendering.

<sup>44</sup> Swahili standard *mlingoti*: *mti mrefu unaosimamishwa katika chombo ili kuweza kuzuwiliya t'anga ambalo limefungwa katika foromani* (Nabhany 2012: 35–37).

<sup>45</sup> Swahili standard *maji*.

<sup>46</sup> *T'undu maalumu ambazo hutolewa kusudi ikiwa jahazi yatakiwa kutiwa maji ili ishirabu kuna na vipande vyake vya kuziba baada ya kumwagwa maji* (ibidem).

<sup>47</sup> *Mahala nyuma ya jahazi au tezi ambapo maji yanoyoiingiya hushukiya hapo, ikiwa ya mengiya kwa omo au kwa tezi, waswahili wasema "mwenda tezi na omo marejewa ni n'gamani"* (ibidem).

<sup>48</sup> *Kuyachota (maji) na kumwaga nje* (Mau 2017).

<sup>49</sup> *-uma* (ibidem).

The poem depicts from the early stanzas the *mahabariya* and all of them far from the harbour floating on a too settled sea. Their being lost in troubles and dangers (*dharabu* and *khatar*) is already figured out and predicted by the state of the *jahazi* itself without a stopper (*ngurudi*) and with water pouring in the blige (*ngamani*) and the sailors tired of using their hands and nails to let the stopper be plugged and to wash the vessel out (*-fua maji*). A miserable state of total defeat is portrayed in stanza four, wherein the feeling of being powerless and thoughtless permeates the stanza. At the end of the poem, the road to salvation is attested in God's power which may guide and anchor all of them back and close to the shore.

Within another composition, *Bandari ina Mawimbi*, it is the figuration of the port, not anymore the *jahazi*, which is adapted and used to talk about other political issues concerning Lamu.

Between the poem's lines, composed almost eight years ago, Mahmoud Mau – in 18 *utendi* stanzas – addresses important questions that specifically concern the *Waamu* (the Lamu people). The composition was recited (*Twaanda yetu kauli, ya karibu kuwambiya*) on the occasion of a congress (*muhadhara*) organised by the governor of Lamu to present the new port construction project to the island's citizens.<sup>51</sup> Before writing about the project's risks, already implied in the word *mawimbi* (waves), Mahmoud Mau first composed a poem in 2009 under the simple title *Bandari* in order to explain to his people – in poetic form – the plans to build a new deep-sea port:

*Mimi nalitunga mashari mawili; moja anwani yake ni bandari na  
baadae nikatunga Bandari ina Mawimbi. Lile la bandari*

<sup>50</sup> *Lulu* (Mau 2017).

<sup>51</sup> It is worth quoting Hoyle at length regarding the political and economical features (or lack of such features) of Lamu's port: "The special qualities of this predominantly Muslim port-city, and its inherent attraction to visitors, lie in this relative remoteness and in the fact that the town still lives and prospers, albeit modestly, as a small-scale regional centre of trade, transport and socio-political activity. Unlike other once-prosperous port-cities of the archipelago, Lamu did not irreversibly decline as traditionally dispersed port activity became increasingly concentrated; unlike Zanzibar, it did not become the principal 19th-century East African emporium of maritime transport and trade; and, unlike Mombasa, it was not selected by European colonial administrators as a modern deep-water port and railway terminal." "The Kenya Government, through the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) initiated the Lamu Conservation Project in 1975 [...] in 1988 waterfront were paved"; (Hoyle 2001: 298–99). Here the project Mahmoud is talking about dates back after 2000, when debates concerning the port started again.



*nilikusudiya kuwaeleza watu kuhusu huo mradi, la pili  
nilikusudiya hatari ambazo zitaweza kutokeya nakuharibu maadili  
mema yetu na mila na desturi kwa sababu ya wageni watakao  
kuja Lamu kwa ajili ya nafsi za kazi zitakazotokeya.* (Mau 2017)

From the very first stanzas of *Bandari ina Mawimbi*, he invites the audience to pay attention to his talk in order to find a way out (stz. 4, *Tupulike kwa makini, tuyatiye akilini / Na kisa twangaliyeni, ipi ya kwandama ndiya*, “Let us listen carefully and reflect upon it, so that finally we can decide which way to go”).<sup>52</sup> In this composition, not least because of the context in which it was composed, the port is not portrayed as the strong and stable entity that makes his people feel at home; it is rather – as the title suggests – a bringer of waves (*mawimbi*), which are used as a metaphor for immense and endless (*hayakomi*) pitfalls and bad consequences, and are liable to generate a violent tsunami: *Bandari ina sunami, mawimbiye hayakomi / chochote hakisimami, kwa kifuwa kuziwiya*, “The port causes a tsunami, bringing endless waves. Nothing can resist them, no matter how hard one tries” (stz.7); *Sunami hiyo ni kali, itazowa ma’adili Nisharuti yambo hili, akilini kulitiya*, “The tsunami is so strong, it will wash away our moral standards. It is important for us to consider this.” The tsunami, popularly considered the water’s earthquake, is depicted as so harsh that is able to wash away (the verb used is *-zoa*) their moral beliefs (*ma’adili*). The image that emerges from the two above-quoted stanzas reveals a dichotomy between *mila zao* (their customs) and the port, which was planned to be built on the mainland opposite the island. Thus, this new port was a threat since it belonged neither culturally nor geographically to the Lamuans, the people of the island.

While the port was expected to boost the economy, the stanza rather predicts a disaster that will ruin the people’s moral values. The only way to avoid this disaster is to be prepared, to know one’s own culture and to strive to preserve what belongs to oneself. The risk hinted at in the poem

<sup>52</sup> Waves are definitely a recurrent motif which is also portrayed peculiarly in Sheikh Haji Gora’ composition titled *Bahari Usichungue* (Don’t Delve into the Sea/ Recondite Sea), as this stanza illustrates: *Bahari ina mawimbi Milele hayaondoki / Kadhalika na vitimbi / Vilo havidhihiriki. Kama si rangi na vumbi / Ingekuwa hakwendeki*, “The sea contains waves Ceaseless waves. Other mysteries and riddles Not evident to untrained eyes Were it not for the colour and dust You would not leave” (translation of Abubakr Zein Abubakr, Dr. Mshai Mwangola; see Owuor 2014: 113-114).

is that others might profit from the port, which is located in their immediate vicinity: *Sharuti tuwe imara, kuunda twabiya bora. Tuimarisha fikira, za kutuonesha ndiya*, “We must be firm, and work on our conduct. We should strengthen the thoughts that guide us along the right path” (stz. 9); *Tuipindeni mapema, kwa masomo kuyasoma. Tukitaka wetu umma, nao funguni kungiya*, “We should make an effort very early, by studying the relevant disciplines, if we want our community to get its share” (stz. 10); *Au tutamiza mate, na chochote tusipate. Watavuna tangu tete, kwa yuu wamezokuya*, “Otherwise, we will continue longing for it, without getting anything, while others will already profit from the first harvest” (stz. 11).

In these lines, Ustadh Mau is exhorting his people to keep “a critical attitude towards human life” at every moment by contemplating and scrutinizing human existence (Cassirer 1992:6): is this not the reason why Mahmoud pays the attention to those critical acts of *kumarisha fikira* and of *kusoma masomo*? Reinforcing their own thoughts and learn relevant disciplines are the keys to acting and reacting properly in one’s own home and for the good of their port-city. He wishes for every single *mwamu* to be “that creature constantly in search for himself” and “responsible/a moral subject” (ibidem).

The admonition and recommendations come in stanza fifteen: *Tukisaliya na pwaji, na kwingi kuipa miji na hayazoleki maji, fahamu tukiyamwaya*, “If we stay idle, ill-talking and boasting, remember, once spilled out, water cannot be gathered up again.” Here the imagery of spilling water (*kuipa miji*) is used to symbolise wasting time, which, once wasted, cannot be returned. Mahmoud Mau exhorts his listeners not to let major events occur and keep passive towards them, without exercising the power to control, react to them or plan them. His belief in moral activism lies in the wise assumption that things evolve and change, and it is people’s duty (*wajibu*) to observe and be part of the change they wish to see occur. Knowledge of many disciplines, as he hints at in the lines above (*masomo kuyasoma*), is seen as the key to being active in protecting one’s own land.

The multiple facets of the port city that Mahmoud Mau sketches out in *Bandari* are similarly present in *Kilio Huliya Mwenye* (Change Begins at Home), composed on the occasion of the conference on popular culture organized by Andrew Eisenberg and Ann Biersteker in Mombasa in 2016. Here, the natural flow of the water is used as a metaphor for life, which

flows and invites you to keep in tune with time: *Yanayotoka tezini na omo kutiririka / Yadirikeni ngamani si kwa hiyari kumbuka / Ni hukumu ya kanuni / Ya mambo kubadilika*, “[The water that] comes from the stern and that which flows from the bow, both reach the sinkhole; Remember there is no other option. This is an inert principle: things change.”

The image of a cruel tsunami, able to wash away everything, or that of water flowing from the stern to the bow before arriving at a sinkhole and changing its aspect – both spell out the essence of life, which is unpredictable and challenging, like a tsunami, and a constantly ongoing process (*divenire, becoming*). Mahmoud Mau hints at and reminds his listeners of this universal principle (*hukumu ya kanuni*). The water that he is highlighting in his lines both belongs at and comes from home: both the pronoun *mwenye* and the noun *bandari*, which are reiterated in the poems, are linked with and rooted to the island of Lamu.

The presence of his own hometown and his first-person involvement with it is emphasized by his frequent usage of the first person plural form *tu-*, by which the poet Mahmoud Mau includes himself: *Tupulike kwa makini*, “Let us listen carefully and reflect upon it” (stz. 4); *Sharuti tuiyandaye, tangu sasa tuangaliye Tusineneni niiye mbona yamekuwa haya*, “We must be prepared; from now on we should have a plan, lest we wonder, Why did it turn out this way?” (stz. 6); *Au tutamiza mate na chochote tusipate*, “Otherwise, we will continue longing for it, without getting anything” (stz. 11); *Na tuwe wakakamavu, tukitaka kula mbivu Tukibaki na uzivu, patupu taambuliya*, “Let us be steadfast, so that we may eat ripe fruits.<sup>53</sup> If we remain lazy, we will have nothing to bite” (stz. 12).

Nevertheless, there are lines in which he directly addresses to his audience by means of “you” (*u-*), which is not unusual in contemporary Swahili poetry. Ahmed Nassir, also known by his pen name Ustadh Bhalo, directly addresses the audience in different parts of his poem *Utenzi wa Mtu ni Utu* (Nassir 1979) to achieve – in Kresse’s words – an “increased emotional identification” (Kresse 2007:159). In one of the last stanzas before the poem’s conclusion, Ustadh Mau shifts from the recurrent first person plural *tu-* to the second person singular *u-* (or its negative *hu-*) with a particular admonitory tone, typically found in Mahmoud’s sermons and echoing his role as a teacher.

<sup>53</sup> Allusion to the proverb *Mvumilivu hula mbivu* (A patient person eats ripe fruits).

*Ni kinyang'anyiro hiki, kiwa ziwawa hutaki  
Ng'o! Kitu hushiki, wendo watanang'anyiya*

This is a competition: “first catch, first win”. If you do not like the jostling, you will never get it, but your opponents will fight for it (stz. 14).

While such political and economic issues as the building of a port reinforce how the local lifestyle is under threat, and alarming signs seem to point to doom and decay, other spheres, such as married life, are portrayed as safe shores. In his long poems composed in the *utenzi* form, enumerating the virtues of married life for husband and wife respectively (*Ramani ya Maisha ya Ndowa / kwa mume na kwa mwanamke*, “The map of married life / for the man and for the woman”), marriage is depicted in one of the first stanzas as a floating buoy that will never let you drown if you hold onto it. Still, the word *boya*, the verb *kuzama* (to drown) and the causative of *kuvua* (to save, to rescue), along with the omnipresent *bahari*, convey a maritime imagery. In this composition, the port, *bandari*, represents stability, home and peace; it is portrayed as a safe destination for anchoring (*bandari tasikiliya*): *Boya hili la maisha, kattu halitozamisha / Ashikao tamvusha, bandari tasikiliya*, “This lifebuoy doesn’t sink at all; it will rescue the one who holds onto it, so that s/he reaches the port” (stz. 9; my translation).

## Conclusion

What I find striking about Mahmoud Mau’s life as a poet and his manner of composing poetry is the seriousness and multi-layeredness of his thoughts and compositions. His commitment to everyday social life is mirrored in his poems, in which he constantly feels the urge to talk to his people. If, on the one hand, his poems, be they in *utendi* or *mashairi* verse, have famously been born of specific circumstances, the content of their messages is more universal, since they can always be read as current and useful reminders. The “nice form” of poetry that he refers to is meant to touch the reader’s heart and to make him or her ponder its message.<sup>54</sup> The phrase *kilio hulia mwenye* (the cry/change starts at home) can easily be used as a motto, which is useful to re-

<sup>54</sup> This is precisely the reason why he claims to favor hip hop music, as well as with its goal of conveying a message: *umuhimu ni ujumbe* (see ELLAf).

read and remind one another. In fact, in his compositions, Mahmoud Mau's voice does not hold back from uttering the truth to his people. He rather dares to reproach them, push them and rouse them to action. In this sense, his being a teacher, preacher and poet are intertwined in one unique voice.

In the selected poems featured in this paper, I have attempted to show how much the ocean matters to the poet and how it figures in different ways in his poetry. His community is portrayed as surrounded by its ocean and its port, which are both motifs of home, but on the other hand also pose a threat (to the community). In Mahmoud Mau's poems, *bandari* plays a role in the political and economic landscape of the island and means "home", which every citizen should care of, but also its opposite, a deep-water port. To that end, *bahari* evokes both sweet old memories of safety in his mother's, as well as the panic he felt in the actual water, where he risked drowning.

Still, his lines contain a sense of wisdom about the inevitable flow of life. Everyone will always find his or her own path, high tides and low, as well as tsunamis and lifebuoys. Ustadh reveals himself as a believer in change and development, which for him is an ambivalent but inert principle that nobody can prevent: life changes like the tides.

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**MEDIA E MEDIALITÀ**

***MEDIA AND MEDIALITY***





LA MEDIALITE ET INTERMEDIALITE DU SAVOIR EN AFRIQUE:  
LE SAVOIR PHILOSOPHIQUE ENTRE TRADITION ET MODERNITE

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Le savoir philosophique se définit laconiquement par le paradoxe socratique, comme un savoir de l'ignorance: "je sais que je ne sais rien". Cet aspect de la négation, la conscience du "non-savoir" dans tout savoir, fait du savoir philosophique une sorte de savoir très spécial. Le savoir philosophique prétend que tout savoir affirmatif implique un au-delà de ce savoir, que celui-ci n'est ni définitif ni achevé et que l'on ne doit jamais renoncer à la possibilité de le questionner de nouveau et à partir de ses propres fondations, c'est-à-dire, la possibilité d'une réflexion critique doit toujours rester ouverte et garantie.

L'importance accordée à cette possibilité fondamentale de la philosophie de critiquer tout savoir donné a poussé certains auteurs à définir la philosophie par cette capacité de questionnement illimité, comme étant une "pensée libre et critique" (Kresse 1999: 28). D'autres auteurs (Gyekye 1997) disent que la philosophie n'est pas que cette capacité critique dans son abstraction. Toute philosophie inclut les deux aspects: une connaissance affirmative, qui constitue un système de convictions (*beliefs*), et la capacité de doute et de questionnement. Les philosophes ajoutent aussi que la connaissance dont on parle en philosophie est une connaissance d'ordre général qui s'oriente vers la totalité du monde et se distingue ainsi des connaissances des sciences particulières (Patočka 1929 et 1992). Elle est fondée sur l'argument et la pensée logique plutôt que sur la recherche empirique (Husserl 1993).

Il convient de souligner que le savoir philosophique n'est pas que cette connaissance affirmative sur le monde en général – un type de savoir qui a souvent été nommé "philosophie" dans des contextes africains. Les philosophes africains anglophones, dont Henry Odera Oruka ou Kwasi Wiredu (Oruka 1990, Wiredu 1980a et 1980b), ont forgé l'expression "philosophie

du premier ordre” en parlant des systèmes de convictions sur le monde et ils ont insisté sur le fait que ceux-ci ne doivent pas être appelés “philosophie” au sens propre du terme. Ils réservent le nom “philosophie” à la “philosophie du second ordre”, c’est-à-dire, un discours philosophique qui inclut les convictions et aussi leur réflexion critique, les arguments ayant conduit à ces convictions et avec lesquels on peut les défendre, etc.

En résumant, nous pouvons dire que le savoir philosophique est un savoir général du monde qui inclut la capacité de tout mettre en doute, y compris ses propres principes.

Il est une question très débattue dans le contexte africain, à savoir: où faut-il chercher le savoir philosophique africain? Y a-t-il une philosophie africaine? Le développement rapide, depuis le milieu du siècle passé, de la philosophie africaine euphonique qui suit le modèle occidental, a apporté une réponse affirmative à cette dernière question, mais beaucoup de chercheurs se sont rendu compte que la question de l’existence de la philosophie africaine a été éludée. Il s’agit maintenant de savoir s’il existe ou s’il a existé une philosophie africaine en dehors du discours philosophique occidental ou occidentalisé. C’est surtout la question de l’usage des langues africaines en philosophie qui a été l’objet de nombreux débats dans la communauté académique.

De grands philosophes africains, comme par exemple Kwasi Wiredu (Kresse et Wiredu 2000), affirment que les langues africaines, même si elles contiennent les germes d’intuitions philosophiques pertinentes, ne conviennent pas à l’usage philosophique: elles manquent la capacité d’expression abstraite, elles ne peuvent pas exprimer des concepts philosophiques fondamentaux (comme par exemple l’être existentiel, opposé à l’être identificatif et l’être locatif). Le philosophe africain peut bien s’en inspirer, mais pour une meilleure élaboration philosophique de cette inspiration, il a intérêt à se servir d’une langue européenne. Wiredu ajoute, avec défaitisme, que même si les philosophes africains essayaient d’utiliser leurs langues maternelles pour faire la philosophie, cela n’apporterait qu’une impossibilité de se lire et de se comprendre mutuellement comme philosophes. Il se produirait un isolement total des philosophes individuels, car il y a beaucoup de langues africaines et très peu de lecteurs. Face au célèbre cas de Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Wiredu estime que les philosophes ne peuvent pas compter sur la traduction comme Ngugi, parce-qu’ils ne sont pas aussi populaires.

Certes, il serait utopique de vouloir que les philosophes africains, ayant une formation philosophique occidentale et, en règle générale, déjà bien

installés dans les universités européennes et nord-américaines, commencent à utiliser les langues africaines pour leur écriture philosophique. Mais la possibilité de trouver des discours philosophiques en langues africaines est-elle épuisée par cette option qui consiste à remplacer l'europhonie par l'afrophonie? Peut-être doit-on renverser la perspective: au lieu de chercher à traduire la philosophie europhone en langues africaines, ne devrait-on pas considérer ce qui existe déjà en ces langues?

Il se pose dès lors la question: où trouver la philosophie parmi les discours en langues africaines? On peut facilement établir que dans la plupart des langues africaines il n'y a pas de discours qui s'appelle "philosophie".<sup>1</sup> Mais il y a d'autres discours qui remplissent la fonction de la philosophie dans une société donnée, c'est-à-dire la fonction de ce savoir fondamental sur le monde, d'un côté, et de la critique universelle de tout savoir, de l'autre côté.

Ce constat constitue le point de départ de la recherche du chercheur allemand, Kai Kresse. Dans sa thèse doctorale de 2002 et ensuite dans son livre, *Philosophising in Mombasa: Knowledge, Islam and Intellectual Practice on the Swahili Coast* (2007), Kresse analyse les discours intellectuels en cours dans la ville de Mombasa au Kenya, notamment la médecine traditionnelle, la poésie et les discours religieux. Suivant la définition d'Ernst Cassirer de la philosophie, Kresse soutient que l'acte constitutif de la philosophie est l'auto-réflexion: la capacité de questionner même ses propres principes et idées fondamentales. Les discours intellectuels de Mombasa disposent de cette capacité d'auto-réflexion. Ces discours représentent une philosophie au sens propre du mot, une philosophie enracinée dans le contexte politique et culturel est-africain et portée par une langue africaine (le swahili).

Tout en nous inspirant de la réflexion méthodologique de Kresse, nous avons poursuivi la recherche dans ce domaine dans notre livre, *Afrophone Philosophies: Reality and Challenge* (2007). Nous y avons examiné les littératures en langues africaines comme expression de la pensée philosophique. L'objectif principal était de montrer qu'il est possible de philosopher

<sup>1</sup> Ce n'est que dans les cultures profondément influencées par le christianisme ou l'islam que l'on trouve le mot de "philosophie", par exemple *filosofia* (du grec) et *falsafa* (de l'arabe) dans la langue swahili; l'usage de ce mot dans ces cultures reste souvent limité au domaine de la philosophie religieuse.

dans les langues d'Afrique et d'en établir la preuve au travers de quelques exemples clairs et convaincants des discours qui servent de vecteurs des discussions philosophiques. Nos études de cas incluaient l'écriture d'imagination (romans), l'écriture spécialisée (historiographie, ethnographie, études littéraires) et une tentative méthodologique d'approcher la littérature orale. Les textes que nous avons étudiés étaient en six langues africaines différentes: le swahili, le lingala, le shona, le ndebele, le bambara et le yorùbá.

Ces textes afrophones abordent, d'un point de vue théorique, des thèmes philosophiques généraux, comme par exemple la question de la métaphysique en tant que dualité de l'être immanent et son origine transcendente, l'épistémologie comme dichotomie entre le sujet et l'objet ou le problème de la définition de ce qu'est la réalité; il y a aussi des thèmes relatifs à la philosophie de la culture, qui sont des lieux communs de la philosophie africaine (entendue comme le discours majoritaire de la philosophie en Afrique, qui est exclusivement europhone) et parmi lesquels figurent les questions de l'identité culturelle, la fonction de la tradition dans la construction d'une telle identité, la constitution et la consolidation historiques des identités, le rôle des traditions locales du savoir historique dans ce processus, la construction de l'altérité (ou l'identité vue par les yeux d'autrui), ainsi que le rôle controversé de la littérature orale comme véhicule d'une philosophie "authentiquement africaine".

Toutefois, nous n'avons abordé dans ce livre que des textes qui se prêtaient facilement au regard philosophique. Ce faisant, nous avons laissé de côté de vastes champs littéraires, en particulier le domaine des littératures orales où, à notre avis, la philosophie n'a pas encore trouvé de méthode efficiente pour les aborder et en tirer la substance et l'inspiration philosophiques.

Dans cet article, nous aimerions aller plus loin en développant une approche méthodologique plus inclusive qui, basée sur le concept de médialité, impliquerait toute littérature comme possibilité d'expression philosophique. Concrètement, après une présentation théorique du concept de médialité, nous exposerons trois études de cas en guise d'illustration.

### **Médialité et intermédialité**

Pour s'exprimer, tout contenu de la conscience est médié, c'est-à-dire transmis par quelque chose qui est en dehors de la conscience et qui en est différent: un

médium. La médiation est une qualité fondamentale de toute expression de la pensée humaine et de toute communication humaine (Bystrický 2006).

Le mot *médialité* évoque cette qualité d'être transmis par un médium.<sup>2</sup> Le médium se définit comme la forme de médiation avec des effets caractéristiques (Haferland 2004: 385); il est conçu ici en un sens plutôt large et très variable. La langue, l'oralité ou l'écriture sont des médiums, mais on peut aussi distinguer, sous le concept de médium, les genres littéraires (comme par exemple le roman, la poésie orale) et également les divers moyens techniques de communication – "les médias" (dont la radio, l'internet, la presse, la télévision), etc.

La *médialité* attire l'attention sur la médiation en tant que telle, notamment sur le fait que le contenu, le message n'est jamais "pur" – jamais présent à la manière d'une essence platonique. La recherche inspirée de cette question de la *médialité* n'examine plus que des discours isolés, trouvés plus ou moins par hasard sur le terrain, qui servent d'exemples de conservation et de transmission du savoir et dont on essaie d'extraire un contenu "caché" – le savoir en soi. Plutôt, la recherche devient d'abord une exploration du paysage médial d'une culture donnée. Qu'y a-t-il comme possibilités de communication et d'expression? Quels médiums y a-t-il, dans un contexte culturel spécifique? Quelles sont les règles et paramètres qui déterminent leur usage? Par exemple, quel est le rôle des enjeux politiques et du mécénat dans la production des textes littéraires? Quelles sont les spécificités de leur divulgation à travers la performance, l'oralité ou l'écriture?

Ainsi, la question de la *médialité* du savoir en Afrique renverse toute la perspective de recherche. La littérature est, en principe, un médium parmi tant d'autres. La médiation, à travers la littérature, est orientée vers un but: la transmission d'un message d'un émetteur à un récepteur et le message passe par un "matériau" (le médium en soi) qui a ses qualités et ses règles spécifiques: les conventions littéraires, l'obéissance aux genres, etc. Le concept de la *médialité* renvoie ainsi à une vue fonctionnelle de la littérature (Haferland 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Le concept de *médialité* a été développé récemment dans les études de littérature et de médias (voir Febel et al. 2004, Greber et al. 2002, Jäger & Linz 2004, Krämer 2004, Pruiskén 2007) et utilisé avec succès, par exemple, dans l'analyse des épopées en ancien-haut-allemand et moyen-haut-allemand en tant que littérature entre oralité et écriture (Haferland 2004, cf. aussi Wenzel 1995) ou les premières impressions de Moyen Âge et des débuts du Temps Moderne (Kapfhammer et al. 2006).

Ce renversement de perspective qui consiste à aborder le savoir à travers le médium (dont la littérature) permet de repenser certains concepts fondamentaux du savoir philosophique, comme par exemple l'unité de la philosophie. Prenons le cas des proverbes, qui sont fréquemment cités comme expression par excellence de la philosophie africaine. Il se pose la question concernant l'unité de la philosophie, au sens d'un ensemble d'idées ayant à être cohérentes entre elles, c'est-à-dire qu'elles ne peuvent pas se contredire mutuellement. Dans la philosophie occidentale, le principe de l'unité est l'auteur;<sup>3</sup> même avec les fragments des philosophes présocratiques, on a un auteur qui sert de point de référence – même les fragments des auteurs inconnus sont attribués à un nom, dont l'identité incertaine est exprimée par le préfixe "Pseudo-". Puis, leurs interprètes peuvent essayer d'harmoniser les idées de cet ensemble de fragments attribués à un auteur inconnu et d'en tirer une philosophie cohérente. Mais quel est le principe d'unité dans un ensemble d'énoncés anonymes comme les proverbes? Quelle serait l'unité pour l'interprétation: un proverbe? Un groupe de proverbes choisis par l'interprète? (Et selon quels critères?) Ou bien tous les proverbes d'un peuple?

Le concept de médialité apporte aussi un nouveau regard sur les possibilités de générer la réflexion philosophique au travers des pratiques discursives. L'acte constitutif de la philosophie, à savoir la réflexion des contenus de l'esprit, est facilité par le passage d'un médium à un autre, c'est-à-dire, par l'intermédialité du discours. Le concept de l'intermédialité montre explicitement la succession de médiation en exposant l'interface entre deux médiums. Bien que l'intermédialité concerne toute conservation du savoir en général, elle acquiert une nouvelle pertinence dans le cas du savoir philosophique. La transition d'un médium à un autre ouvre la possibilité d'une réflexion philosophique.

Nous allons étudier ce processus au travers de trois cas impliquant chacun le passage d'un médium à un autre. Le changement de médium – par exemple un changement de l'oralité à l'écriture ou un changement de genre – conduit à la réflexion du savoir conservé dans un médium, faite au travers de l'autre médium. Par exemple, la littérature spécialisée saisit les proverbes ou les noms d'éloge (c'est-à-dire, des véhicules du savoir local qui, à son tour, constitue la philosophie du premier ordre) et les reflète. En les reflétant elle en fait la philosophie du second ordre. Cette saisie est souvent possible

<sup>3</sup> Cf. le débat sur le rôle de l'auteur entre Barthes (1977) et Foucault (1980); voir aussi Burke 2007.

grâce à l'usage continu, dans les deux médiums, d'une langue africaine. Par conséquent les littératures en langues africaines sont des domaines privilégiés de cette recherche.

## Études de cas

Ainsi que nous venons de le mentionner, nous allons examiner au travers de trois cas quelques exemples de la transmission intermédiaire du savoir. Il s'agit notamment des cas où un médium traditionnel fait passage à un médium moderne. Nous analyserons deux traditions africaines du savoir, à savoir la poésie panégyrique et les proverbes. Nous en explorerons l'usage dans deux types de médiums modernes de la conservation et la transmission du savoir: le texte historiographique et le récit romanesque.

### *Passage de la poésie panégyrique à un texte historiographique*

La poésie panégyrique est un genre très répandu de la littérature africaine, surtout à l'Ouest et au Sud de l'Afrique. Les chants des griots ouest-africains ou les *imbongi* sud-africains représentent un médium traditionnel du savoir, une source importante de la connaissance du passé et de son évaluation au présent. Les noms d'éloge renvoient aux personnes, y compris aux esprits des ancêtres, groupes de personnes (clans, nations), aux animaux, plantes ou choses. La poésie panégyrique évoque les qualités de ces êtres et elle est ainsi un aperçu abrégé de leurs histoire et biographie. Toutefois et malgré son nom, la poésie d'éloge n'exprime pas que des qualités positives des personnes ou des entités évoquées; les louanges sont souvent parsemées de critiques. De cette manière, la poésie panégyrique est un vecteur important dans la construction de l'image des personnages historiques et dans la diffusion et la conservation de la connaissance des événements historiques en général.<sup>4</sup>

La valeur de la poésie panégyrique en tant que réservoir du savoir historique est perceptible et appréciée au travers des histoires écrites par des auteurs contemporains. De plus, ces textes s'appuient sur la poésie panégyrique comme une source autochtone, *ergo* comme une source authentique de la

<sup>4</sup> Sur la poésie panégyrique, voir par exemple Barber 1991, Cope 1968, Finnegan 1970, Guma 1967, Gunner & Gwala 1991, Hodza & Fortune 1979, Ndhlukula 1990, Nyembezi 1982, Opland 1989, Vail & White 1991.



connaissance historique; ils en tirent légitimité pour leur vérité. Leur histoire est considérée comme étant plus authentique, plus vraie que telle autre basée sur d'autres sources, notamment celle écrite par les Blancs.<sup>5</sup>

Cette conviction est exprimée très clairement par l'auteur de l'impressionnante trilogie historique sur les Ndebele, Pathisa Nyathi. Celui-ci est également auteur de plusieurs publications, écrites aussi bien en ndebele qu'en anglais, sur l'histoire et les traditions des Ndebele. La trilogie évoquée traite de la période la plus décisive de l'histoire des Ndebele, celle du 19e siècle. C'était au 19e siècle que Mzilikazi, chef de troupes du célèbre roi des Zoulou, Chaka, a déserté de l'armée royale, vers 1820, pour aller au nord. Il a traversé le fleuve Limpopo en 1838 et fondé son royaume dans la région présentement appelée Matabeleland au Zimbabwe. Il est mort en 1868 et son fils Lobhengula a accédé au trône en 1870, devenant le dernier roi des Ndebele jusque dans les années 1890, date à laquelle les Anglais ont débarqué. Ceux-ci, après avoir maté le soulèvement des Ndebele (le premier *Umvukela*) et des Shona (*Chimurenga*) en 1896, ont instauré la colonisation.

De cette époque glorieuse du royaume ndebele du 19e siècle datent la culture et les coutumes traditionnelles ndebele. La tradition ndebele a été discontinuée pendant le colonialisme. C'est cette brève période du 19e siècle que les écrivains, les savants, mais aussi les participants aux discussions politiques en ligne,<sup>6</sup> en somme les intellectuels ndebele, continuent à scruter pour retrouver leur identité perdue et l'inspiration pour la vie actuelle. Le rapport à la tradition discontinuée et les possibilités de la raviver, la culture et l'histoire ndebele constituent le thème principal de la plupart des écrits spécialisés en ndebele ainsi que d'un grand nombre de romans ndebele.

L'ampleur de l'ouvrage de Pathisa Nyathi reflète l'importance accordée au savoir historique parmi les intellectuels ndebele. C'est une œuvre en trois parties. La première partie a été publiée en 1994 et elle s'intitule *Igugu*

<sup>5</sup> Cette acceptation de la poésie panégyrique peut être surprenant quand on se rend compte du fait que les griots, bien que des sources incontestables de la mémoire collective, ne sont pas toujours les sources les plus fiables: ils vivent et dépendent de leurs mécènes et leur poésie reflète les relations entre eux. Dans plusieurs régions d'Afrique, le mot "griot" a acquis un sens péjoratif de "bonimenteur, enchanteur". Cependant, on n'aperçoit aucun recul ironique dans la manière dont parle de la poésie panégyrique Pathisa Nyathi, peut-être en raison du regard idéalisant des intellectuels ndebele vers leur tradition perdue.

<sup>6</sup> Voir des serveurs dont *Mthwakazi Peoples Convention* (<http://www.mthwakazonline.org/>) ou *Inkundla. Umthombo wesizwe sikaMthwakazi* (<http://www.inkundla.net/>).

*likaMthwakazi. Imbali yamaNdebele 1820-1893* (Le trésor du Mthwakazi.<sup>7</sup> L'histoire des Ndebele 1820-1893). Ce tome décrit l'histoire de Mzilikazi et son fils Lobhengula, c'est-à-dire les jours de gloire du royaume ndebele au 19<sup>e</sup> siècle. En 1996, Nyathi a publié la deuxième partie, *Uchuku olungelendiswe. Imbali yamaNdebele 1893-1895* (Cruauté indicible. L'histoire des Ndebele 1893-1895), dans laquelle il décrit la disparition du roi Lobhengula en 1893 et la polémique concernant sa mort: selon plusieurs témoins, le roi avait pris du poison en 1893; selon d'autres, il avait réussi à s'échapper quand les Européens ont envahi son royaume et il était encore vivant entre 1894 et 1895, quand quelques témoins l'auraient vu. Il n'existe pas de certitude quant au lieu de sa sépulture et le grand trésor d'or, diamants et argent qu'il aurait eu n'a jamais été trouvé (voir aussi Cooke 1970, Burrett 1996).

Le deuxième tome est le plus volumineux des trois. La disparition de Lobhengula est un événement d'une importance capitale pour les Ndebele, parce-qu'elle est identifiée avec la désintégration de leur vie traditionnelle. Cette disparition de Lobhengula a même provoqué le changement quant à l'image du dernier roi des Ndebele créée par les bardes de la poésie panégyrique, les *imbongi*: de son vivant, Lobhengula n'était pas populaire en tant que roi. Il était ridiculisé par les *imbongi* comme étant un roi faible qui faisait toujours des concessions aux Européens. A sa mort, petit à petit, de nouveaux poèmes d'éloge lui ont été dédiés afin de rétablir l'esprit traditionnel des Ndebele et leur donner courage au temps du colonialisme (voir Ndlovu s.d.).

La troisième partie de la trilogie historique s'appelle *Madoda lolani incukuthu. Imbali yamaNdebele 1896* (Hommes, aiguiser les pointes en métal.<sup>8</sup> L'histoire des Ndebele 1896) et a été publiée en 1999. Ce volume décrit l'insurrection de 1896 contre les Anglais et la défaite inévitable des Ndebele.

Sur la couverture du premier tome de son chef d'oeuvre, Nyathi exprime clairement son intention: fournir une histoire des Ndebele qui sera authentique et libre de fautes et falsifications. Pour garantir ce projet, il

<sup>7</sup> Nom que se donne le peuple ndebele.

<sup>8</sup> Les *incukuthu* sont des instruments domestiques utilisés pour trouer du bois et du cuir. Le titre du livre n'est qu'une partie d'un dicton ndebele, *Madoda lolani incukuthu sikudulule okuyizinja lokhu*, "Les hommes, aiguiser les pointes en métal pour chasser ces chiens", une locution devenue populaire pendant la révolte ndebele de 1896. On parle des instruments domestiques pour montrer que l'ennemi n'est même pas digne des armes.

s'appuie sur des ouvrages historiques, bien sûr, mais aussi, dans une grande mesure, sur le patrimoine oral, surtout la poésie panégyrique.

En guise d'illustration, parcourons le passage suivant qui décrit la survie de Mzilikazi et une partie de ses troupes après qu'un régiment de Chaka ait envahi sa forteresse à Ngome:

AmaZulu ayethi uMzilikazi asembhuqile kanti aqamba etshilo. Yikho nje imbongi yenkosi yathi:

*Inyang' abath' ifil' uZulu*

*Kanti ithwasile*

*Ithwase ngoNyokana kaMpeyana.* (Khiyaza, G.)

Esuka eNgome uMzilikazi waqonda enyakatho eya ngentshonalanga. Lapho wafika wagasela isizwe semaNgweni esasibuswa nguNyoka. Ukunqoba kwakhe uNyoka kwaba yikuthwasa kwakhe: "Ithwase ngoNyokana kaMpeyana."

Yikho lokhu ukufohla kwakhe eNgome okwanika uMzilikazi izibongo ezithi:

*Unkomo zavul' inqaba ngezimpondo*

*Ngoba zavul' iNgome zahamba.*

Yikho-ke ukuthwasa kukaMzilikazi:

*UMkhatshwa wawoZimangele!*

*Okhatshwe ngezind' izinyawo*

*Nangezimfithazanyana*

*Wal' ukudl' umlenze kwaBulawayo.*

Wadela ukudla umlenze koBulawayo, wakhetha ukuzibusa – yafohla imbabala! (Nyathi 1994 : 20)

Les Zoulou ont cru que Mzilikazi était complètement détruit, mais ceci n'était pas vrai. Pour cela l'imbongi du roi a dit:

*La lune qu'on dit qu'elle est morte chez les Zulu*

*Néanmoins, elle est apparue*

*Elle est apparue à travers Nkoyana le fils de Mpeyana.* (Khiyaza, G.)

Après qu'il se soit évadé de Ngome, Mzilikazi est allé au nord-ouest. En arrivant, il a conquis le territoire du peuple ngweni, qui était sous le règne de Nyoka. La défaite de Nyoka était due à l'apparition de Mzilikazi: "(Il) est apparu à travers Nyokana le fils de Mpeyana."

L'évasion de Ngome a valu à Mzilikazi l'éloge suivant:

*Toi qui es le bétail qui a fendu de ses cornes la forteresse*

*Parce-que il a défoncé Ngome et s'en est allé.*

Ceci était l'apparition de Mzilikazi:

*Toi qui as reçu des coups de pied, le fils des Zimangele!*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Celui qui a reçu des coups de pied est un nom d'éloge de Mzilikazi, qui est aussi traditionnellement appelé imbabala ("guib harnaché").

*Tu as reçu des coups de longs pieds  
et de courts pieds*

*Tu as refusé de manger la jambe à Bulawayo.*

Il a refusé de manger la jambe à Bulawayo,<sup>10</sup> il a préféré l'autonomie – le guib harnaché a percé!<sup>11</sup>

Le récit historique de Pathisa Nyathi suit de près les éloges traditionnels de Mzilikazi,<sup>12</sup> en les expliquant et les interprétant; il en tire la légitimation de sa vérité – une vérité prétendument supérieure aux récits d'autres historiens. Le poème devient la garantie de la continuité historique, un lien entre le passé (c'est-à-dire l'époque de Mzilikazi) et le présent (c'est-à-dire le temps du récit sur Mzilikazi dans le livre de Pathisa Nyathi). Ce lien à travers le temps confère au livre une marque d'authenticité.

Le poème détermine la séquence des événements (la fausse conviction des Zoulou que Mzilikazi est mort, sa fuite de Ngome et sa réapparition au pays ngweni) et donne ainsi une structure chronologique à la narration historique. Le passage final évoque les noms traditionnels d'éloges de Mzilikazi et les explique en s'appuyant sur les événements récents. L'interprétation du poème se fonde sur une connaissance de l'histoire et sur les convictions personnelles de l'auteur. Celles-ci renvoient à l'interprétation du passage concernant "la jambe à Bulawayo" comme étant une option politique de Mzilikazi pour l'autonomie.

### *Passage des proverbes à un texte historiographique*

Dans les sociétés d'Afrique, des proverbes ont été, et continuent à l'être, un médium favori pour exprimer et conserver la sagesse – les convictions fondamentales religieuses et philosophiques. Ils servent de porteurs de la pensée et de lieux communs du raisonnement. Ils sont utilisés pour formuler

<sup>10</sup> Bulawayo renvoie ici à un campement militaire de Chaka, non pas à la ville actuelle de Bulawayo, au Zimbabwe. "Manger la jambe" est traduit comme "manger de la viande" par Ndlovu (s.d.), qui l'interprète comme refus de participer aux célébrations à Bulawayo – peut-être avec l'implication de choisir l'autonomie, comme dit Nyathi.

<sup>11</sup> Tout ce chapitre d'*Igugu likaMthwakazi* est traduit en anglais en Rettová 2004: 90-98.

<sup>12</sup> Il faut noter que Nyathi cite un livre de Khiyaza (non repris dans sa bibliographie) comme source du poème d'éloge. Khiyaza était un écrivain de fiction, auteur de plusieurs romans. Certains de ses romans traitent de l'histoire des Ndebele, mais toujours de façon imaginaire.

et étayer des arguments aussi bien dans des discussions quotidiennes que les débats spécialisés entre les intellectuels (cf. Madu 1992).

Par conséquent, dans le domaine de la philosophie africaine, les proverbes ont souvent été vus comme l'expression d'une philosophie authentiquement ou originellement africaine. Néanmoins, à ce propos s'applique la critique d'Odera Oruka ou de Wiredu: les proverbes ne sont qu'une philosophie du premier ordre, c'est-à-dire des énoncés de simples convictions. La philosophie digne de ce nom doit être du second ordre, à savoir, les convictions doivent être reflétées en soubissant un examen de la raison critique.<sup>13</sup>

Nous aimerions montrer comment le proverbe, un texte oral, est interprété dans un texte historiographique. La référence au proverbe dans un texte écrit conduit à une élaboration du contenu philosophique de ce proverbe, en en faisant la base d'une analyse philosophique des événements historiques.

Le texte que nous allons étudier ici est le livre de Berehima Wulale, *Kɛko ye Fɔko ye* (Ce qui est fait est ce qui est dit, 1995). Le livre est un rapport de l'histoire de la ville malienne de Ségou, appuyée sur les traditions locales de l'épopée de Ségou (voir aussi Belcher 1999). Néanmoins, en plus de l'histoire, le récit traite d'une gamme très large du savoir humain. Le livre comprend trois chapitres: le premier traite de l'histoire humaine; le second étudie le monde animal, tandis que le troisième concerne la nature.

Wulale commence son récit par une réflexion sur la philosophie de l'histoire: sur les changements du monde dans le temps et les développements modernes, dont le voyage aérien ou la connaissance des événements lointains à travers la télévision. Ensuite, le premier chapitre traite du règne de Maamari Bitɔn, de la famille Kulubali et des gouverneurs successifs dont Ngolo, Cɛmɔkɔ Jara, Mɔnson et son fils Daa, qui a régné de 1808 jusqu'à

<sup>13</sup> Bien sûr, ce processus se passe dans les écrits des philosophes africains europhones. Il faut dire que beaucoup de ces tentatives sont très peu convaincantes. En guise d'exemple, Kwame Gyekye dit du proverbe akan, "il n'y a pas de croisements de route dans l'oreille", que c'est une "formulation du principe de non-contradiction" (1995: 7). Sophie Oluwole, pour sa part, trouve que le texte yorùbá, *Kí ebi ó má pa ádié, k'á sárínnàkò ire fún adíé, kí á se àkòyà ibí fún àyà̀n. Ewé egéjì kì í jé l'ónà méjì* ("Afin que le poulet ne soit pas affamé, nous faisons la médecine de bonne chance pour lui. Mais nous faisons aussi une autre médecine pour le cafard. Une médecine ne va pas dans deux directions"), est une "expression directe de la loi du tiers exclu" (Oluwole 1999: 93). Ces appropriations entièrement inadéquates de la littérature orale dans la philosophie africaine signalent, à notre avis, le manque de réflexion méthodologique quant à l'approche du patrimoine oral de la part des philosophes europhones.

1827. C'était sous le règne de la famille Futa, qui a accédé au trône après la mort de Daa, que les Blancs sont arrivés dans la région de Ségou.

Le texte est parsémié de morceaux de poèmes d'éloge à ces rois, qui servent de repères du récit historique et qui sont introduits par une référence aux griots: *jeliw b'a lakali cogo min...* ("comme les griots ont dit"), et de proverbes, introduits par *Bamananw ko...* ("Les Bambara disent..."). Les griots sont des témoins des événements historiques ainsi qu'un réservoir de la connaissance de l'histoire; mais leur rôle ne se termine pas là, car ils doivent également encourager les rois et les motiver dans leurs entreprises politiques et campagnes guerrières. De leur côté, les proverbes constituent la base d'explication de la logique sous-jacente aux événements historiques – la force qui propulse l'histoire.

Les deux chapitres suivants, sur les animaux et sur la nature, décrivent l'élevage des animaux domestiques et les problèmes affectant les animaux sauvages à cause de la détérioration de l'environnement. L'attention aux questions environnementales devient grande dans le dernier chapitre sur la nature. Ici, Wulale décrit le développement de la région de Ségou de 1955 jusqu'à ce jour, concernant l'environnement. Il note la disparition de la forêt tropicale, la rareté de l'eau et des animaux de brousse. Il condamne fortement certaines pratiques contemporaines, comme par exemple l'écobuage, et il insiste sur la protection de l'environnement.

C'est la sagesse traditionnelle bambara (cf. Bailleul 2005) qui lui sert de source d'argumentation. Wulale dit que beaucoup de tabous et superstitions traditionnelles bambara servaient, en fait, à protéger la nature; par exemple, la défense d'abattre les caïlcédrats et les karités (types d'arbres) répondait à cette préoccupation. Il dit que cette interdiction reposait sur la croyance superstitieuse selon laquelle on tombe malade si l'on abat tel ou tel arbre; mais en réalité la vraie raison en était la protection de la nature:

*Nin ko minnu tun be ɸɔ jiri ninnu tigeli la, a bee tun te tije ye. Feerew tun don walasa ka jiriw ninnu lakana.* (Wulale 1995: 86)

Ce qui a été dit sur l'abattage de ces arbres n'était pas toujours vrai. Il s'agissait des stratégies pour protéger les arbres.

L'auteur conseille vivement de protéger la nature. On doit penser aux générations futures. Wulale cite un proverbe bambara:

*Mɔgɔ te i ka jiri dannen bee den dun.* (Wulale 1995: 90)  
On ne mange pas les fruits de tous les arbres que l'on a plantés.

Et il reformule le proverbe pour accentuer son rapport à l'avenir:

*Mɔgɔ tɛ i ka jiri dannen den bɛɛ fana dun.* (Wulale 1995: 90)

On ne mange pas non plus tous les fruits de l'arbre que l'on a planté.

Ayant cité et paraphrasé le proverbe, Wulale l'intègre dans sa propre argumentation: un énoncé de la sagesse traditionnelle devient la base d'une philosophie du temps, qui produit, du côté pragmatique, une pensée environnementaliste orientée vers l'avenir. Ensuite, Wulale explique le proverbe par un exemple tiré de l'histoire: il cite le roi Banbugu Nci, qui a creusé un canal afin que son village ait accès à l'eau. Non seulement son propre peuple, mais aussi les générations futures pourront profiter du canal.

Les proverbes bougent et dynamisent le texte, en exposant une logique derrière le mouvement du temps. De cette façon, ils donnent un sens aux événements historiques et fournissent une dimension philosophique au récit historique. A son tour, le texte historiographique explique et développe les proverbes, en utilisant les événements historiques pour une "interprétation comportementale": il montre un comportement qui exemplifie les vérités générales exprimées dans les proverbes.

En voyant et en exposant dans le proverbe l'articulation d'une vérité philosophique, ce processus transforme la sagesse traditionnelle en un réservoir d'idées philosophiques. Les textes oraux du patrimoine culturel deviennent des éléments fondamentaux d'une philosophie actuelle.

#### *"Interprétation comportementale" des proverbes à travers des récits imaginaires*

Il n'y a pas que dans les textes historiographiques que les proverbes sont adoptés – et adaptés – pour devenir des véhicules de la pensée. Beaucoup de romans en langues africaines ont un proverbe pour leurs titres. A cet effet, les chercheurs français, Xavier Garnier et Alain Ricard, parlent avec raison de "proverbes-romans". Aussi écrivent-ils:

Il y a une symétrie entre le proverbe et le roman : un proverbe est un récit enveloppé dans une formule, un roman est une formule développée en un récit. (Garnier & Ricard 2006: 19)

Ce phénomène est décrit avec abondance de détails, particulièrement en ce qui concerne la littérature shona, par George Kahari (1997). En 1984

Kahari constate que 72 % des romans shona qui existent à cette époque sont “moralistic in intent and didactic in tone” (Kahari 1997: 281). Il dit que “[t]he authors have achieved this by making use of plots where consequences are seen as a direct commentary on the morality of characters’ actions. The closures of the narratives are therefore moral statements” (Kahari 1997: 281). Le roman est un commentaire d’une maxime morale; parfois, son antithèse (Kahari 1997: 296).

Des 112 romans shona qui avaient été publiés jusqu’à 1984, 95 traitaient du monde après l’arrivée des Européens et 17 étaient situés dans un environnement précolonial. De ces 95 romans situés dans la période coloniale ou après l’indépendance, 73 étaient didactiques, contre seulement deux romans “explicitement didactiques” portant sur la période précoloniale (Kahari 1997: 306). Kahari explique la grande proportion de la littérature didactique parmi les récits du “nouveau monde” de la manière suivante:

From these figures it is clear that the New World authors are not happy with the manner in which the urbanites have *disturbed the traditional moral codes*. Obviously, this is not the concern of the Old World narrators. In their novels, the idea of didacticism comes out at the end of the story when justice and peace triumphs over injustice and war. (Kahari 1997: 306; emphase ajoutée)

Cette citation montre aussi que les romans moralisants et didactiques renvoient à la “moralité traditionnelle”. Une des stratégies employées par les auteurs shona pour renforcer l’impact moral de leurs écrits est l’usage des proverbes ou de leurs parties – expressions par excellence de la moralité et pensée traditionnelles –, pour les titres de leurs romans (voir Kahari 1997: 306ff). Kahari présente la liste complète des “overtly didactic novels whose plots are based on the structure of traditional proverbs” (Kahari 1997: 306). Il y en a 20; les autres romans didactiques ont pour titre “a) formulaic and popular expressions, or b) axioms with almost the strength of a proverb, or c) simple statements of facts, or d) eponymous characters, or e) aliases” (Kahari 1997: 307ff).

Il existe une situation similaire dans la littérature swahili (voir Senkoro 1982 et Parker 1982). De même la poésie écrite dans certaines langues africaines emploie et développe abondamment les proverbes. Pour ne citer que le cas swahili, l’*Utenzi wa Mtu ni Utu* (1979), un poème philosophique en forme d’*utenzi* sur la signification du concept d’*utu* (humanité) du célèbre



poète de Mombasa, Ahmad Nassir Juma Bhalo, utilise un proverbe comme titre (cf. Kresse 2007 et Rettová 2007b et 2009). La référence aux proverbes est encore plus fréquente dans la poésie swahili en forme de *shairi*.

Le passage du proverbe à un texte en fiction est très intéressant et beaucoup plus complexe que celui du proverbe à un texte théorique ou spécialisé. Comme nous l'avons exprimé ailleurs (Rettová 2007a: 140-167), le texte en fiction peut présenter une réflexion intellectuelle du proverbe, en termes de commentaires auctoriaux ou dans les dialogues des personnages; mais le récit peut aussi être compris comme une "interprétation comportementale" de ce proverbe: le roman habille le proverbe en personnages et événements, qui éliminent l'ambiguïté du proverbe eu égard à la pluralité des sens qui lui est propre, l'expliquent et le développent dans un contexte spécifique. Inversement, le proverbe remplit les événements d'un sens philosophique (d'habitude du domaine moral).

### Intermédialité et réflexion

Il convient de constater que c'est toujours le passage d'un médium à un autre qui sert de base pour une réflexion du contenu d'un énoncé – dans les cas analysés ci-dessus, le contenu de la poésie panégyrique ou d'un proverbe, reflété dans un texte historiographique, un roman ou un poème. Nous avons à faire à un mélange unique du traditionnel et du moderne, du passé et du présent.<sup>14</sup>

Les deux exemples des textes historiographiques analysés nous montrent quelques possibilités de l'emploi des traditions locales du savoir dans un discours moderne. Les procédés méthodologiques de Nyathi et de Wulale sont très semblables. Nous pouvons y distinguer trois moments:

1) La structure du texte suit la poésie panégyrique. Celle-ci fournit les faits historiques, que l'on doit expliquer au travers du récit historiographique, et leur séquence chronologique, qu'il faut respecter pendant la narration historiographique. Ces deux aspects constituent, pour ainsi dire, l'échafaudage de l'histoire.

2) Le dynamisme derrière les événements historiques est expliqué en employant les proverbes. Ceux-ci expriment la logique du mouvement de l'histoire. En donnant un sens plus profond aux événements historiques, les

<sup>14</sup> Karin Barber (1999) souligne le rôle de la citation comme une pratique de la littérature orale.

proverbes leur donnent une forme intellectuelle et constituent ainsi les événements pour la mémoire de l'humanité. De cette façon, les proverbes créent et consolident un sens philosophique de l'histoire.<sup>15</sup>

3) Ensuite, le texte historiographique interprète et développe les proverbes théoriquement (par la citation, explication, paraphrase, exposition détaillée de son thème, etc.), mais il emploie aussi les événements historiques pour une interprétation béhaviorale: l'événement historique illustre le sens du proverbe. Ce processus ressemble à celui employé par les "proverbes-romans", qui exemplifient une vérité proverbiale à travers des événements fictifs.

L'interprétation philosophique de l'histoire est portée par les proverbes, qui donnent un sens plus profond à l'histoire et expliquent le dynamisme derrière les événements historiques. Par l'interaction des sources primaires (poésie panégyrique, proverbes) et de la narration historique de l'auteur, le récit historiographique devient un discours philosophique d'une forme très spécifique, basée sur les passages entre deux médiums, dont l'interface est l'endroit où s'effectue la réflexion philosophique.

### **En guise de conclusion: la philosophie de la littérature**

La philosophie, en tant que pratique discursive, commence avec la réception. Il s'agit d'une réception qui reflète et développe la sagesse, la poésie, les aperçus intellectuels ou même les énoncés quotidiens et peut-être banals. Une telle réception constitue la "tradition philosophique": une histoire de contacts intellectuels au travers des pratiques discursives. C'est la réception qui a fait des fragments des philosophes présocratiques le commencement de la philosophie européenne: sans elle, ils ne seraient restés qu'une sagesse voilée en langage opaque d'une poésie ancienne et perdue dans l'abîme du temps.

L'intermédialité est le mécanisme de la tradition, incluant la reprise des énoncés intellectuels et leur diffusion sous une nouvelle forme. Ainsi, comme nous l'avons vu, la littérature spécialisée reprend les expressions traditionnelles de la connaissance historique (dont la poésie panégyrique) et de la sagesse (dont les proverbes) pour les transformer en des récits modernes à contenu historique et philosophique dense et profond.

<sup>15</sup> Par ce mouvement circulaire, le proverbe donne un sens philosophique à la poésie panégyrique, deux genres que à peine se rencontrent traditionnellement.

Le même mécanisme s'avère efficient quand un interprète reprend la littérature fictionnelle africaine actuelle et en fait une analyse philosophique. Voir la littérature comme philosophie signifie voir le texte comme un message actuel pour le destinataire et continuer à l'écrire à travers l'interprétation, en faire son propre texte. Une telle interprétation prend le texte et va plus loin que celui-ci, ou, pour ainsi dire, "elle écrit plus loin". Tout en gardant le texte original pour les lecteurs (qui peuvent, à leur tour, en faire autant avec leurs interprétations), on écrit sa propre histoire.<sup>16</sup>

Interpréter, c'est, certes, tenir compte des lois de l'écriture littéraire (ce que signifie le concept allemand de *Literaturwissenschaft*: les conventions de la narration, des genres, du langage figuré, etc.); mais en ce qui concerne le contenu, une interprétation est impossible sans philosophie; c'est un discours philosophique qui interprète un texte littéraire du côté du contenu, du sens.

La compréhension de la littérature comme philosophie réside alors dans la réception en tant qu'interprète: ne pas rester un lecteur, mais continuer à écrire. La littérature est comprise comme une énonciation sur la réalité, quelque chose qui a une vérité en soi, et utilisée comme moyen de comprendre la vérité. Ceci fait de l'interprétation de la littérature un chemin vers la vérité (ou vers une vérité) – une recherche philosophique.

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<sup>16</sup> C'est ainsi que le philosophe et écrivain tanzanien, Euphrase Kezilahabi, voit le rôle de la critique littéraire, en distinguant le "techno-criticism" (une approche extérieure et réifiante vers la littérature et l'art) de l'"onto-criticism" (Kezilahabi 1985). "Onto-criticism" veut dire une critique qui prend la littérature comme pertinente pour la propre vie du critique et qui continue à écrire le texte, en développant son message dans un nouveau contexte et un nouveau texte.

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CYBERBARAZA: SOCIABILITY AND IDENTITY (TRANS)FORMATIONS  
IN CONTEMPORARY ZANZIBAR

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**From “*Mapinduzi daima*” to “*Zanzibar daima*”**

Lying at the intersection of the maritime routes across the Indian Ocean, along which peoples from the surrounding littoral societies have been travelling for centuries (Sheriff 2010), Zanzibar has been a threshold of the African mainland and a harbour for access by a continuous flow of commodities and peoples. Zanzibar experienced periods of great wealth and power, such as during the era of the Omani Busaidi Sultanate, often referred to as both the “golden age” and the “Arab rule nightmare.” The introduction of the clove crop by Sultan Sayyid Said (1804-1856), first in Unguja then, more importantly, in Pemba triggered a new influx of migrants from Oman and Yemen.<sup>1</sup> As trade grew, so too did mobility, involving trading actors (and a new complex social stratification which was to define the roles of all of those within it) and traded actors – slaves, mostly originating from the mainland – who influenced the heterogeneous nature of Zanzibari society and its cosmopolitan culture (Horton and Middleton 2001; Sheriff 2010).

The process of self-identification, revealed when looking at centuries of global history contextualizing East Africa, was made more complicated under the British Protectorate (1890), when the local population was further divided among mutually exclusive racial categories (Mazrui and Shariff 1994; Glassman 2011). With the abolition of slavery (1897), the islands’ demographic-scape changed dramatically once again, delineating different paths of social and political identification, which would mark the political

<sup>1</sup> In 1832, after the Portuguese defeat, Zanzibar became the seat of the Omani Empire with Zanzibar Town as its capital.



identities (and the political developments) to come (McMahon 2006). Rather than returning to the mainland, many ex-slaves settled in the place that they felt had been their home (*nyumbani*), a site of belonging (*uenyeji*) for generations. Investigating the process of emancipation in Pemba, Elizabeth McMahon highlights the composite structure of the society, where power relations were anything but fixed and manifested themselves unexpectedly to a superficial eye. She narrates the centrality of Pemba along the Swahili coast in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and of its following process of detaching from the Indian Oceanic world, dissolving, eventually, into economic and political isolation. It is in this context, characterized by intricate power relations between the inter- and intra-social actors (ex-slaves, ex-masters, landowners, rulers, workforce, etc.) that she argues the political identities apparent in the contemporary situation were formed, enacted to avoid vulnerable positioning and in order to belong and not be excluded (McMahon 2013: 231).

Zanzibaris, living at the interface between maritime and continental environments, experiencing the movement of different peoples from socio-cultural backgrounds, have a cosmopolitan culture, “remarkably tolerant towards other religions, cultures and behaviour although not an harmonious blend” (Sheriff 2010: 18). As participants in a maritime society, “pragmatic” and able to “easily adopt to new surroundings”, Zanzibaris have always attempted to rearticulate their identities throughout various paths – religious, cultural, social, economic and ethnic – in order to publicly define their degree of belonging (Topan 2006).<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, within that flexibility, racial rhetoric has survived and been reproduced throughout the islands’ history. The main ethnic divisions of colonial Zanzibar – Arabs, Indians, indigenous islanders and African mainlanders – had been already defined in the 19th century, when the Omani sultans had conquered Zanzibar (Glassman 2000: 402). Reinvented along the existing socio-political hierarchy and reinforced to support the Omanis’ policies, British officials tried to make these divisions more rigid, although they

<sup>2</sup> In addressing the Swahili identity and the trajectory of its development, Farouk Topan (2006) highlights a moving of Swahili identity from being coastal to being global. His is a groundbreaking study of a new approach which includes the perspective of the Internet and takes into consideration the migrations which have been characterizing Swahili people for centuries and still define their very core, global and local. This may be more correctly termed translocal. I refer, here, to the concept of “translocality” as a valuable lens through which to look at contemporary Zanzibar as suggested by Verne and Müller-Mahn (2013).

could never become as fixed as they wished. Economic and political, as well as educational and administrative, policies were instrumental to the maintenance of colonial power, but colonial discourse was not the only one contributing to the development of racial thought, nor were Zanzibari intellectuals passively receptive to it. Pre-colonial and colonial ethnic identities were in fact reverberating in the narratives surrounding the “Time of Politics” (*Zama za Siasa*),<sup>3</sup> reinvented into new “authentically African” ideas that could serve the nationalist cause: at the time, “[...] the idea of exclusionary ethnic nationalism had become an unquestioned ‘given’ across the entire spectrum of Zanzibari intellectual discourse” (Glassman 2000: 427). The “rigidification of identity paradigms” (ibidem: 413), and consequently the claim for racial purity, became the concept on which political rhetoric was developed in defining both the Afro Shirazi Party (ASP) and the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP)s’ agendas.<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, the ASP’s propagandists were invoking the “inborn” nature of the islands’ inhabitants (mostly referring to the ethnic identities of the slaves’ ancestors as coming from the mainland, therefore “undoubtedly African”) and labelling any possible unifying Zanzibari identity as an “unnatural category” betraying that very identity (ibidem: 417). On the other hand, the ZNP’s nationalist propaganda supported a single multi-racial nation based on *ustaarabu* (Islamicist and Arabo-centric “civilisation”), the same as the one reinforced by official British narratives during colonialism, as opposed to

<sup>3</sup> *Zama za siasa*, ‘Time of Politics’, preceding the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution, a dramatic event that was the result of decades of exacerbated frustration, exploitation and injustice. Unquestionably part of the historical context of the 1960s, when various nationalist movements had led, and were still leading, their countries to freedom all over the African continent (and elsewhere), the Revolution developed into a genocide of Arabs, Asians and all those of Arabic or Asian physical appearance in the archipelago. The “Time of Politics” has been interestingly investigated by J. Glassman in his work *War of words, war of stones* (2011), where he highlighted the links between that time and the post-revolution political atmosphere, with “legislative boycotts, intimidation, and sporadic outbursts of low-grade violence” (2011: 285).

<sup>4</sup> The ASP (Afro Shirazi Party) was founded in 1957 under the name of Afro-Shirazi Union, a coalition between the African Association and the Shirazi Association. Its ideology is mainly African nationalism as opposed to the broader multi-ethnic pan-Zanzibari nationalism of the ZNP (Zanzibar Nationalist Party) (Glassman 2011; Shariff 2001; Shivji 2008). On the unicity of Shirazi identity as played out within the geopolitical context of the islands (with a specific focus on the differences between Pemba and the south-east region of Unguja), please see Glassman (2000).

*ushenzi* (“barbarism”) and *umma* (“Islamic universalism”, hence anti-racial). However, their narratives portrayed African mainlanders as a threat to the “true” Zanzibari identity and, importantly, the ZNP declared loyalty to the Sultan. To conform to this socio-political dichotomy, the islands’ inhabitants had to re-think their own identities, claiming even at a micro level identification along the socio-political geography of the archipelago (“Pemban-ness” among others).

Breaking out during the 1964 revolution (*mapinduzi*), those very identities reinforced, in different ways, the same exclusionary nationalist agenda against which, ironically, nationalist official discourses had raised their voices: pan-Africanist and pan-Arabist discourses, but also Cold War rhetoric, played into Zanzibar’s local politics. Intellectuals’ political activism, together with peoples’ responses, within the contemporary geopolitical global context, fuelled the rumours that created fear, and consequently drove the behaviours deployed in riots and the revolution. Yet, the adaptation and transformation of identities did not depart from the previous modes of thinking along racial lines.

The revolution was followed by the establishment of a one-party state led by Abeid Amani Karume (1964-1972) and a Revolutionary Government, which installed a regime of terror, intimidation and violence under the guise of equality, justice and freedom (Askew 2006). The new regime was, in fact, privileging an overall “African” racial identity over any recognizable “Middle East” physiognomy. A new and unique mobilization then developed of youth (the “discontents”) fled to mainland Tanzania, other neighbouring African countries, Arabic countries, Europe (mainly the U.K.) and the U.S., taking with them a key part of the workforce, the intellectuals, the educated élite. Development and opportunities were thus dispersed along multiple, translocal trajectories (Burgess 2002).

In 1964, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the first president of independent Tanganyika, and Abeid Amani Karume signed the Articles of Union, merging the Islands of Zanzibar with Tanganyika and forming a new polity, the United Republic of Tanzania.<sup>5</sup> Zanzibaris have always been con-

<sup>5</sup> Although there are differing opinions concerning the extent to which Zanzibar’s citizens have supported the Union, generally it has been a subject of debate since its birth because, although it was conceived based on a need for national unity as opposed to the international scene, it was realized without the will of the citizens being expressed.

cerned with issues of the Union, and the extent of the islands' legal standing, participation and agency in Union matters, the distribution of resources, and policy implementation. Racial rhetoric was not excluded from the everyday life of ordinary people, rather it was constantly invented anew: in "[...] post-revolutionary Zanzibar, racial categories were reimagined in the course of conversations about how to realize the modernist dream of building a nation-state" (Glassmann 2011: 287), under the motto *mapinduzi daima* (revolution forever). Because the ruling ASP's policies were tied to those of their mainland counterpart, TANU (Tanganyika African National Union)<sup>6</sup> and the party was ideologically loyal to African nationalism, the opponents of the Union (the ZNP and ZPPP),<sup>7</sup> were given no space for open discussion, rather they were silenced and labelled as enemies (*adui*) of the new nation (Bakari 2001; Shivji 2008).

Within this geopolitical scenario, because of the main dichotomy of "mainland vs. islands" (*Bara – Visiwani*), and because of the identities deeply inscribed in the islands' historical background, Pembans were recognized through the superimposed pan-Arab identity of "traitors of the new nation".

The re-introduction of multiparty elections in 1995 (the first three had taken place in 1961 and 1963) marked a critical juncture in the political arena: it legitimised open confrontation between the CCM (*Chama cha Mapinduzi* – Revolutionary Party) and the CUF (Civic United Front).<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the two main competing parties have been, since then, reaffirming identities openly associated with social classes, race and geographical origins (Bakari and Makulilo 2012). As Nathalie Arnold, look-

<sup>6</sup> In 1977, the two parties were fused in what is known as the CCM (*Chama Cha Mapinduzi* – Revolutionary Party).

<sup>7</sup> The ZPPP (Zanzibar and Pemba People Party) was formed in 1959 after the secession from the ASP. Its leaders, identifying themselves as Pemba Shirazi, feared domination by the mainland, therefore the rhetoric characterizing the party was built on a strong anti-mainlander sentiment (Glassman 2000).

<sup>8</sup> CCM (*Chama cha Mapinduzi* – Revolutionary Party) emerged in 1977 from the unification of the Afro Shirazi Party (ASP) and the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), as a strong symbolic consolidation of mainland and island policies. Formed in 1992, CUF (Civic United Front; also *Chama cha Wananchi*) is "a conglomeration of diverse political forces, including disgruntled elements originating from ZNP and ZPPP" (Bakari and Makulilo 2012: 215).

ing at the negotiation of racial and divisive politics in the “cultural fora of sociability and social expression” (Arnold 2002: 163) in Zanzibar between 1995 and 2001 puts it: “[...] the conflation of CUF membership with “Pemban-ness” and “Pemban-ness” with opposition, was irreversible. The “shameless” were no longer CUF members in general and especially Pembans, but rather all Pembans in particular, all of whom, in official discourse, are necessarily members of the CUF” (ibidem: 153). Therefore, even if the ideological background of the CUF’s members was (and still is) based on the dissatisfaction with the ruling party’s performance (its alleged corruption, mismanagement, civil rights abuses) and the belief that the CCM has betrayed the founding mission of the Revolution, CUF members are depicted as a unified, homogenous group supporting the ZNP government and most likely wishing for the restoration of Arab rule. Within this imagery, Pembans were indeed directly considered as CUF supporters.

[...] four decades of single-party rule in the name of African racial nationalism have reinforced nativist hostility towards mainlanders. The old discourses of civilization and barbarism – reinforced and reimagined in the nineteenth century by the intensified practices of slavery, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the hegemony of the Busaidi state, and during the colonial period by Western-inspired teachings about progress and modernity – have since the 1960s been reimagined once more, this time in oppositional terms. [...] people of mainlander background are assumed to be uniformly sympathetic to the CCM, and in opposition stronghold such as Pemba even those who have been living in the islands for years have been intimidated from registering or voting. Many regard the government as an instrument of mainlander domination and the 1964 revolution as nothing about an “invasion” of foreigners, abetted if not actually planned by Nyerere himself. (Glassman 2011: 292-293)

The elections, taking place every five years, have, since 1995, been characterized by vitriolic confrontations, violent riots, political exclusion and suppression (Bakari 2011). The aftermath of each of the six competitive elections has not produced any “legitimate” government, the results having been regularly contested and the defeat never officially accepted (Bakari and Makulilo 2012). The lack of good governance, together with

the excessive use of force, lobbied for an accommodation through reconciliation agreements: from 1999 to 2007 three accords (*Muwafaka wa Kwanza, wa Pili, wa Tatu*)<sup>9</sup> have been signed by the two competing parties, but they have never been implemented.<sup>10</sup>

At this point, a further reconciliation process (commencing in 2009) was embraced on the basis of narratives of peace, stability and development, clearly addressed by the leaders, Amani Abeid Karume for the CCM, and Seif Sharif Hamad for the CUF, in their relationship with the citizens (Moss and Tronvoll 2012). The political reconciliation (*maridhiano ya kisiasa*) was aimed at bringing about an effective change from its very beginning, fostering cooperation, respect (*heshima*) and trust (*imani*). The notions of *heshima* and *imani* have been defining discourses of belonging throughout the islands' history, thus their utterance prompted renewed patterns of identification. Notwithstanding the mainland's controversial involvement,<sup>11</sup> the two parties held the process revolving around the cultural commonality of the Zanzibaris, as if the "Zanzibar problem" had eventually to be solved as an internal Zanzibari affair (*ibidem*).

After the elections to be held in October 2010, a popular referendum to decide upon the establishment, of a Government of National Unity (*Serikali ya Umoja wa Kitaifa*) was conducted on the 31 July, 2010. Both the parties, the CCM and the CUF, campaigned for "yes", although factions among the CCM opposed it unofficially (Bakari and Makulilo 2012). Karume ratified the necessary constitutional amendments (from the 1984 constitution), validating a political transformation that marked an important political turning point. The run-up to the 2010 elections (on 31 October) was characterized by a peaceful environment; the citizens voted for the CCM, in the person of Dr

<sup>9</sup> Respectively in 1999, 2001, and 2007.

<sup>10</sup> The two parties involved have never accepted electoral defeat; although the negotiations have been carried out by officially appointed committees, the political leaders and actors involved (Zanzibar presidents, Union presidents, party leaders, and so forth) were not genuinely committed to power-sharing, nor were they moving in a political environment free from distrust, alienation and resentment (Anglin 2000; Bakari 2011; Bakari and Makulilo 2012; Matheson 2012).

<sup>11</sup> It is rumored that the Tanzanian president Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete (2005 - 2015) initiated the dialogue between the parties. However, another version claims that he was unaware of the whole process, which indeed developed in a more informal way, especially when compared to the previous negotiations (Moss and Tronvoll 2012: 103).

Ali Mohamed Shein, who was announced as the winner with 50.1% of the votes (ibidem). Maalim Seif Sharif Hamad, the CUF leader, accepted defeat and the two parties celebrated the new political era together, which offered a new period for the islands.<sup>12</sup> A power-sharing government is usually “a transitional arrangement to address particular situations of crisis” (Nassor and Jose 2014: 258), although in certain circumstances it might be instituted on a more permanent basis. In Zanzibar, the Government of National Unity, which saved the country from the political impasse that was impeding any form of governance, remained in office for five years, aiming at more democratic political practices. The case was so unique, that it is contended that “Zanzibar’s current experiment in power-sharing demonstrates that democratic parliamentary rule does not have to be structured in terms of two-party oppositional politics” (ibidem: 265).

Looking at the political scenario before the 2015 Tanzanian general elections, this study on the digital social-scape opens up confrontations (concerning specific issues such as the Union, the Tanzanian Constitution, the laws regulating the search for oil and energy resources) that, whether disconnected or not from previous identity frameworks, transform into the new creative identification’s features. Because of the role geography played, and has been playing, in the formation and transformation of the relational context *Tanzania-Bara* vs. *Tanzania-Visiwani* (mainland vs. Zanzibar archipelago), intersected with Unguja/Pemba, and because of the enacted regional geopolitical abstractions, a critical geopolitical analysis, as intended by Myers and Muhajir (2013), will be applied. This approach combines the study of discursive tactics with the study of political acts and it moves beyond the textual representation alone, looking at speech, its outcomes, and its agency (Myers and Muhajir 2013: 666).

The Swahili language, being the main language used, plays an unavoidable role in shaping actors’ identities. More importantly, it “allows us access to [these] debates among people far below the governing elite”, enriching our understanding of the dynamics of identification (Hunter 2015: 9).

To engage with the identification dynamics occurring in the digital public realm, I use the notion of *cyberbaraza*. Drawn from the notion of *baraza*, as

<sup>12</sup> Yet irregularities in granting electoral identification cards have been denounced, there is evidence of a lack of transparency, which, if not seriously addressed, could undermine the implementation of democracy.

“an important feature of Zanzibari’s public sphere” (Loimeier 2005: 26), the *cyberbaraza* is a unique alternative and locally grounded concept that enables us to understand the phenomenon of publics on the Zanzibar islands. The *cyberbaraza* is a digital public constituted through the practices of communication enacted on the internet (digital social networks), and regulated, as is the *baraza* in Zanzibar town, by unofficial but conscious membership rules, behavioural norms, attendance, commitment, participation and agency (Brunotti 2018). Here discourses characterizing Tanzanian geopolitics, and in particular Zanzibar as a micro-context, are rendered on a global scale, as if the openness of the medium could grant a field for the unfolding of “dominant narratives of the Tanzanian nation” versus “residual narratives of Zanzibari and even Tanganyikan nationhood, emergent narratives of global identities (such as Islamism), and hidden or excluded narratives of tolerance and cosmopolitanism” (Myers and Muhajir 2013: 667): in other words *Mapinduzi daima* vs *Zanzibar daima*.

Considering media texts as part and parcel of broader social and cultural discourses,<sup>13</sup> this article investigates how sociopolitical identities and Swahili Zanzibari knowledge are circulated on digital social media – after the political transformation which occurred in 2010 and in 2015 pre-election times – by exploring how discussions online (trans)form the longer-standing identities, as *cyberbaraza*.

### **Identities (trans)formation on the *cyberbaraza***

As part of a digital public, the *cyberbaraza* participants create communities that are tied to a sense of belonging, enacted through personal stories and experiences, which are narrated, shared and read. Participants develop discussions through which they construct a profile of themselves, freed from the offline official identification codes but still endorsed by public recognition. It is established through the “mediated activity that seeks to raise people’s awareness, give a voice to those who do not have one, offer social empowerment, allow disparate people and causes to organize themselves and form alliances, and ultimately be used as a tool for social change” (Fenton 2008: 63). This is a place where identities existing offline are reproduced and portrayed online, but also where new identities are invented, unveiled

<sup>13</sup> See Askew and Wilk 2002, Dickey 1996, Willems 2012.



and spread, produced and consumed online, following specific paths, often differing from offline political, geopolitical or religious narratives. It emerges as a social space in a new sense, where formerly bounded, physical spaces are interpenetrating and manifested through new patterns of flow and (trans)formation. (Cohen 2007) This is where diasporic identities are called upon to have a role, materially and discursively, in the identity formation, disrupting or altering pre-existent geographies of power; it is a site of narratives of early and contemporary transnationalism and globalization too.<sup>14</sup>

Where political identities are often under threat within offline publics, the *cyberbaraza* as a public allows concerns to be voiced, suggesting online identity construction can provide freedom of speech. Subjectivities are here defined through the practice of communication, that is to say communicative practices in the Swahili language on issues of common concern, which are debated through the variety of texts available in the digital media.

### **J-blog (*u-blogu*)<sup>15</sup>**

Web-logs, or simply “blogs”, are frequently updated websites where content, in different forms (messages, video, audio, etc.) are displayed and available to an audience of pre-accepted participants. Through the hyperlinks available, and the connected participants of the blogs, they represent a wide network, which becomes a widely accessible arena of debates and direct involvement. Access and participation is defined by specific rules limiting the consequent memberships.

Slightly different from the web-logs, j-blogs consist of frequently updated opinion journals. The j-blogger, a journalist involved in blogging practices – albeit working on blogs – is still expected to perform his/her role as a “gatekeeper of information”, but s/he can also profit from the potentiality of transparency and accountability offered by the blog format (Singer 2005). In reference to our context, an interesting case to be looked at is *Zanzibar Daima – Zanzibar jana, leo, kesho* (Zanzibar

<sup>14</sup> Arnold 2002, Bryceson 2008, Caplan and Topan 2004, Fair 2001, Larsen 1998, 2009, Mazrui and Shariff, 1994, Topan 2006.

<sup>15</sup> *U-blogu*, where ‘u’ stands for *uanahabari* – journalism.

forever – Zanzibar yesterday, today, tomorrow) a journalistic blog in Swahili, mostly centred on political issues.

*Zanzibar Daima* was started in 2011 by a renowned Zanzibari journalist, Mohammed K. Ghassani.<sup>16</sup> It is subdivided into various subcategories (menu-pages) – namely *Kiswahiliblog*, *Kalamu ya Ghassani*, *Siasa ya Muungano*, *Siasa ya Zanzibar*, etc.<sup>17</sup> – through which the author’s expertise emerges together with the blog’s main purpose; it consists of various blogging practices, which provide information and discussion through news postings, editorial pieces, poetry (the author himself also being a poet), interviews and the like. It has links to other correspondent digital networks (such as Facebook and Twitter), where the digital media practices of communication are more visible, and also to Ghassani’s personal blog, called *Kwenyewe – Kiswahili kina wenyewe* (In its very place – the Swahili language has its speakers).<sup>18</sup> Compared to the blog *Zanzibar Daima*, which is almost completely about politics, his personal diary reveals a great passion for the Kiswahili language, since it shares many insights, interviews and essays on the topic. Nevertheless, his passion for politics is revealed in an interview with Abdilatif Abdalla, a Kenyan poet known internationally not only because of the beauty and intensity of his verses, but mainly because of his political activism (during the Kenyatta and Daniel Arap Moi era) which ended in his imprisonment and exile. *Zanzibar Daima* as a title reminds us of the revolutionary slogan “*Mapinduzi daima*”, but ascribes a new geopolitical discourse to it, relocating it in a way in the geographical arena. Seemingly, the titles appearing in the main menu suggest a regional

<sup>16</sup> Mohammed K. Ghassani was one of the intellectuals who started the weekly newspaper *Dira* (lit. vision, 2002-2003). The need for this new publication was justified by a lack of freedom of expression within the Zanzibar media context, and aimed at overcoming the strong censorship imposed by the elite in power. Proposing narratives on the Union alternative to the official ones, *Dira*’s journalists used the issue of the Union to claim full sovereignty of the islands, echoing the public concerns in constraining political and economic conditions, attributed to the Union’s existence (Fouéré 2012).

<sup>17</sup> In order: Swahiliblog, Ghassani’s pen, Union’s politics, Zanzibar’s politics.

<sup>18</sup> *Kwenyewe* - liter. itself, intensively used as a pronoun, usually following a noun, here in *ku* class, which conveys either a locative meaning, or a reference to any action in its infinitive mood (as to indicate *kusema kwenyewe* - the act of speaking in itself); *wenyewe* - owners/performers/proper speakers, in an integrating sense, pointing at those who have the right to speak it.

approach to political news delivery. In his blog's layout the author is differentiating between Union politics and Zanzibari politics, tracing a clear line between the two geopolitical entities.

Through *Zanzibar Daima* you can link to external sites and to the related digital social network, but it does not show any commentary although the structure provides for this. It seems that the author is confining and limiting the intra-communicative activities, practicing his role as editor through choosing, editing and publishing certain news, and certain comments, in the very "traditional" journalistic way.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, the readers become "prosumers"<sup>20</sup> as soon as they enter the related Facebook page, where the political identity of the author, as well as of the *cyberbaraza* of which he is part, becomes apparent. In the profile photo, "*Zanzibar 2015*" is written, openly addressing the then coming elections, and featuring white, blue and red colours, although no party affiliation is openly stated, these colours remind any visitor who has some political background knowledge that these are the colours of the flag of the CUF. The common concern of the specific *cyberbaraza* emerges from the topics discussed in the posts (and the chats), from the groups' affiliation, photos, books, music, videos and so on. For instance, the page advertises the book *Kwaheri Ukoloni, Kwaheri Uhuru! Zanzibar na Mapinduzi ya Afrabia* (Goodbye Colonialism, Goodbye Freedom! Zanzibar and the Afrabia Revolution), written by Harith Ghassany, an independent intellectual and researcher<sup>21</sup> as he defines himself in the book, published in the United States by Lulu.com in 2010.<sup>22</sup> The screenshot of the book is linked to a further website hosting the book in its entirety. Here the author defines himself as "a genuine Afroarabian born from Arabic parents and African grandmothers with relatives, on the

<sup>19</sup> Whether the intercommunicative potentiality is raised to the *n*th power through blogging practices, journalists as columnists have always been involved in relations with the readership, welcoming comments and letters and replying to them. While journalism had been practiced more as monologue, nowadays 'it increasingly consists of multiple voices' (Fenton 2012: 564).

<sup>20</sup> Producers-consumers (Mudhai 2014: 126).

<sup>21</sup> "*msomi/mtafiti huru*" (Ghassany 2010: 453).

<sup>22</sup> An alternative publishing house, set up in 2002, offering a self-publishing structure, which allows authors to directly follow their publications, in agreement with the mission of "making content creation and consumption a simpler and more rewarding experience for people around the world" (<http://www.lulu.com/about/our-story>).

paternal side, among Wamanyema and Wamwera.”<sup>23</sup> Among the different possible identifications (for instance, scholar, researcher, intellectual, Zanzibari, Tanzanian, among others), the author chooses to rename his own origins as “Afroarabian”, embracing a dual identity, whereby he feels a sense of belonging, and which overcomes any fixed micro-categorisation. Identity discourses are linked here to a geopolitical abstraction that disengages the author from the regional dichotomy of mainland vs. islands. Nevertheless, the book supports the conspiracy theory of the revolution as a scheme planned by the first Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere, and his assistant, Oscar Kambona, equating the departure from colonialism with loss of freedom due to the consequent Union:

The use of the term “revolution” comes from a different understanding of the events of January 12, 1964. To this group [those people questioning the Union since the beginning] revolution means that Zanzibar had been invaded and swallowed by Tanganyika on April 26, 1964. The meaning of revolution to this group is the way to differentiate between the Zanzibari-ness of those who overthrew the ruling class and the Zanzibari-ness of those who have been overthrown.<sup>24</sup> (Ghassany 2010: xv)

In a similar way, Mohammed Ghassani identifies, in his own blog profile, his relationship with Zanzibar within the migrating routes distinguishing his life journey:

*Nimepata kuishi nje ya Zanzibar na sasa ninaishi nje ya upwa wa Afrika ya Mashariki, lakini siko kwetu. Zaidi ya Zanzibar, iliyo sehemu ya upwa wa Afrika ya Mashariki na kuliko nyumbani kwa Kiswahili, mimi sina pengine pa kupaita kwetu. – I have had the*

<sup>23</sup> “Harith Ghassany ni Muaf Arabia kindakindaki aliyezaliwa na wazazi wa Kiarabu na mabibi wa Kiafrika kuumeni kwake kutoka kabila la Kimanyema na la Kimwera” (<https://kwaheri.wordpress.com/mwandishi/>; all translations are mine; ellipses, orthography and punctuation as appearing in the posts).

<sup>24</sup> *Matumizi ya pili ya neno ‘mapinduzi’ yanatokana na ufahamu mwengine wa tukio la tarehe 12 Januari 1964. Kwa kundi hili, mapinduzi ni tukio la kuvamiwa Zanzibar kutoka nje na kumezwa na Tanganyika tarehe 26 Aprili 1964. Maana ya mapinduzi kwa kundi hili la pili ni namna ya kutofautisha baina ya Uanzibari wa waliopindua na Uanzibari wa waliopinduliwa.*

opportunity to live elsewhere other than Zanzibar and now I live far from the East African coast, but I am not at home. I have no other place to which I belong other than Zanzibar, part of the East African coast and home to Kiswahili.<sup>25</sup>

*Kwetu* does not mean literally “home”, but is a possessive pronoun used in a locative class in the first person plural, denoting a strong idea of “belonging” as opposed to the same pronoun in the third person plural, *kwao*, or *makwao*, meaning “at their place, at their home”. More precisely “because of historical and genealogical reasons, African and Arab blood is flowing in(to) my roots, but my identity is Swahili (lit. Swahili-ness). I have no other identity than this.”<sup>26</sup> The journalist, hence, reveals himself through the topics discussed, and opens up to further identification. The Facebook page is linked to the documents’ digital library *scrib.com*, that hosts an online political magazine, *Zanzibar daima on-line*, featuring a printed publication. Leafing through it, the article *Naam, Mapinduzi Daima, Zanzibar Daima* appears in banner headlines.<sup>27</sup> Herein the author, Mohammed Ghassani, addresses the issue of the Union. In the very first line he declares: “Zanzibaris and Tanganyikans have been raised differently in regards to the Union’s appearance. Whereas Tanganyikans see it as being the Union of one government, Zanzibaris see it as a federative union of three governments.”<sup>28</sup>

The article argues that the decision leading to the Union was a revolutionary one, but not for following the 1964 Revolution. Rather, it was revolutionary for Tanganyikans because around 40 million citizens have

<sup>25</sup> <https://kwenyewe.wordpress.com/about/> (accessed on 29 June, 2015). The author has currently deleted this website, substituting it with the following one: <https://kinawenyewe.wordpress.com/tag/mohammed-ghassani/>.

<sup>26</sup> *Kwa sababu za kihistoria na kinasaba, ndani ya mizizi yangu munatiririka damu za Kiafrika na Kiarabu, lakini utambulisho wangu mimi ni Uswahili. Sina utambulisho mwengine usiokuwa huo* (<https://kwenyewe.wordpress.com/about/>).

<sup>27</sup> Editorial called *Ngurumo la Mkama Ndume* (The roar of Mkama Ndume/ the roar of the property’s administrator). In: *Zanzibar Daima*, September 2013, *Toleo la 3*: 16-19 (<http://de.scribd.com/doc/166288148/Zanzibar-Daima-Online>).

<sup>28</sup> *Wazanzibari na Watanganyika wana malezi tafauti kuhusiana na sura ya Muungano. Ambapo Watanganyika wa-nauangalia huu kuwa ni Muungano wa Serikali Moja, Wazanzibari wanauangalia kuwa ni wa Shirikisho la Serikali Tatu.* In: *Zanzibar Daima* September 2013, *toleo la 3*: 16 (<http://de.scribd.com/doc/166288148/Zanzibar-Daima-Online>).

been “brain-revolutionised” (*kupindua fikra*) to trust in one thing, and for Zanzibaris because one million citizens, the 3% of the Tanzanian population occupying less than 1% of the Tanzanian lands, have been brain-revolutionised to be dissatisfied with 50 years of Unity. Not abandoning the values proclaimed by the revolution, Ghassani invites the readership to a revolution of thoughts. He eventually concludes that Zanzibaris (addressed as “we”, therefore choosing inclusiveness as opposed to “them”, the outsiders) are pointing at a moment in which they will not deny having the Union, but they certainly will deny this Union,<sup>29</sup> moving towards a renewed relationship between Zanzibar and Tanganyika. He suggests that Zanzibaris are brave, grasping the chance of this “revolution” in order to make it “forever”, but always remembering that to make a meaningful Zanzibar, they must move to a “Zanzibar forever” (*Zanzibar daima*) approach.

Throughout his posting, publishing, and editing, referring to the journalist, we notice a tendency towards using certain notions, reviving a definite Tanganyikan identity as opposed to the one of Zanzibar, reproducing discourses clearly clashing with the national ones and reviving historical identities. Looking at the geopolitical past of the islands, the discourses evolving around this dichotomy are reminders of abstractions which were enacted mainly by the CUF, in the perennial clash with the CCM. Yet, where the CUF (political identity) was made equal to “Pemban-ness” (identities constructed around the island of Pemba) in claiming sovereignty and more independence from the mainland, today we see a common “Zanzibari-ness” brought forward, echoing equal, but maybe differently argued, aims.

As soon as we move from j-blogs, where news and information delivery is still guided by blogging journalists, to other digital social networks, a current of various modes (images, video, messages and the like) conveys information and news in a time/space continuum. Here the local is constituted in the global, not only for the potentiality of the medium itself, but also for the very political discourses and enacted identities, which are herein performed. Centred on the significant issues replayed by leaders and parties rallying for elections, this *cyberbaraza* uses a unique

<sup>29</sup> *Ninachoeleza ni kwamba tunakwenda katika kipindi ambacho hatutasema kuwa hatuna Muungano moja kwa moja, lakini pia hatutakuwa na Muungano huu* – What I mean is that we are heading for a moment when not only won’t we directly have a say in the Union, but that we also won’t have this Union (*ibidem*).

language and identities are built within the practices of communication (chats). It is interesting, thus, to look at those digital social networks where the readers are made writers, and the citizens are made netizens (Fenton 2012, Ya'u 2012), to discover how identities are played and displayed within blogging practices, looking at whether (and how) geopolitical abstractions characterizing the Zanzibar offline political scenario have been removed or reproduced, hidden or uttered anew.

### **Facebook and Jamiiforum**

Allowing people to organize around a person's interests or relationships, the digital social networks are mainly based on the notion and practice of sociability, rather than on content. They are frequently used for people to meet (consider Facebook or Twitter), both online and offline. Yet they exhibit effective communicative features which have been used also in critical situations to report injustice and trigger immediate responses, as well as to implement injustices and incite violence, facilitating harassment events.<sup>30</sup> The very conversational practice enacted on this digital public, the *cyberbaraza* allows for certain dynamics which can enable the construction of various identities. When it comes to contemporary political Zanzibar, what is to be investigated is the kind of response to the consensus, created underneath it, and which seems to have been permeating government and society since the ratification of the constitution's amendment that allowed the establishment of the Government of National Unity. While the power-sharing agreement worked as a breach in the wall separating the two major parties, it had been ratified on the basis of the leaders' consensus as well as on a large popular consensus that emerged in the pre-election referendum. Even so the two-thirds majority vote cast in favour of the Government of National Unity did not represent the two-thirds of the citizens eligible to vote.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, despite the atmosphere of dialogue preceding the 2010 election and following the official speeches of the two major leaders, then president and vice-

<sup>30</sup> For further insights on 2008 post-election violence in Kenya and the role of digital social networks see, among others, Mudhai 2014, Zuckermann 2009, Ogola 2011, Bowman 2013, Sambuli 2015.

<sup>31</sup> The registration of voters was not complete because the regulations defining the eligibility to register oneself to vote had changed, to the astonishment of less well-informed citizens (Bakari and Makulilo 2012).

president who were united in ruling Zanzibar, scepticism had become visible in regards to the capabilities of the two parties in working together in the same way that they had sold the reconciliation.

Already discussed by Nassor and Jose, in a study which ponders the stability and sustainability of the status quo based on “consensus politics rather than oppositional politics” (2014: 265), the gap between the leadership enacting this consensus, and the citizenship, becomes apparent in the debates in which the *cyberbaraza* engages. In other words, the Zanzibar identity pushed by the two parties to gain this consensus did not delete the silent polarity which was to rise below the “highly restricted process” that was brought to the referendum (Bakari and Makulilo 2012). This is deduced from the analysis, among others, of the digital groups and forums.

*Voice of Zanzibar -VOZ*, was founded on Facebook.com on July 10, 2010 (19 days before the referendum was held) under the slogan “United We Stand, Divided We Fall, One Voice for Zanzibar”.<sup>32</sup> The group profiles itself as a community “root movement welcoming non Zanzibaris to contribute too, whose “intention is to serve the freedom of expression both Politically & Economically among Zanzibari people who live in and outside of Zanzibar.”<sup>33</sup> Besides the “integrative” tone of the mission statement, the profile’s cover exhibits a close-up of the two main leaders, Maalim Seif Sharif Hamad and Dr Ali Mohamed Shein, together, but looking in opposite directions. Such layout aesthetics makes one think whether the picture is reproducing the ambiguity which surrounds the popular consensus issue. Nevertheless, a very diverse range of photos, videos and chats is available and the hyperlinks to the newspapers *Mwananchi* (lit. citizen) and *The Citizen*,<sup>34</sup> as well as to the page of the non-profit organization *Human Rights Watch*, denote the overall scope of the page, as well as of the reconciliation process.

12,166 people have openly expressed their consensus by having “liked” the page,<sup>35</sup> which is frequently updated. Yet, the diary shows a clear tendency to post materials, news and comments supporting the CUF and its policies. Frequent news concerning the leader of the CUF, the vice-president

<sup>32</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/voiceofzanzibar/info?tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/voiceofzanzibar/info?tab=page_info) (posted on July 10, 2010; accessed on October 2, 2017).

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem (posted on July, 10 2010; accessed on October 2, 2017).

<sup>34</sup> Both belonging to Nation Media Group; the Kenyan media group was founded in 1959, and is the largest private media house in Central and East Africa.

<sup>35</sup> Accessed on October 28, 2017.



of Zanzibar Maalim Seif Sharif Hamad, are commented on and very often referred to Pemba. The proclaimed united “Zanzibari-ness” seems to run along local territorial lines, confirming the scepticism which arose around the consensus. In the run-up to the October 2015 elections, ancient rivalries showed, through the debates held by the *cyberbaraza*, a legacy which is somehow transferred from offline to alternative practices of communication, although under the overall Zanzibari identity. A news item posted on her Facebook page by Salma Said,<sup>36</sup> a famous Zanzibari journalist and co-founder of the above-mentioned newspaper *Dira*, is commented upon on *Voice of Zanzibar - VOZ*. The article reports Hamad’s answer to a letter by the Committee’s spokesperson informing the vice-president of the decision of the Committee’s members to negate his participation in the House of Representatives.<sup>37</sup> In the letter, Hamad reassures the writer that he will respect the decision by not participating in their meeting, and wishing them every success.<sup>38</sup>

In the discussion that followed, a debater comes out declaring his/her Kenyan citizenship and suggests Hamad’s resignation, who should “let Zanzibar be just a province among other provinces, since there is no need for Zanzibaris to get problems from your country, it’s all about a very minuscule

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100008445132656> (posted on June 26, 2015, 10:29).

<sup>37</sup> According to the news as reported in the online newspaper *Dunia Leo*, the members of the House of Representatives belonging to the CCM asked the spokesperson, Pandu Ameir Kificho, to rescind the previous decision and negate the participation of Maalim Seif Sharif Hamad in the meeting, because of the too frequent boycott of CUF members (<http://www.dunialeo.com/sw/posts/browse/local-news/dk-shein-kuvunja-baraza-la-wawakilishi>; posted on June 26, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> *Kufuatia uamuzi wa jana wa Wajumbe wa Baraza kukataa Maalim Seif asende kuhudhuria ufungwa wa baraza Spika wa Baraza alimuandikia barua ya kumtaka asihudhurie naye Makamo wa kwanza amejibu barua hiyo na haya ndio majibu yake kwa ufupi: “Ninashukuru kwa barua yako na pia nakuhakikishia nitaheshimu maamuzi ya Wajumbe wa Baraza la Wawakilishi sitahudhuria kikao hicho, Na nawatakia mafanikio mema” hayo ndio maneno ya Maalim Seif. – Following yesterday’s decision of the House of Representatives’ Delegates to refuse Maalim Seif participation in the closing ceremony of the House, the House’s spokesperson wrote him a letter and the first Vice President answered: “Thank you very much for your letter and I assure you that I will respect the decision of the Delegates of the House of Representatives by not participating in the meeting. I wish you a successful outcome.” These were Maalim Seif’s words (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100008445132656>; posted on June 27, 2015).*

island. Where is this Country after all?”<sup>39</sup> Openly approaching the issue from a foreign perspective, the author is addressing the archipelago as “an island”, downplaying the regional geopolitical role of the two main islands constituting the archipelago, the political unit. Meanwhile, s/he is pointing out a notion of citizenship, using the word *mwananchi* (semantically *mwana nchi* – child of the country/nation), which is obviously related to the word *nchi*, meaning country/nation/city-state.<sup>40</sup> Not only is s/he considering the resignation of the man from the political role, but of the “Zanzibar cause” from the debate on sovereignty. The message is perceived as being beyond the limits imposed by this *cyberbaraza*’s rules of *heshima* and membership; hence, his/her participation becomes an intrusion into a public space where s/he is no longer welcome. S/he is not a Zanzibari, and, as the responses show: “Zanzibar must be left to Zanzibar citizens” and “if he has personal comments, he should expose them to the Kenyan government that should withdraw its troops from Somalia leaving it in peace.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the “unfortunate” participant is advised to direct his attention to Kenyatta<sup>42</sup> and to stop intruding in affairs that he has no clue about. He should, on the contrary, sit with his “mates” and tell his leaders to “stop oppressing (and suppressing) the sheikhs in Mombasa (unless he is more interested in foreign af-

<sup>39</sup> *Mimi kama Mwananchi wa Kenya ngingenda huyu Maalim Seif Ajiuzulu na siasa, aiche Zanzibar iwe Mkoa kama Mikoa mingine, haina haja Wazanzibar mupate shida eti mwataka Nchi yenu, nanyi ni Kisiwa tu Kadogo. Hio Nchi iko wapi. Hayo ni maoni yangu* – I, as a Kenyan citizen, would like Maalim Seif to resign from politics, letting Zanzibar be a district like other districts. There is no need for you Zanzibaris to put yourselves in trouble wanting your own country, and you are just a very small island. Where is the country you are talking about? This is my opinion ([https://www.facebook.com/pg/voiceofzanzibar/posts/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/voiceofzanzibar/posts/?ref=page_internal); posted on June 27, 2015, 07:37).

<sup>40</sup> On the rhetorical use of the word “*nchi*” and on the discourses surrounding it, see Myers and Muhajir (2013: 668-670).

<sup>41</sup> *Hicho kisiwa kidogo iko siku utaingia kwa visa na kama una maoni peleka seri kali ya kenya watowe jeshi lao Somalia ili waalishi kwa amani wananchi, ya wazanzibar waachiye wazanzibar. Hayo ni maoni yangu pia.* – This is a small island, there will be a day when it will enter history and if you have any suggestions, then bring them to the Kenyan government so that they can call back their army from Somalia and leave its citizens in peace. That which pertains to the Zanzibaris, leave it to the Zanzibaris. This is also my opinion. [https://www.facebook.com/pg/voiceofzanzibar/posts/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/voiceofzanzibar/posts/?ref=page_internal) (posted on June 27, 2015, 07:54; accessed on October 15, 2017)

<sup>42</sup> Kenyatta, current president of Kenya.

fairs than internal ones).<sup>43</sup> The picture gets even more interesting then, since the debate is building up a new communal identification which is crossing national borders (and Zanzibar locality) recalling ancient loyalties, based on a comprehensive Swahili identity, which is one bonding the East African coastal communities, especially in the relationship between the Zanzibar islands and the coast. Eventually, Zanzibar is emphasized as a region where injustice, wretchedness and sorrow is known by Zanzibaris, only.<sup>44</sup>

What emerges from this blogging practice is, in my opinion, a continuous indecisiveness, the one which has been often referred to in Zanzibari Swahili political (and performing) context as “*vuta n’kuvute*”<sup>45</sup> – pull and I pull you. It permeates the narratives, moving the attention from a broader geopolitical context (represented by “Zanzibari-ness” vs. “Tanzanganyikan-ness”/ “Tanzanian-ness”), to a blurred, narrower one (“Pembani-ness” vs “Zanzibari-ness”) and again to a broader one (Zanzibar vs. mainland/ Zanzibar within the Swahili Coast). Although a new political reading does not mean that it is possible to let go of the old struggles, the nationalistic discourse still acti-

<sup>43</sup> *Wewe [...] mambo ya Zanzibar yanakuhusu nini hivi tukihitaji ushauri tufuate kwako wewe ? huoni kama ushauri mpa Uhuru ambaye yupo karibu na wewe, maalimu yupo na kama mzalendo wa kweli hawezi kukubaliana na dhulma wanazofanyiwa wazanzibari wenzake ..nakupa ushauri wa bure kaa na wenzako uwambie viongozi wako waache kuwakandamiza mashekhe hapo Mombasa au hulioni hilo unaona la wenzako tuuu? – You [...] how far do Zanzibari issues concern you? Actually should we follow your suggestions if we need any? Don’t you see that it would be better for you to advise Uhuru who is close to you, maalimu [= Maalim Seif] is there and being a true patriot he cannot agree with the injustices that his fellow Zanzibaris are done...let me give you a free suggestion - stay with your fellows and tell your leaders to stop harassing the Sheikhs there in Mombasa, you are not interested in your issues, rather only in your neighbours’ ones. [https://www.facebook.com/pg/voiceofzanzibar/posts/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/voiceofzanzibar/posts/?ref=page_internal) (posted on June 27, 2015, 09:43).*

<sup>44</sup> *Wanzanzibar wachiwe wazanzibar wenyewe kwani wawo ndio wanao juwa uchugu na madhila wanayo yapata hayo ni maoni yangu. - Zanzibari issues should be left to Zanzibaris themselves because only they can know the pain and the wretchedness they get. That’s my opinion ([https://www.facebook.com/pg/voiceofzanzibar/posts/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/voiceofzanzibar/posts/?ref=page_internal); posted on June 27, 2015, 09:50).*

<sup>45</sup> Title of a novel written by the Zanzibari novelist Shafi Adam Shafi. Title of the poem: *Mnazi: vuta n’kuvute*, by Abdilatif Abdalla, belonging to his prison poetry collection *Sauti ya dhiki* (Voice of Agony, 1973). See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eiqXzEg4ZvM&feature=youtu.be>. See also its theatrical/dramatic performance, directed by Alombe Namai Hellon, performed by Alai K and Musa Adam (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2TJZrs4G0Q>).

vates a desire for peace, respect and further development. Yet, the exclusiveness of the *cyberbaraza*, this locally grounded digital public, is in outing any intervention detected as not pertinent, not respectful, not based on common needs and beliefs, therefore “foreign” (*ya kigeni*), albeit officially welcomed on the Facebook page. The outsider (*mgeni*) is eventually publicly silenced by this *cyberbaraza*’s members, not belonging, s/he is therefore outed: the post from June 29, 2015, is in fact no longer visible.

The geography of Zanzibar and the geological properties of its seabed are issues of debate and are related to one of the key problems driving the political consensus on the need for a new Tanzanian Constitution. To analyse this topic I would like to investigate another debate developed within the community of the *Voice of Zanzibar* because of an article retrieved from the website *mzalendo.net* entitled: *Mafuta ya Zanzibar kutolewa kwenye Muungano* (Zanzibar’s oil to be moved from the Union).<sup>46</sup> Besides the obvious economic attractiveness, searching for gas and/or oil requires particular technologies, specific skills and, therefore, significant investment and the introduction or development of a workforce that must be housed, fed, etc. somehow absorbed. By virtue of the economic interests concerned and the controversial relation between the mainland and the islands, gas and oil provoke massive disputes, offline and online. The article says that the general attorneys of the Zanzibar government and the Union government have formed a committee aimed at moving the issue of oil and gas out of the affairs treated under Union sovereignty.

One of the replies suggests looking at the future of the country first, in order to find a solution to the issue of oil exploration. But hereafter there is some scepticism, the lack of trustworthiness perceived from “these people” (*hao*) who are not credible enough and too easily corruptible.<sup>47</sup> A more radical reply addresses the CCM as the “infidel party” (*chama cha kikafiri*), resurrecting the strong historical and geographical identity as equally related to

<sup>46</sup> <http://mzalendo.net/>.

<sup>47</sup> *Nadhani bora tuongeele mstakabli wa nchi kwanza. Na ndipo tutakapopata ufumbuzi wa mafuta. Hawaaminiki hao kwa kujipendekeza wanaweza kutoa mpk nyumba zao kupeleka Tanganyika. kila la kheri ZANZIBAR* – I think it is better to talk about the country’s future first. And this is when we will get a solution concerning the oil. These people are not credible for suggesting that they can also take their houses and bring them to Tanganyika, all the best ZANZIBAR ([https://www.facebook.com/pg/voiceofzanzibar/posts/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/voiceofzanzibar/posts/?ref=page_internal); posted on April 7, 2013, 05:38).

religion.<sup>48</sup> At the end of the same post, the author recalls a religious identity, now linked to the political one: in the end, the infidels (therefore not Muslims) belong to the mainland and to the CCM.<sup>49</sup> The inverse identification mirrors the same kind of reasoning which for decades would have assumed the CUF identity as homogenously Muslim, separatist, pro-Sultanate and pro-slavery (and consequently Pemban, although the latter no longer resonates).

It is, indeed, very interesting to see how another member of this public reconstructs the geopolitics internal to the Union playing with the word Tanzania, which becomes “TAN-ZAN” with a separated “IA”, as we see in its visual representation.<sup>50</sup> His argument begins in the above-mentioned news item, at the point where the president of Zanzibar assures Zanzibaris (in the diaspora) in a speech given in London (August 2011) that all the steps to find a solution to the “matter” (the matter of oil, hence a Union matter) are being taken by the two governments concerned. He considers Dr Shein’s arguments to be ambiguous and insufficient: why, he wonders, if it was already clear in 1966 that oil was present, has nothing been done? Then he draws attention to the citizens, claiming their right to direct profit, eventually saying: “If it exists in the Union of Tan-Zan and in the cooperation IA, why should Zanzibar be given a loan by Tanzania? What’s the meaning of the Union here?”<sup>51</sup> The author points out the

<sup>48</sup> See Glassman 2011.

<sup>49</sup> *Zenji bila Muungano na Makafiri wa Tanganyika inawekana, kwa nini mnang’ang’ania kuna faida gani huko Tanganyika? nyinyi hamuoni aibu? hata mkitaka kiongozi wa Unguja lazima waamue wao nyinyi hamna sauti, na mwisho kama mesahau CCM ni chama cha Kikafiri [...] – Zanzibar without a Union to the infidel from Tanganyika is possible why do you insist what profit is available there in Tanganyika? Don’t you feel ashamed? Even if you want a Zanzibari leader, they will decide you haven’t got any voice, and finally, if you forgot CCM is an infidel party [...] (https://www.facebook.com/pg/voiceofzanzibar/posts/?ref=page\_internal; posted on April 07, 2013, 10:48).*

<sup>50</sup> *Kwa muono wangu apa waziri, Raisi wametupiga la kisigino, bcz. Ikiwa yafahamika toka 1966 kwani lisitatuwe toka apo mwanzo? Pia kwanini yasichimbwe watu wakafaidika nayo? or ndo serikali zote mbili hazina uwezo? – In my opinion here, the Presidents have tricked us, besides that, if the oil presence was known since 1966 why couldn’t the issue be solved from the very beginning? Also, why shouldn’t people extract it and benefit from it? Or do both the governments have no means? (https://www.facebook.com/pg/voiceofzanzibar/posts/?ref=page\_internal; posted on April 7, 2013, 11:23).*

<sup>51</sup> *Kama ni Mungano wa TAN-ZAN na ushirikiano IA ‘kwa nini Zanzibar ipewe mkopo kutoka Tanzania? Ni nini mAana ya huu Muungano apa? (https://www.facebook.com/pg/voiceofzanzibar/posts/?ref=page\_internal; posted on April 07, 2013, 11:23).*

imbalance between the mainland and the islands, which is not only geopolitical but also economic, and represents it displaying a categorization, which is mirrored in many practices of representation. Taken and put out anew on the *cyberbaraza*, it is seen through another lens, in respect to historical narratives. Here then the Tan-zan would completely lose the “*ia*”, having “Tanzania literally swallowed the Zan of Zanzibar, as if figuratively swallowed in the Revolution of 1964 by its ruling party” (Myers and Muhajir 2013: 678).

Natural resources are not the only issues addressed in the draft of the new Constitution, which would replace the previous one passed in 1977, and which is a highly contested issue since it tackles economic, religious and political spheres on which the major political parties do not find agreement. The referendum that was to be held on the 30 April, 2015 to decide upon the Constitution, was postponed because of delays in registering voters (apparently due to difficulties encountered in implementing the new BVR – Biometric Voter Registration system). It was therefore likely to interfere with the October 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections, since the changes which were debated reconfigured political discourses centring on the Union matter. This is highlighted in conversations occurring among the members of *JamiiForums* – *where we dare to talk openly*,<sup>52</sup> a “user generated content site”, alias a social (*jamii*) forum (*jukwaa*) that people can freely access.

Initiated in 2006, *JamiiForums* offers information and debate on a variety of topics, such as politics, entertainment, business and economy, language, education, and law, but also communication, love, friendship and jokes. It is linked to Facebook, Twitter and an email service. It provides freedom of communication and expression, specifically pointing to individual contribution to the public discussion<sup>53</sup> and on its worthiness. It clearly states the regulations framing the behaviour and language to be used in posting, highlighting notions of stupidity (*upumbavu*) as opposed to wisdom (*hekima*), connected to those of respect (*heshima*) and trust (*imani*), hence supporting the notions of membership, and belonging (“Hide your stupidity, don’t hide

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.jamiiforums.com/>.

<sup>53</sup> *Tunatoa uhuru wa kuongea. kama mada inakukuna au kukugusa kwa kiwango ambacho unaona lazima utoe majibu jisajili na kutoa ufafanuzi yakinifu.* – we deliver freedom of speech, if the topic irritates you or touches you to the extent that you think you have to answer, register yourself and give your empirical analysis (ibidem; posted on November 18, 2009, #3).

your wisdom!”).<sup>54</sup> Here the participation is wide and diverse, allowing one to encounter the debate of the most disparate topics; the forum embodies the huge participation which has been theorized in relation to the potential of democratization; there is, indeed, a presumption of transparency too, which is visible in the way the membership regulations are enacted: at any misbehaviour, the forum’s managers are visually crossed out from the debate. Nevertheless their approach and/or the topic remain visible as a “warning” to the other members. This is a site where intense discussions define anew the dynamics of identification that are performed as regional, but readable as part of a trans-regional dimension. This very act of de-territorialisation takes place, for example, in debates arguing the role of Islamic courts within the new Constitution.

On March 9, 2015, a senior member of the forum, under the label of JF Senior Expert Member, opens the debate on the following topic: “to prevent the draft of the Constitution to pass is like opposing a Tsunami with the hand.”<sup>55</sup> Here the debater is exposing his/her astonishment concerning the willingness of certain people to oppose the new Constitution without discussion, and s/he claims their relations to certain politicians (who do not love this country). Reminding the forum that the Constitution is not a commodity intended for political parties, but the result of a process of reconciliation, hence a benefit for all the citizens, the post encourages the Tanzanians (*mtanzania*) not to oppose the Constitution, referring to a precise identity, the patriot (*mzalendo*)<sup>56</sup> but also arguing that “This is why the Holy Scriptures, like the Bible, say that eventually good will win over evil.”<sup>57</sup>

Although referring to religious motifs is a common practice, the very fact that one of the contested points in the Constitution is related to religion changes the perception of the text, and provokes consequent categorizations. There is a detailed response to the poster (*bango*), drawing attention to the various Constitution drafts and on the detailed articles,

<sup>54</sup> *Ficha upumbavu wako; usifiche hekima yako!* (<http://www.jamiiforums.com/jukwaa-lasiasa/18042-jamiiforums-rules.html>; posted on September 10, 2006).

<sup>55</sup> *Kuzuia Katiba inayopendekezwa isipite ni sawa na kuzuia Tsunami kwa kutumia mikono* (posted on April 15, 2015).

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.jamiiforums.com/katiba-mpya/838044-kuizuia-katiba-inayopendekezwa-isipite-ni-sawa-na-kuzuia-tsunami-kwa-kutumia-mikono.html> (posted on April 18, 2015, #1).

<sup>57</sup> *Ndo maana maandiko matakatifu kama Biblia yanasema kuwa Hatimaye mwisho mwishowe wema utashinda tuuuu* (ibidem).

until one of the members decides to show the ongoing debate's figures, that is to say: 100 posts/day = 5 posts/hour.<sup>58</sup> The author, a "Gold Member" from 2008, does not feel the need for further explanation, relying on these figures to declare his standing position. Shifting to another level of discussion and moving the possible perspective, the contribution is likewise effective, causing waves in the conversation's flow. Churches and religious institutions strongly oppose the new Constitution because, as they put it, the bill would introduce Kadhi (Islamic) courts across the country's mainland.<sup>59</sup> The argument they raise is a very sensitive one, fuelling the animosity between Christians and Muslims. Article 41 of the draft is, indeed, dedicated to Islamic courts, whose verdicts would be possibly accepted by the Tanzanian court. This article would allow Islamic courts to decide on Muslim affairs, without interfering with the secular power. Nevertheless, it is perceived by Christians as a threat against the nation of Tanzania, but reinvented through old religious contrasts.

Furthermore, the political interpretation of the contended article results in the following: *Uchaguzi huu October 2015, ni mahakama ya Kadhi v/s CCM*, that is to say: these October 2015 elections consist of the Islamic courts versus the CCM.<sup>60</sup> In very harsh language, the member explains his astonishment for what was aired on TV (TBC, as he says) the previous day: the speech of the President of Tanzania, Jakaya Kikwete, referring to the churches and the religious institutions which had decided to interfere in the pre-election referendum, to incite their followers and believers to vote "no". While interpreting the president's speech, the post provokes the sharp reaction of one of the senior members, who officially asks for politically-correct behaviour and explains that the President's declaration of religious freedom (in article 41), specifying to what extent the Islamic courts would not interfere with secular power: "[...] (2) Religious advertisements, religious services and religious proselytising are free and voluntary for every person unless interfering with the country's law. And (3) all that is related to the

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.jamiiforums.com/katiba-mpya/838044-kuizuia-katiba-inayopendekezwa-isipite-ni-sawa-na-kuzuia-tsunami-kwa-kutumia-mikono.html> (posted on April 9, 2015, #24).

<sup>59</sup> <https://barnabasfund.org/news/Churches-and-religious-institutions-publicly-opposing-new-Tanzanian-constitution-to-be-closed-says-government> (posted on April 21, 2015, 16:47).

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.jamiiforums.com/katiba-mpya/827178-uchaguzi-huu-october-2015-ni-mahakama-ya-kadhi-v-s-ccm-tutaona-nani-mshindi.html> (posted on March 29, 2015).



guiding of the religious communities will be out of the governmental authority.”<sup>61</sup>

In the development of the debate, opposing religious identities are continuously played bouncing from one extreme to the other, on the global field of contemporary debates around religions and their extremisms,<sup>62</sup> and throughout the local historical legacy. (It is interesting to notice that while the stem *Islam*, appears around 61 times on this page, the one of *kristo* appears only three times).

### Concluding thoughts

The *cyberbaraza* is an informed public, where “goers” display various identities, (trans)formed because of the digital public’s very dynamics. In this study I have given some examples which I consider representative of the mechanics which operate on this unique public platform allowing people to meet and contribute, not only in the exchange of information but also, in a more performative way, triggering an agency which goes beyond the acts of text and speech. The context of the study is the political transformations which occurred in Zanzibar, begun in 2010 with the ratification of the Government of National Union, and enhanced in the run-up to the October 2015 presidential and parliamentary election. Approaching elections, political debates show up more often and more distinctively, hence online activities are consequently undertaken. The active participation of Zanzibaris in the *cyberbaraza* constitutes itself as digital public through the participation of Zanzibaris and the practices of communication through which members engage in identification dynamics that alter existing forms of social exchange and belonging to, and/or creating new ones.

Yet, offline identities which have been defining interpersonal relations and political intercommunication for decades, often under conditions of power abuse

<sup>61</sup> [...] (2) *Kazi ya kutangaza dini, kufanya ibada na kueneza dini itakuwa ni huru na jambo la hiari kwa mtu binafsi ilimradi hakiuki sheria za nchi. Na (3) Shughuli ya uendeshaji wa jumuiya za dini itakuwa nje ya shughuli za mamlaka ya Serikali* (<http://www.jamiiforums.com/katiba-mpya/827178-uchaguzi-huu-october-2015-ni-mahakama-ya-kadhi-v-s-ccm-tutaona-nani-mshindi.html>; posted on March 29, 2017).

<sup>62</sup> “The United Republic government has emerged as a strategic partner of the US military in the Global War on Terror, and particularly in the Horn of Africa and western Indian Ocean struggles” (Myers and Muhajir 2013: 676).

and rights violation, be they human, electoral, societal or religious, can be replicated under a variety of forms on the *cyberbaraza*. While the *cyberbaraza* empowers collectives and individuals to express their concerns, interests and views, it being a “meeting-point” of various social actors, groups and publics, “it echoes negotiations and re-negotiations of social identities, codes and relationships that take place through their practice” (Vatikiotis 2010: 37).

Zanzibaris who decide to connect and “sit” on the *cyberbaraza* are concerned with the discussions held online, practicing locality in a trans-local forum. They are involved in processes of disclosing personal and community narratives, and, therefore, engaging in political practice. The study has shown that tuning into communicative practices enacted on digital social networks highlights the ways the *cyberbaraza* constitutes an informed forum for political debate, shaping the identities and subjectivities that operate through it. Characterised by local features, the *cyberbaraza* develops as a de-territorialized and global public, acquiring meaning and voice through the communicative practices of its members. Regardless of any limits on how they are identified online, individuals and communities actively participate in debates and deliberations on issues of common concern (Brunotti 2018).

Through the analysis of a few case studies, focusing on the topics which were debated because of the October 2015 election, I have highlighted how the Union matter (together with the new Constitution and the political transformation occurring between 2010 and 2015) defined the framework where netizens take sides without fearing repressive consequences, where boundaries broken offline are reproduced defining new online identities. The legality<sup>63</sup> and implications of the Union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar (1964) have been debated at length through a variety of media and in a highly-charged atmosphere (Bakari 2001, Fouéré 2014, Patterson 2002, Shivji 2008, Wilson 1998). Yet, the character and the contents of these debates had not yet been investigated taking into account the role of digital media in altering existing forms of social exchange and belonging and/or creating new ones. The actors (i.e. Zanzibari people of different backgrounds) in these confrontations engage in narratives of identification that are far from ascribable to those defined by the single approach, either being historical or wholly geographical, religious or

<sup>63</sup> The legality of the Union has been extensively investigated by Shivji, shedding light on, among other important conclusions, the fact that the Revolutionary Council has never enacted the Articles through an official ratification, nor has given them force of law (Shivji 2008: 86).

exclusively party-dominated. The unique narratives appearing on the *cyberbaraza* portray an important shift in Zanzibari self-identification and, possibly, in socio-political practices.<sup>64</sup> Here the process of identification profits from the versatility of the medium, allowing not only discussions among the actors, through oral or written chats, but also through visual implementation, thanks to video, pictures, external links, drawing and a variety of graphic features which contribute to its definition. Looking at this locally grounded digital public, we discover notions of belonging that allow us to understand more closely how identities are constructed. The *cyberbaraza* exists as a place where the public can invent new identities, disappearing under official politics. “Pemban-ness” disappears under the umbrella of the “wholesome Zanzibari identity” displayed on alternative media<sup>65</sup> in response to old and new socio-political challenges. Yet, inherited historical features of identification are perceptible through a language that, to inattentive readers, will sound clear but is, indeed, a “*lugha ya ndani*”, a hidden language, understood by and directed to a very specific public.

While hopefully inspiring further research, this study reveals the *cyberbaraza* as public, opening up critical thinking and confrontations (concerning also critical issues like the Union) disentangled from a previous identity framework and conveyed into new creative political practices. This creativity is displayed by making use of the versatility of the instrument, and allows different discourses to articulate the Zanzibari identities, be they religious, ethnic, historical, geographical or political.

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<sup>64</sup> I acknowledge the existence of regimes, which have complete monopoly over the Internet. With reference to Africa, one clear example is Ethiopia. See Gagliardone 2014: 279-99. Nevertheless, I address the potentiality of the digital social networks in making and/or widening freedom of speech in many African countries. See Eko 2010, 2015.

<sup>65</sup> I understand the alternative media, as opposed to mass media, and placing emphasis on media power (Atton 2008), as “media resisting the frames, the codes and the practice of mainstream media through forms of organization, the means of production of and modes of distribution” (Fenton 2008: 61).

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“KANGA & CO”. VERBAL/VISUAL REPRESENTATION AS SOCIAL PRACTICE  
IN A MUSLIM SOCIETY (SWAHILI, EAST AFRICA)

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This paper starts from the observation that the *kanga* – the East African wrap cloth with proverbial inscriptions printed on it (Beck 2005, Zawawi 2005) – is embedded in a complex network of verbal and visual representations which spread throughout Swahili society. Apart from on the *kanga* (or *leso*) such texts can be found on a broad variety of material objects: windowsills, buses, *matatus* (small buses for private public transport) and *tuk-tuks* and *bajajs* (auto-rickshaws), woven objects; they can even appear as names for restaurants (Linnebuhr 1994). Intertextual relations tie the *kanga* to Swahili poetics in general, but more specifically to the oral genres of proverb, maxim and metaphor, to other genres of Swahili literature and poetry, to song lyrics, film and other popular genres. This verbal-visual network of representation with motifs from the *kanga* extends to mural paintings, studio photography or embroidered men’s caps. All these items draw on the same textual and iconographic reservoir of patterns and motifs circulating at the East African coast at the intersection of the Indian Ocean and the African continent.

These relationships can be further traced on an interpersonal level, i.e. we can understand the objects to possess utteranceship (Yahya-Othman 1997), they are thus “speaking objects” (Beck 1999). It means that object and proverbial expression are routinely connected to each other in a semiotic process and vested with the power of “doing relationships”:<sup>1</sup> accuse, insult, insinuate, hedge, admonish, pray, request, ask for something, console, curse, and so forth. While I take up a perspective which starts

<sup>1</sup> Comparable to “Doing Gender” (West & Zimmerman 1984).



out from the *kanga*,<sup>2</sup> it is not only this cloth which can speak, but so can – sometimes – the *matatus* and buses, windowsills and raffia woven window plates or food lids together with their inscriptions, the performed lyrics of *taarab*, *muziki wa dansi* and *bongo flewa* (genres of popular music), or, more recently the sending of mobile messages as well. The proverb-objects speak to husbands, (female) in-laws, relatives, neighbors and rivals about love and jealousy, envy and sorrow, advice and moral council. They also speak in political discourses constitutive of nationhood (Askew 2002) and belonging (Arnold 2002) and allow for the expression of contemporary civil society in its own terms. What ties together the political dialogue of public *taarab* performance with the private wearing of *kanga* can be described as subaltern strategies (Spivak 1988) or “weapons of the weak” (Scott 1985). More precisely, this particular genre of “weapon” consists of a “practice of conjecture” (Arnold 2002: 145) with the main ingredients of equivocation by veiling source, content, addressee and contexts, and the impossibility to disambiguate and perorate with interpretive activity by the interactants (Beck 2001, 2004, 2005). The verbal aesthetics of conjecture, the materiality of writing, and the cosmopolitan yet gendered iconography of the object are constitutive for the performativity of the *kanga*.

In recent years Swahili expressive culture and its imbrications with “the social” have received fair empirical and theoretical attention in the field of Swahili studies.<sup>3</sup> Kelly Askew has suggested a notion of “performance of power” (Askew 2002: 24ff), which allows to see performance as an emergent and contingent process everyone in attendance is engaged in, and

<sup>2</sup> This is, in the first place, a result of my own research focus and training as a linguistic anthropologist and field stays in 1992, 1994/95, 1996 when I collected data for my Ph.D. thesis (see Beck 2001, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> For example poetics and society (Mazrui & Shariff 1995, Shariff 1988, Biersteker 1991, 1996); music, dance and politics (Strobel 1976, 1979, Franken 1994, Askew 2002, Arnold 2002, Geiger 1997, Graebner 1991, 2004, Eisenberg 2009, Topp 1992, 1993); the social implications of leisure activities (Fair 2001, Glassman 1994), media and female youth culture (Fuglesang 1994), dress and gender (Linnebuhr 1992, 1994, Parkin n.d. [1996], Yahya-Othman 1995, 1997, Hino 1968, Amory 1985, Beck 2000, 2001, 2004, Trillo 1984, Muombwa 1995), adornments and jewellery (Romero 1987, Volker 1992, Troughear 1983), architecture and space (Donley-Reid 1984, Pradines 1999), carving (Aldrick 1988, Athman 1996), photography (Behrend 1998).

through which social life as structured by power relations is actively constructed (ibidem: 23). Contrary to musical performance, the “speaking objects” I write about here are regularly part of everyday routines and actions. From both local or academic perspective they just as regularly disappear as “minor genres” from the focus of observation, description, or analysis: they are small, everyday objects, with often obscure, difficult proverbial texts (another “minor genre”, Jolles 1982), not written communication and not spoken either, with no apparent author or addressee, and no easily observable interpersonal consequences etc. Neither cloth printed in thousands of pieces in some European, Indian or Kenyan up-country factory nor proverbs in general can easily be traced to an author; in fact, this is a prominent *raison d’être* of speaking objects: to lend voice and concurrently obscure authorship and thus protect its users from sanctions (for an overview of “speaking objects” in Africa see Beck 1999). The genre of “speaking object” resists received analytical models from performance theory, reception aesthetics, politeness to materiality not only for its complexity, but because of its constitutive elusiveness and conjectural properties. Instead the notion of practice, as i.e. typified, routinized and socially intelligible combination of activities which are held together by encompassing and socially shared, implicit, methodical and interpretative knowledge (Reckwitz 2008: 112). “Practice” in this sense used here recognizes the embodied structures and routines of social action as constitutive for and constituted by shared horizons of meaning, orders of knowledge, systems of symbols and cultural codes (Reckwitz 2008: 109). In other words, to perceive of, participate in, interpret and understand, in however subtle or overt ways, the practice of speaking-with-a-proverbial-object means to participate in the social economy of power particular for Swahili coastal societies which is marked by conjecture and equivocation. I believe that these verbal-visual-material practices allow the Swahili people to express and make sense of an experience of disjuncture and insecurity in a highly stratified society marked by fundamental changes brought about by post/colonialism. The practice of speaking-with-proverbial-objects thus contributes significantly to “Swahiliness”.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Not in so many words, Middleton (1992: 90) has made a similar observation: “Properly it is the moral behavior associated with great pedigree that matters, not the pedigree in itself.”

The notion of shared horizons as constituted by shared practices further allows us to recast the relationship between language use and social action in a fundamental way in that language use *is* always social action.<sup>5</sup> Also, the notion of practice allows to more clearly focus the routine relationship between language use and material object, which in Swahili society as elsewhere in Africa<sup>6</sup> seems to transcend Western academic norms and routines for delineating orality and writing. I will come back to these issues further below.

### **Cloth that speaks<sup>7</sup>**

The *kanga* is an object of everyday use mostly among women throughout Eastern Africa, including Eastern Congo, Madagascar, Somalia, and reaching as far as Muscat, the Yemen and, with contemporary work migration, the United Arab Emirates. In this paper, I will concentrate on its uses among the Swahili speaking, Muslim people at the East African coast, more specifically about Mombasa, where I conducted field research in 1994/5 and 1996.<sup>8</sup> As a factory-printed cloth imported from Europe the *kanga* appeared most probably first in Zanzibar around 1875, after a long history of handpainted, printed or embroidered cloth (Zawawi 2005). After Independence in the 1960s it was locally produced in Kenya and Tanzania, in the past 15 years imports from India have greatly gained importance while the local factories are subject to the ups and downs of regional economics and just keep struggling on.

<sup>5</sup> The reverse is not true, of course, not all social action is also verbal action.

<sup>6</sup> See Beck 1999. Here I describe the practice of speaking-with-a-proverbial-object for a number of so-called proverb-cultures apart from the Swahili coast, namely the Akan-Fante-Baule area (Ghana, Ivory Coast), the Lower Congo-Cabinda area, the southern Angola-Northern-Namibia Bantu speaking contexts, the Zulu-Xhosa area (South Africa). And there may be others, which I have not yet taken notice of.

<sup>7</sup> The material presented in the following two paragraphs originates from several field stays in Mombasa, in 1992, 1994-95 and 1996, and more recently from 2006 and 2007 (see also Beck 2001, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> See Beck 2001. The following summary is based on an English short version of my Ph.D. thesis (Beck 2005).



**Illustration 1:** *Ngoma ikilia sana hupasuka* (Sounding the drum too hard risks its bursting). Van Vlissingen, Helmond, 1920s. © Vlisco, Helmond.

The success of the cloth dates back to the late 1890s, because it became the means and visible sign of the integration of former slaves and immigrants from the African mainland into the Swahili-Muslim East African society (Fair 1998: 14-15). Although today the *kanga* is used by women of all walks along the coast, it still connotes aspects of gender and status in which this origin finds resonance. The *kanga* is a means of negotiating power relations and status among women as well as between women and men. In particular, the *kanga* marks the ambiguous status of women in Swahili society.

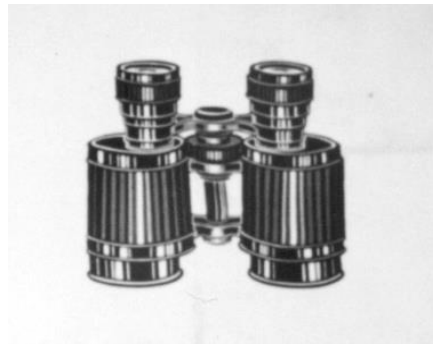


**Illustration 2:** Binoculars, Van Vlissingen, Helmond, 1930s. © Vlisco, Helmond

The *kanga* consists of a border which runs around the four sides of the cloth (*pindo* or *pindi*) and a central field (*mji*) (illustration 1). Its designs mostly draw on a reservoir of typical or recurrent motifs and patterns, which can be divided into two main groups: realistic and abstract. For example, from very early on we find cars, radios, airplanes, ships, etc. (illustrations 2, 3 and 4). In the 1990s there were of course also glasses, telephones, mobiles, dollar bills and so on, that portray and constitute meanings of modernity within Swahili society.



**Illustration 3:** Glasses, 1994. Photo R. M. Beck.

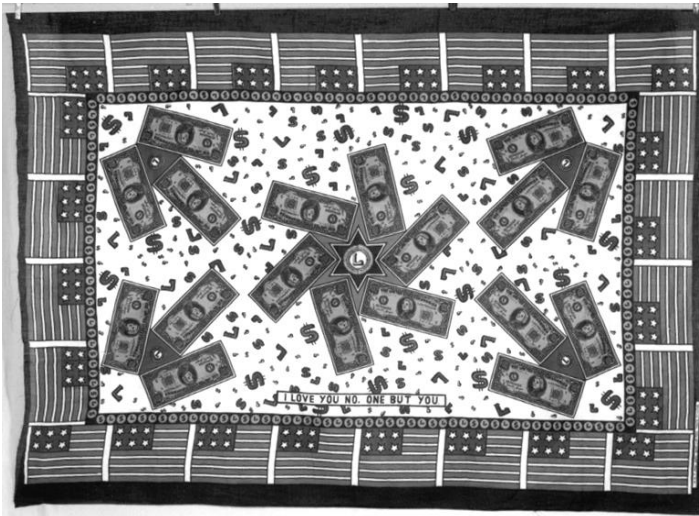


**Illustration 4:** I love you no, one but you. Bombay, 1993. Photo Günter Platzbecker.

The symbolic or abstract representations of objects on the *kanga* form a huge reservoir of motifs and patterns: dots in all sizes, flowers, plants, motifs from the deck of cards and so on. One of the most important motifs of the *kanga* is the *korosho* – the cashew nut (illustration 5). It appears also as *batata* (potato) or seed, or as *embe* (mango). It is certainly reminiscent of what we know as “paisley” or the *arbor vitae* that can be traced to the Indian subcontinent, yet local interpretation makes no overt reference in this case to the Indian Ocean Area background.



**Illustration 5:** Van Vlissingen, Helmond, 1930s, © Vlisco, Helmond.

A special feature of the *kanga* are the proverbial texts printed on the lower third of the cloth. The texts usually formulate what is culturally considered to be inappropriate or impossible to speak about openly: quarreling on the grounds of jealousy or envy, conflicts between wife and husband or among in-laws, gossip, and sexuality. Many inscriptions also contain maxims and well-wishes.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Both thematic domains can be understood to belong to strategies of negative and positive politeness (Brown & Levinson 1987: 87).

The following example that was related to me in June 1996 gives a good impression of the interpersonal use of *kanga*.<sup>10</sup>

*Hakuna mlezi ashindaye mama (No parent exceeds the mother)*

The *kanga Hakuna mlezi ashindaye mama* (No parent exceeds a mother) was given to Asma by her sister-in-law, Safia. Asma was so angry about this that she refused to speak to Safia for a long time.

In order to understand why Safia gave the *kanga* and why Asma was so angry, we have to reconstruct the family situation in which both women lived and the social valuation of their way of living.

Safia was the second wife of Asma's elder brother, who had from his first marriage a boy that grew up with Asma. With Safia he had four very small children. Asma, who was not married, lived in the household of her elder sister, but had taken up to fostering the boy. While Safia had problems of her own with her children and could scarcely manage to take care of them (her husband had migrated to the Arab Emirates to work and was not able to well support of his family financially), Asma had a hard time with the boy who was obstinate and engaged in company his family did not approve of. The relationship between Asma and Safia was not easy either, for personal reasons, but also because as an in-law Safia had a difficult position toward Asma, and Asma as an unmarried woman had a difficult position in society in general.

The first and most obvious interpretation is that Safia accuses Asma of not being proper mother to the boy: The terms *mlezi* (parent) and *mama* (mother) are set up against each other formally in the inscription. *Mlezi* is a noun from *-lea* (bring up, rear a child, act as a child's guardian) (Johnson 1939) and refers to social parenthood. While *mama* (mother) has a variety of meanings, from “parent” to a deferential address toward married women, it may also, and does in this context, imply biological motherhood. Therefore the text told Asma that she was “only” the foster mother and could never be as “good” for the boy as his biological mother. As opposed to Safia, who, since she was a “true” mother, would also know how to be a foster mother. This interpretation, however, was not satisfactory: it could lead to the conclusion that Safia she claimed to be a better mother for the boy and thus would be

<sup>10</sup> In order to protect the identity and privacy of the women involved some information has been left out, the names have been changed as well. For more case studies see Beck 2001, 2005.

given the boy for fostering. But everybody knew that she absolutely did not want the boy on her hands, with her small children and the necessity to secure their existence almost on her own, she was not capable to do so.

In my discussions with Asma's elder sister Fatma we found a different explanation, which "fit" much better. The key to the understanding of the meaning of the *kanga* lies in the wider context Asma lived in, namely in the household of her elder sister.

Her elder sister, Fatma, lived a happy marriage. Her children had already grown and done well, too. One day Fatma went to visit her sister-in-law, Safia, where she found that one of the children was very sick and lived under deplorable circumstances. She decided to bring it back home, took the baby to a doctor and nursed it back to health. When her brother came for a holiday, she informed him that his wife was not looking properly for her children and had actually risked the life of his youngest child.

Fatma herself interpreted the *kanga* on the background of this episode: Safia used the *kanga* in order to defend herself. By playing off the two terms *mlezi* (social parent) and *mama* (biological mother) against each other, she criticized the two sisters of intruding into what she saw as her own business. Although the *kanga* was, in the end, directed towards Fatma, it was tactically necessary to give it to Asma. Had she given it directly to Fatma, nothing would have happened, because the message would be in keeping with Fatma's social position: she was a successful parent and mother. The *kanga* would have been a compliment, not a criticism. But Safia had assumed that the whole family knew of Fatma's accusation that she had failed as a mother. By giving the *kanga* to Asma, Safia set off a process of interpretation which at first could be seen as an attack on Asma's social position and her abilities as a mother. The gift thus acquired a negative connotation of fight and criticism. Although this interpretation would not satisfy, the connotation would remain and the "right" conclusions eventually drawn. The sister's interpretation was in the end: "Only because you (Asma) are a more or less successful foster mother, don't think you are in a position to accuse me, a 'true' mother." By criticizing the younger, more vulnerable sister, she also found a way to criticize her elder sister-in-law. Who, by the way, was rather unimpressed by the whole incident, in contrast to Asma, who was fuming.

In this case the person giving the gift and the person addressing a message is the same, but the person receiving the gift is different from the addressee of the message. Fatma was not given the *kanga* and was not present



in that part of the communicative interaction “giving a gift”. On the other hand, Asma was not directly involved in the conflict between Fatma and Safia. The identity of the addressee oscillates between the two women and the construction of the message depends on this oscillation and its recognition by the participants. At the same time, it is the “out-of-contextness” of the *kanga*, i.e. the structural disruption of contingencies between speaker, addressee, content and situation, which makes such oscillation and subsequent ambiguity possible in the first place.

Ambiguity in communication, when used strategically, is said to be the result of a social situation of conflict (Bavelas et al. 1990), i.e. of a situation where one wants to say something but at the same time wants to say nothing. For Safia the conflict was caused by Fatma’s critical remark towards Safia’s husband/Fatma’s brother. Because Fatma was older and the sister of her husband, she had a more powerful position in relation to Safia. Safia had the choice between three strategies. First, say nothing, but this would also have meant that she could not defend herself. Second, openly confront Fatma, but this would have been a bad choice, because this would tilt the scale in the economy of power even more unfavorably against her. It is very rude in general to quarrel, and even more so, to quarrel with one’s in-laws. In the worst case she would risk her marriage and her social existence, in the best case she would further weaken her position with the in-law-family and get to be known as a quarrelsome, i.e. flawed person.

Instead Safia chose a way that gave her several possibilities at the same time. First, she could be offensive, and even aggressive, without having to be so openly. Second, she could defend her position, without running the risk of being held accountable. Had someone asked her why she had given this specific *kanga* – which is done only at a high social cost (see the next example) – she could have hedged the implicit accusation by saying that it was the only *kanga* she could afford, or that she didn’t know what it read, etc. And third, she had the last word in the affair, because, what could one answer?

To use the *kanga* interpersonally is broadly considered socially incompetent behavior and comprises aspects of powerlessness. The meta/discursive regimes attached to the interactional uses of the *kanga* do not only pertain to the topics, the main reason for the very existence of this communicative genre, but also to the interpretive activities when “receiving” or supposedly “receiving” a message. It was impressive during fieldwork that almost nobody admitted to using *kanga* in such ways, but everybody had

stories to share, either with themselves in the role of the “receiver” or about the outrageous things that had happened to third parties. Women generally hesitate to confront the assumed “giver” of a message; it is something of a last resort in often very private and personal struggles. By bringing out into the open that one feels like the (unjustified) victim of a slanderous comment comprises a loss of privacy while at the same time appearing in the role of the one who instigates dispute and quarrel, both of which are considered to be significant of low status (Swartz 1991). Because the *kanga* is often used in close yet unequal relationships – “from below”, for example between daughter and mother-in-law, wife and husband – the powerful person, in order to preserve her power, is either rendered unable to respond or forced to run the risk of losing status. Often therefore, at least in the 1990s, and comparing everyday experiences in Mombasa, Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam, I don’t see that much has changed until today, the conjectural character of this practice is very hard to bring to an interpretative close. It thus constitutes a specific practice in the economy of power that renders social hierarchies simultaneously stable and unstable in way characteristic for Swahili society.

### **Kanga’s Relatives**

#### *Taarab*

It is undisputed that there are close connections between the *kanga* and various forms of music: *taarab*, sung Swahili poetry, of course, but also *muziki wa dansi* and other *ngoma*. Their connections are both verbal-aesthetic and interactional.

On the verbal level we can first observe a topical resemblance of their texts: they talk of love and jealousy, of gossip and quarrels, of poverty and wealth in the everyday lives of people. The actual intertextual exchange goes through proverbs and proverbial expressions which are usually present in the chorus of song. The chorus sums up the message and provides for a lever to interpretation. The inscription on the *kanga* very often takes up exactly the lines from the chorus. An early example is the *kanga* *Bembeya mtoto* from the 1950s, which makes reference to a very popular song by the famous Mombasa based singer Ali Mkali. *Bembeya mtoto* has a double meaning of “baby swing” or “the child wants pampering”. The text talks about a child that continuously cries for attention, it wants to be pampered from morning to evening and the

parent is struggling to comply with its wishes. The metaphorical meaning refers to a difficult wife who constantly claims the attention of her husband. The inscription on the *kanga* is taken from the chorus.<sup>11</sup>

Whenever there is a popular song it could regularly appear also as a *kanga*. This was the case, for example with the song *Wape wape vidonge vyao* (Give them, give them their medicine) (Malika 1990; see Graebner 2004), a song which provoked a heated debate along the coast in the mid to late 1990s with many replies and comments, and of course, the respective *kanga*.

Apart from such close intertextual relationships, there are other parallels of *taarab* and *kanga* on the level of interpersonal use. Kelly Askew recounts a number of such interpersonal encounters for *taarab*:

The song being sung when the altercation broke out was entitled “Hasidi”. *Hasidi* translates as “an envious person,” and in this context was used to refer to a woman envious of another’s spouse. [...] While these lines were sung, a woman in the audience rose to go tip Juma Bhalo [the singer]. As she made her way to the front of the hall to give him the money and as she returned to where she had been sitting, she pointedly stared at another woman seated in the audience – directly yet indirectly, verbally (via the poetry) yet silently and nonverbally (through her body language) accusing that woman of coveting her husband, of being a *hasidi*. Having been publicly charged in so powerful a fashion (virtually everyone in the hall had recognized and understood the significance of the act except, of course, myself), the accused was reduced to tears and ran from the room. The significance of the act was self-evident. Social relations were being negotiated by means of musical performance. (Askew 2002: 17)

In a penetrating analysis Nathalie Arnold (2002) shows how *taarab* was performed in what she calls “practice of conjecture” to constitute and maintain political conflict in pre- and post-election Zanzibar in 1995 up to 2001 to establish, through a discourse of shame and shamelessness, the justification of who belongs where: on which political side as much as which place, Pemba, Zanzibar or African mainland respectively. She recounts how she heard the song *Wasohaya wana mji wao* (The shameless have a town of their

<sup>11</sup> This *kanga* is extraordinary in that it contains a realistic representation of a common cradle, a *bemba*. Usually there is no traceable connection between inscription and design, rather this connection is arbitrary.

own) (East African Melody 1994; Arnold 2002: 151) on many diverse occasions, being played from the official Zanzibari radio station *Sauti ya Tanzania Zanzibar*, cited and chanted by marching supporters of the ruling party CCM (*Chama cha Mapinduzi*, Revolutionary Party), or blaring from CCM branch offices. In playing the song, a distinction was created between the followers of the ruling party and the opposition, and by reference to the notion of town, between people from Zanzibar and people from Pemba. While not so obvious for the *kanga*, much of *taarab* as a cultural practice is connected to dialogue (*majibizano*) and competition (*malumbano*), and unsurprisingly, an answer to the song was composed: *Wasohaya unaishi nao* (The shameless, you live amongst them) (Arnold 2000:155ff). This song, however, was not played on air and not performed publicly by a *taarab* troupe but was distributed through individual cassettes, allusive humming or citing of lines of the song etc. Finally, she observed a line of the song printed on a flyer and glued to the outside of a wall of a house in Zanzibar town: “We have a town of our own, and it is Zanzibar!” (ibidem: 158). Beyond its content, she took the existence of the flyer as a comment about the conditions produced by a repressive political atmosphere under which a song could not be publicly performed (ibidem).

In noticing that “poetry in Zanzibar is deeply implicated in events that have been explicitly violent, not as a discursive form aimed at curbing violence, but as a praxis that is intimately linked to, and in some ways constitutive of, violent action” (ibidem: 142), she confirms what I see as “practice”: acts of speech constitute a horizon of meaning in the sense of a typical and socially recognizable physical expression which defines and is defined by a specific relationship between meaning, object and action characteristic for Swahili society.

### *Mass media*

*Kanga* inscriptions may also draw on other domains of popular culture, for instance television. I want to mention the Brazilian soap opera *Te quiero*, in the English synchrone version *No one but you* which appeared as a *kanga* as well (illustration 6). This *kanga* was very popular around 1993. It is reminiscent of an earlier *kanga* from about 1986 (Rivatex) *Wewe ni wangu tu*, which was reprinted in about 1993. The same soap featured the main male character Antonio. A *kanga* came out by the name of *Mume ni Antonio*.

This *kanga* resembles other *kanga* with inscriptions such as *Mume ni wa Dubai*, *Mume ni wa Arabuni* which were popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s (cf. Fuglesang 1994). While, according to Minou Fuglesang, young girls expressed their ideal of a future husband with these *kanga*, *Mume ni Antonio* was a real scare and it was said that it had lead to a quite a number of serious marital problems, even to divorces. What we see here is that the *kanga* provides for the possibility to accommodate topical currents into the already existing thematic domains.



**Illustration 6:** No one but you. Bombay/Kenya 1993. Photo R. M. Beck.

This complex of “No one but you” seems to have inspired a *taarab* song by Malika, but I have no proof of this. In any case we find here not only a two-way intertextual relationship between popular cultural mass productions, but a network of citation practices which are fed from numerous sources.

While the previous examples either are quite well documented in the literature or their perception has been, in part, prepared through recent development in media anthropology, the following examples seem to have gone quite unnoticed. I have taken as significant marker the similarity of the inscription on the object to those from the *kanga-taarab* complex. Also, all these objects are used in everyday life.

### *Household items*

This first group contains mainly woven items: mats (*mikeka*), fans (*pepeo*), trays for sifting grain (*teo*), and food lids (*makawa*), which are also often put up on walls or used in the household: *Najitahidi kwa wema ibaki rehem*a (I try in good intention for compassion to remain) (ill. 7), *Tupendane wambea waulizane* (Let's love each other and let the gossips wonder) (ill. 8). Intertextual relationships are explicit in the case of *Utamaliza visigino kwa safari za umbea* (You will finish your heels on your gossip tours) that shows a painted canvas with an inscription which was also popular as *kanga* in the late 1994. Such decorated items may be bought at the market or ordered from an artist. The texts usually are carefully chosen and are comments on an interpersonal situation. This is exemplified by a food lid in the comic *Kula kama vinalika* (Eat if they are eatable, Mpangalla & Mhilu 1994: 11-15) that is part of the climax of the story. The food lid reads *funua ule* – “open and eat” and brings a conflict between husband and wife over marital relationships, polygamy and an ensuing uneven distribution of the man's resources into to the open. The comic ends with a huge fight and public resolution of the problem. In order to understand the comic knowledge about “speaking objects” as practice is essential.



**Illustration 7:** *Najitahidi kwa wema ibaki rehem*a. Mombasa 1993. Photo R. M. Beck.



**Illustration 8:** *Tupendane wambea waulizane*. Mombasa 1996. Photo R. M. Beck.

### *Matatu and bus*

Another group of objects on which we find similar inscriptions, are cars: buses and *matatus*. Usually such vehicles have different kinds of writings on them: on the front sill the name of the *matatu*, a kind of trademark or brand, such as “Camel” or “Desert Storm” (ill. 9) or “Bayern München”, “Princess”, “Lufthansa”, “Captain”, “Bombastic” (ill. 11, a reference to the hit *Mr. Bombastic*). This name may be repeated on the rear windscreen, where paintings or other general comments can be found as well (ill. 10). These names often constitute commentaries on political events, contribute to popular culture or are chosen for the sake of individual preferences.



**Illustration 9:** *Desert Storm*. Mombasa 1994. Photo R. M. Beck.



**Illustration 10:** Sweet Heart (rear), Nawapenda (I love them) (mudguards). Mombasa 2009. Photo R. M. Beck.

**Illustration 11:** Bombastic (rear); Kero (Anger) (below number plate). Mombasa 1996. Photo R. M. Beck.

Texts that draw on the proverb practice of the “speaking object” systematically appears in the space between registration plate and rear bumper, or on big buses and trucks on its mudguards: *Kero* (Annoyance) (ill. 11), *Rungu la mahasidi* (The club [hitting stick] of the envious) (ill. 12), *Kuku aruki* (A chicken doesn’t fly) (ill. 13).



**Illustration 12:** Easter Special (rear); Rungu la mahasidi (Bludgeon of the envious) (below number plate). Mombasa 1996. Photo R. M. Beck.

**Illustration 13:** Kuku aruki (A chicken doesn’t fly). Mombasa 1996. Photo R. M. Beck



*Jino moja mswaki wa nini?* (One tooth, what [do you need] a toothbrush for?) (ill. 14) illustrates how these texts are used in interpersonal communication. As I was told by the driver,<sup>12</sup> it was used as a kind of teasing among two competing bus companies: A rival Tanzanian bus company consisted of but *one* bus – so if you have only one bus, what do you need a bus company for?! Such joking and commenting, sometimes with more bitter or confrontative meanings takes place between drivers, sometimes also between drivers and the bus owners, or bus owners comment into their social contexts. Not much is known about these dynamics, my own rest on casual observation and impromptu questioning over the past 20 years.



**Illustration 14:** *Jino Moja Mswaki wa nini?* (One tooth, what [do you need] the toothbrush for?). Mombasa 1996. Photo R. M. Beck.

In 2004 the Kenyan Ministry of Transport passed a law to increase the security and transparency of private-public transportation. It contained a ban on loud music and bright embellishments. Instead, *matatus* had to paint a strip along their sides and put a placard in their window which indicated their route (cf. Mutongi 2006). Unsurprisingly the practice of giving names to *matatus*, and in particular also the writing of proverbial, allusive texts below the number

<sup>12</sup> During a field research in April - June 1996, Mombasa.

plates, soon resurfaced (see illustration 10). Also, the rickshaw-taxis on Mombasa Island, *tuk-tuks*, which have become very popular in the past ten years, can often be seen to have painted such inscriptions either on the inside or even on its rear plastic coat. It is relevant to notice here, that this kind of inscription which is part of the practice of speaking with objects is not limited to Mombasa. While one does only rarely see them in Nairobi, they are prominent on – or rather in – *bajajs* in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. Recently they have also appeared sometimes on the mudguards of *boda-boda* motorcycles.

### *Walls*

Then there are, amongst many kinds of graffiti, also those with personal messages on windowsills and shutters. These texts are proverbial, such as *Hapendwi mtu apewae* (A person given [something] is not liked), *Poison*, *kikulacho*, which is a citation of the proverb *Kikulacho ki nguoni mwako* (What eats you is in your clothing) (Linnebuhr 1994: 37). This kind of texts also comments at the side pole of the entrance of a clothes-shop in Mwembekuku, Mombasa: *Sianzi mimi* (I don't start) (ill. 15). This is a remark directed toward a rivaling shop owner with whom there had been conflicts over many years.<sup>13</sup>



**Illustration 15:** *Sianzi mimi; duka la lessu na kikoyi* (I don't start; shop of *leso* and *kikoi* ). Mwembekuku, Mombasa 1996. Photo R. M. Beck

<sup>13</sup> I realized this during a field stay in 1996, where I learned that this shop owner and another one, both with whom I had contact, mentioned personal conflicts with the other.

In 1994 there existed a restaurant in Likoni, i.e. in a suburban neighborhood south of Mombasa, with the name *Sisi kwa sisi inn* (We Among Us Inn). This is also the name of a *kofia*, a men’s embroidered cap, and my (unpublished) collection of about 2500 inscriptions covering approximately 100 years also contains the inscription.

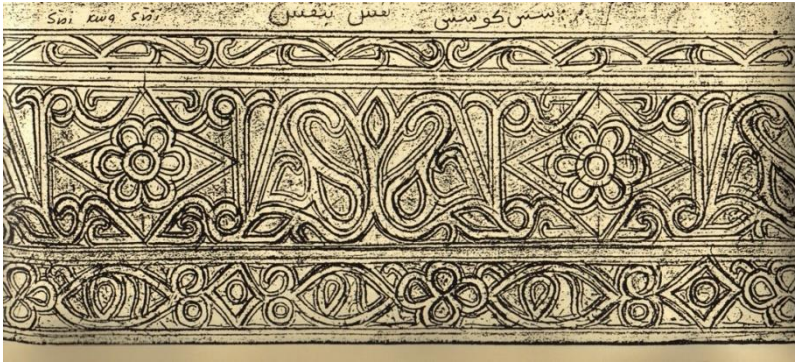


**Illustration 16:** Stitching pattern for the *kofia Sisi kwa sisi* (we [remain] amongst us). Anonymous, copy in possession of the author.

The intertextual connection of graffiti to *taarab* has been noticed in the context of Nathalie Arnold’s analysis of the politics of *taarab* and poetry in contemporary Pemba and Zanzibar which she interpreted as the result of the unequal distribution of – political – power (Arnold 2002: 158). In my experience all these objects are a result of the unequal distribution of power and can be considered to constitute a specific kind of “weapons of the weak” (Scott 1985).

### *Kofia*

Passing on the streets of Mombasa, a number of different materials, designs, and styles of men’s caps, *kofia*, can be observed. They visibly constitute hierarchies and positions among men: Bohora men wear different *kofias* from some Hadhrami and Indian Muslim communities, the former made of white cotton with finely striped golden embroideries, the latter are finely crocheted thin white skull-caps. Young men may wear *kofias* made from a cheap, stiff blue or black material, embroidered with colorful ornaments and patterns. Older men prefer white caps with fine eyelet

embroideries in different styles and ornaments. Both different styles and ornaments are given names. Zanzibar-style *kofias* differ from Lamu-style ones in their colors and types of ornaments. Zanzibar-style *kofias* are reminiscent of Omani caps with spacious ornaments in colors from black through dark blue, brown to light yellow. They are the most popular today. The finest caps, it is said, are those of Lamu. They are made of an expensive, strong cotton and daintily embroidered with a monochromous silken thread. *Kofia* constitute one of the few possibilities for men to visibly express social differentiation. Especially the Lamu-style *kofia* has names, some of which resemble the inscriptions on the *kanga*, such as *Mpende akupendao* (Love the one who loves you), *Ua la moyo* (Flower of the heart), *Wasitara hasumbuwa* (The one protected by God cannot be bothered) (see also Muombwa 1995).

The Lamu-style *kofia* differs from the *kanga* in that its reduced coloring contrasts with the brightness and patterns of the *kanga*. The patterns and motifs on the caps remain symbolic and ornamental, reminiscent of calligraphic ornamentation. They rarely make reference to the typical inventory of pattern and motifs found on the *kanga*. Yet the most important difference is that the names are not represented in writing. The potential interpersonal messages remain much more covert. Which is not surprising, as men generally are not inclined to this kind of socially dubious behavior which carries with it the stigma of powerlessness and low social status.

### **Urban Muslim society of the coast**

The society which emerged at the fringes of both Indian Ocean and African Mainland since the late first millennium AD was urban, cosmopolitan, mercantile, highly stratified, multi-ethnic, situated on the chain of islands just off the shore along the coast. Local interpretations of Islam and what it meant to be a Muslim supported existing social hierarchies from the beginning (cf. Strobel 1979; El Zein 1974). In the past 100 years, this society has been shaped by the economic and social effects of colonialism and independence. Of particular impact were the change of the Trans-Indian-Ocean-trade from Arabic to British domination and the subsequent loss of access to existing trade and finance networks (Biermann 1993, Sheriff 1987), and a little later, with the effective abolition of slavery in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a profound transformation of labor relations with a loss of access to labor and an increase

of work migration to the coast (Cooper 1980, 1987). Today we find a society which has been and continues to be economically, socially and culturally marginalized since Independence, despite repeated efforts at being included into national politics. This is in particular true for the Kenyan coastal Swahili (eg. Kresse 2008, 2009). Being a Muslim today has increased in importance as formative for coastal identity.

With regard “*kanga & co*” the local as well as scholarly recourse to the debate about the practice of Islam which is divided into a domain of “*dini*” (religion, religious practice) and “*mila*” (tradition, customary practice) seems to play a major role. *Dini* is the term accorded to a very prestigious and hegemonial discourse about “religious practice” which is closely connected to Islamic orthodoxy (or the local interpretations thereof) and with this to “being Arab”. *Dini* connotes a number of other facets: the public, normative power, high status, but also male gender, patrician background, and (Islamic) education. *Dini* is manifest in public speech at political or religious occasions, politics, religious practice, and in the influence of “civilized”, freeborn and old men – the *waungwana*. *Mila* which can be translated as “tradition” or “custom”, is a much less prestigious but nevertheless very influential domain, that of the “minor traditions”: It connotes terms such as the private domain, submission, low status, sexuality, femininity and slave respectively African descent. Part of this domain are various non-Islamic or unorthodox practices such as dance-, possession- or initiation associations (cf. Strobel 1979; Middleton 1992: 162-164).

It has been frequently pointed out that this distinction is too simple, and reductionist, and of course the structuralist background is evident. However, this distinction can be understood to form two competing discourses which through their formulation of norms and values provide patterns and guidance for individual action. In practice these norms and values are adapted situatively and transformed. In other words, through the use of “*kanga & co*” interactants situate themselves within the domains of *mila* and *dini* – usually in both at the same time – and thus negotiate their scope and influence on an individual and social level. For example, individual behavior as measured by the adherence to the norms and values as formulated by *dini* is decisive for an individual’s standing in his or her community (Middleton 1992: 90, Swartz 1991: 170). With “*kanga & co*” these negotiations have been given material form; a form which always contains elements of *dini* and *mila*. “*Kanga & co*” can be understood as a resource of elements which allow for

an individual positioning within Swahili society but because the different objects refer in different ways to *dini* and *mila*, and because this changes through time, we are presented with an ambiguity and an oscillation of meaning which is difficult to grapple with on a theoretical level.

*Dress – kinds of dress and color*

In their emancipation around 1900 slaves used especially dress as an instrument of integration into Swahili society, albeit at its bottom (Fair 2001). The *kanga*, which is usually worn in pairs, allowed former slaves to conform to dominant dress codes as prescribed by Islam, namely to cover themselves to the exception of face, hands and feet. However, their occupations as domestic helps or in the fields and plantations, allowed them also for more freedom of movement. They displayed their “new” status also on the street, represented in the colorful *kanga*. Noble or freeborn women at those times were still severely secluded and only went out onto the street covered by a tent (*shiraa*). This difference has its reverberations until today. A woman who perceives herself and wants to be perceived by others as of high status would always wear a black, monochrome veil, even in the more homogeneous neighborhoods such as Old Town Mombasa, while younger women, or women with less affiliations to the hegemonial ideology of *dini* would not mind being seen clad in *kangas* in the streets of Mombasa. The connection of high status and modest colors versus low status and bright colors accords to the two discourses. In short, I associate *dini* with simplicity and *mila* with patterns and motifs, ornaments and embellishments.

The *kofia*, the men’s cap, fits very well into this pattern. There are many kinds of it, from the relatively reasonably priced colorful *kofia* which is mostly worn by young men, and the most expensive *Lamu kofia* which every man with a good social standing within the Swahili community would pride himself to own. However, in terms of *mila* and *dini*, the monochrome embroidery of the *Lamu kofia* is a contradiction in terms.

The *kanga*, although it belongs to *mila* on the grounds of its gendered allocation as a predominantly female dress, also contains elements of *dini*. The floral motifs and ornamental designs accord to Islamic iconoclasm: *dini*. However, there are some motifs, which point to a *mila*-background: Motifs from the deck of cards, an occupation at those times of soldiers and other non-patrician groups (Schadeberg 1991: 113), and symbols from local flora

which played a role in female or rural life,<sup>14</sup> for example the aphrodisiac scented flower *kilua*, a kind of Ylang-Ylang.

Another arena where *dini* and *mila* are “discussed” is played out in the changing proportion of realistic representation of objects, motifs of Western modernity, as compared to the floral and ornamental patterns.

### *Linguistic ideologies*

Local linguistic ideologies are closely connected to the discourse of *dini* (Strobel 1979, Beck 2000, 2001) and more precisely to the concept of *uungwana*. A *mwungwana* values highly the notions of honour (*heshima*, *fakhri*) and privacy (*sitara*). However, it is more important to behave as a *mwungwana* and live according to the norms than actually be able to prove an appropriate pedigree (Middleton 1992: 90). Noble behavior may be generally described as *upole* (gentleness) as an expression of being civilized. Speech plays an important role in the maintenance of *uungwana* (the state of being a *mwungwana*): it is restrained speech – or silence – that gives proof of one’s aloofness and power and protects one’s honor and privacy best (Hirsch 1998: 40). Further, restrained speech does not only imply low voice and taciturnity, but also discretion and speaking in metaphors (Fuglesang 1994: 26, Shariff 1988: 99-100).

Low social esteem and thus the affiliation with the discourse of *mila* finds reflection in devalued manners of speech: a raised voice is associated with sailors (El Zein 1974: 66), with quarreling women. To say it pointedly, women and slaves represent the negative aspects of speaking:

The beliefs about speech [...] suggest that the prototype devalued speaker in Swahili culture is a woman, specifically a woman who tells tales. [...] Emphasis on the trivial and potentially fictional quality of women's speech merges with emphasis on its dangerous and disruptive qualities to create the impression that women's speech is suspect, not to be counted on, and to be suppressed when it gets too close home, literally. (Hirsch 1998: 67)

<sup>14</sup> Agriculture was either slave’s work or of groups only loosely connected to the urban culture of the Swahili, i.e. “country towns”. These are associated with *mila* (Middleton 1992, 164).

Speech in general is seen as problematic because it implies gossip and nosiness, insult and slander, worse are only fighting and quarreling. Inappropriate speech behavior is fearfully avoided because it implies loss of privacy, loss of social position and consequently powerlessness (Swartz 1991: 171, Hirsch 1998: 64ff). Powerlessness in turn is associated with badtalk which includes gossip and quarrels, etc., and badtalk again especially with young people and women (cf. also Swartz 1988-1989).

Generally the pressure to conform to socially adequate communicative behavior is high, and the preferred choice is to remain silent, as Saida Yahya-Othman (1997) in her article on the *kanga* points out:

Silence and forbearance on her [the woman's] part is assumed to maintain her dignity and respect within the community. She is thus placed in a powerless situation, not only in terms of her action but also in terms of what she can say. Composure will win her praise from most other women in the community; fights in public will invite censure and blame, quite apart from the possibility of sanctions from her husband as well. (Yahya-Othman 1997: 145)

“*Kanga & co*” negotiate the preference to remain silent and the intention to still “say” something in that they use writing – this applies to the *kanga* itself, to the woven objects, the buses and *matatus*, graffiti on walls and, of course the *kofia*. At the same time they get back their ability to express themselves without violating neither inhibitions nor ideals of speech. “*Kanga & co*” therefore provide for a kind of middle ground on which the varying influences of local interpretations of Islam are negotiated and defined as a dispute about social stratification and identity.

## Conclusion

Visual and verbal aspects of Swahili expressive culture can be understood to materialize in an extensive network of representation and interpersonal use, constituting an example of “speaking objects”. The objects presented here link verbal, visual and material expression and in doing so transcend received boundaries between the verbal, the visual and the material. Yet in blurring these boundaries they can be seen to play on the visibility of the verbal and verballity of the visual as well as their materialities. And while doing so, they also play the margins of the interpersonally possible, of that



which holds together society or makes it fall apart. While “kanga & co” very obviously contain aspects of aesthetic pleasure and play, it is also obvious that it is a very serious means to make sense of incommensurabilities, of disjuncture and disorientation in a fast changing society. “Kanga & co” thus are a material form and resource for a social practice of the individual positioning of people negotiating how to have and keep control and make sense of their lives in a heterogeneous context.

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**STORIA E CULTURA**

***HISTORY AND CULTURE***



LES *VILINGE* OU CONFRERIES TRADITIONNELLES DANS LA REGION SUD DE  
L'ILE DE ZANZIBAR A LA FIN DU 20<sup>EME</sup> SIECLE

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Au siècle dernier, lors des initiations à visée thérapeutique organisées par les confréries traditionnelles (*vilinge*, sing. *kilinge*)<sup>1</sup> de la région sud de l'île de Zanzibar, récits épiques et légendes faisaient l'objet de spectacles participatifs où se mêlaient danses, chansons et mimes.

L'initiation consistait à revivre une épopée dont l'épilogue serait la naissance d'un héros qui, à son tour, entrerait en scène dans les spectacles ultérieurs. Elle était également un acte de parole, une promesse, un pacte destiné à rétablir équilibre, paix et sérénité. A travers un drame, dans le corps de la femme d'ordinaire soumise et muette, s'incarnait un héros tout puissant, sorte de demi-dieu qui allait changer son destin. En acceptant d'abriter ces créatures dans l'errance, elle accédait à un monde de fraternité, le *kilinge* au sein duquel une nouvelle parenté se superposait à celle du quotidien pour lui offrir dignité et respect.

Pour comprendre et apprécier ces spectacles aujourd'hui pratiquement disparus, nous reviendrons sur le contexte dans lequel les textes présentés ici furent recueillis, sur la typologie des créatures démoniaques à la fin du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle dans cette région rurale et, avant d'analyser les thèmes mis en scène dans une initiation,<sup>2</sup> nous nous arrêterons sur quelques héros de cette littérature du vivant et de l'éphémère.

<sup>1</sup> Pour une interprétation plus ancienne voir C. Saclex (1939: 377). Le terme de *kilinge* (vi-) est inconnu dans la ville de Zanzibar mais on le retrouve chez les Zaramo où, selon M. L. Swantz (1970: 201) il se rapporte au culte des ancêtres sans se superposer totalement à la parenté.

<sup>2</sup> Dans la région sud de l'île d'Unguja on parle de *mdalanga* (mi-). Ce terme, d'origine yao (Hetherwick 1889: 193), désigne une danse déjà tombée en désuétude à la fin du 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle.



## Le pays de Kae et ses environs

A la pointe sud de l'île d'Unguja, laquelle constitue avec Pemba l'archipel de Zanzibar, se trouve le pays de Kae, connu par les étrangers sous le nom de Makunduchi. Dans une zone qui va de Bwejuu au nord à Mtende à l'extrême sud, on observe une unité économique, culturelle et linguistique.

Cette région où le giroflier ne pousse pas, resta sous l'administration du Mwinyi Mkuu, le souverain local, jusqu'en 1870.

Dans toute la province on parle différentes variétés de kikae, un dialecte que les citadins ne comprennent pas et qui est classé parmi les dialectes swahili du sud (Racine 2002).

Les intermariages sont fréquents d'un village à l'autre et les références culturelles communes. Les *vilinge* ou confréries traditionnelles en font partie. Elles sont spécialisées dans le traitement des troubles qui menacent l'avenir des lignages (*koo*). C'est ainsi qu'un couple affecté par le décès d'un grand nombre d'enfants, l'homme ou la femme dont la sexualité est perturbée par les visites nocturnes d'esprits taquins, se mettent-ils en quête du *kilinge* qui saura traiter leur problème. A la fin du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle, certains fonctionnaient comme des dispensaires, avec des jours de réception.

A cette époque, la région ne bénéficiait pas encore de l'électricité. Jambiani était un village de pêcheurs tout de sable et de blanc tandis que Kae, aux chemins rouges, était un bourg habité uniquement de paysans. Aucun hôtel n'avait encore entamé les longues plages paisibles consacrées à la pêche et à la fabrication de la corde à partir de la bogue de la noix de coco.

Dans toute la région, les villages sont constitués d'une juxtaposition de quartiers (*viambo*, sing. *kiambo*) regroupant les membres d'un même lignage. Chaque *kiambo* affirmait alors avoir son propre *kilinge*.

## L'adversité en personnes

Durant la dernière décennie du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle, l'île de Zanzibar était coupée du monde et les habitants de la région sud vivaient en semi autarcie,<sup>3</sup> dépendant des travaux des champs et de la solidarité familiale. Chacun se savait

<sup>3</sup> Les liaisons maritimes et aériennes avec Dar es-Salaam, Tanga et Pemba étaient rares et la route de la ville de Zanzibar vers le sud réduite à l'état de piste rendait cette région pratiquement inaccessible.

vulnérable devant les caprices de la nature qui n'épargnait ni les récoltes, ni les hommes.

Dans un monde où l'individu ne se pensait que dans le groupe, la médecine était organisée en quatre secteurs complémentaires visant à protéger aussi bien le pays que ses habitants comme le résume le tableau ci-dessous.

**Tableau n°1:** Les structures de la médecine traditionnelle dans le pays de Kae<sup>4</sup>

|               | Mesures prophylactiques                                      | Mesures thérapeutiques                               |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Les habitants | Rites de naissance<br>Initiations pubertaires<br>Funérailles | <i>Midalanga</i> au sein des<br><i>vilinge</i>       |
| Le pays       | Mwaka kogwa                                                  | <i>Shomoo</i> ou purification du<br>sol <sup>5</sup> |

Les *midalanga* – appelés *ngoma za kupungwa* dans le reste du monde swahili ou tambours d'affliction dans la région des Grands lacs<sup>6</sup> – ne constituent donc qu'une partie de la médecine traditionnelle de cette région. Ils sont spécialisés dans le traitement des maux qui affectent le lignage par le biais de l'un de ses membres, généralement des femmes. Or le monde des créatures désincarnées est vaste et la distinction principale se fait entre possesseurs et non possesseurs. Soulignons cependant que cette frontière est floue et que la distinction entre les deux dépend bien souvent de l'informateur et de son âge. Cette situation résulte vraisemblablement d'un effritement des catégories par face à un Islam citadin de moins en moins tolérant. Les témoignages du 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle montrent que les termes qui font référence aux étapes du voyage de l'âme (autrefois appelée *kivuli* "ombre") d'un défunt sont tombés dans l'oubli ou se sont superposés. De nos jours, le terme *mzimu* renvoie plus souvent à un lieu de culte qu'à un ancêtre. D'un point de vue religieux, le lien entre *mizimu* et *midalanga* s'est distendu (Racine 1995, 1998) même si les deux sont toujours reliés aux lignages.

Quelques précisions sur ces différentes catégories d'esprits sont donc nécessaires pour comprendre le périmètre d'intervention des *vilinge* et interpréter les textes donnés en annexe.

<sup>4</sup> Sur le culte des *mizimu* voir O. Racine (1995, 1998, 2000, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Voir O. Racine (1992).

<sup>6</sup> Allusion à V. Turner (1972).

*Les esprits non possesseurs*

Ils sont des trois sortes:

- a) Espiègles, méchants, ironiques, les *vibwengo* ou “gnomes” vivent dans les herbes, sous les pierres en bordure de mer, dans des excavations auprès des falaises.<sup>7</sup> Petits mais dotés d’une force herculéenne, ils rôdent en fin de journée et tout en ricanant peuvent vous mettre à terre d’une simple chiquenaude. On raconte à Kae, qu’un jour, au crépuscule, deux amis qui rentraient de la plage furent assénés de coups sur la tête sans voir personne. Les auteurs de cette mauvaise plaisanterie ne pouvaient être que des *vibwengo*.<sup>8</sup>
- b) Le terme *mzuka* ou “apparition” est rarement cité. Construit sur la même base que le verbe *-zuka* “sortir de terre” qui est lui-même le dissociatif de *-zika* “enterrer”, il est apparenté à *kizuka* qui désigne une veuve durant la période de réclusion (*uzuka*) (Racine 2013).<sup>9</sup>
- c) Les *mizimu* (sing. *mzimu*) sont les esprits des ancêtres fondateurs des lignages (Racine 1995, 1998, 2013).

*Les esprits possesseurs*

Ils sont de trois sortes:

- a) Les esprits incurables qui comprennent:

- Les *wanyama*, “bêtes” et les *wadudu* “bestioles” qui provoquent des maladies infantiles, la polio<sup>10</sup> et l’épilepsie.<sup>11</sup> Les seuls praticiens à pouvoir éventuellement les traiter sont les *waganga* ou médecins traditionnels.
- Les *majini*, “génies” aussi appelés *pepo*, de la même racine que *upepo* “vent”, forme sous laquelle ils se manifestent.

<sup>7</sup> Sefu Msheba, le 13.09.1995. Selon C. Sacleux (1939: 350), P. Caplan (1975: 112) et H. Koritschoner (1936: 211, 218), ce sont des esprits marins. Ce dernier précise qu’ils provoquent des douleurs aux yeux et des céphalées.

<sup>8</sup> Papao, le 02.08.1995.

<sup>9</sup> Selon M.L. Swantz (1970: 183) chez les Zaramo ce terme s’applique aux esprits traités par les *vilinge*.

<sup>10</sup> Tatu Makame, le 13.09.1995.

<sup>11</sup> Sefu Msheba, le 13.09.1995.

*Si rahisi kumwona. Wewe utaona tufani tu, yaani upepo mkubwa sana unakuja tu hahahaha. Tena vitu vinazunguruka hivi huuu. Pale ndo unaambiwa yule jini. Sasa wenye macho yao, wanaokuwa na elimu, wanamwona. Na wenyewe wanakuambia kwamba ana vichwa saba. Enh kichwa kuanzia kimoja mpaka saba. Ndo wanakuambia ndo jini. Na jini anaingia pahala padogo sana kwa sababu hata kwenye chupa humo unaweza ukamkunja. Ukamkunja ukamtia kwenye chupa. Ukaziba uko kwa kumfuga na ukamweza. Na ulaji wake damu ya binadamu.<sup>12</sup>*

Ils sont en élevés par des sorciers (*wachawi*) dans le but de nuire. Aucun remède ne peut en venir à bout. La victime est condamnée à se soumettre à sa volonté.<sup>13</sup>

*Unaweza ukawa na jini ukampiga vita, lakini kwa njia ngumu sana kwa sababu umtege nini? Akija, akinasa, unamkata. Lakini lazima umwue kwa panga. Sio kisu wala mundu, lazima liwe panga na panga lenyewe liwe kali kwa sababu vichwa vyake kama nilivyotamka ni kama saba. Huyu ndo jini.<sup>14</sup>*

Ils sont généralement mêlés aux affaires d'adultère. Ils relèvent de deux catégories:

- Les *rohani*, très pieux qui rôdent dans les mosquées. Pour les invoquer il suffit d'être en état de pureté rituelle et de lire le Coran. Mais certains à Kae, considèrent ces récits comme des balivernes de citadins.

<sup>12</sup> Papao, le 02.08.1995. "Ce n'est pas facile de le voir. Toi tu ne verras qu'un typhon, c'est-à-dire un vent violent qui arrive wou wou wou. Tout tourbillonne wou. C'est alors qu'on te dit que c'est un génie. Ceux qui ont des yeux, ceux qui savent, ils le voient. Ils te disent qu'il a sept têtes. Oui des têtes, de une à sept. Voilà comment ils décrivent le génie. Et un génie il entre dans des endroits minuscules, parce que même à l'intérieur d'une bouteille tu peux le plier. Si tu le plies, tu le mets dans une bouteille, tu bouches et tu le dresses, si tu y arrives. Sa nourriture c'est le sang humain."

<sup>13</sup> Maryam Fadhil Pandu, le 23.05.1990; Papao, le 02.08.1995; Sefu Msheba, le 13.09.1995.

<sup>14</sup> Papao, le 02.08.1995. "Et si tu as un génie et que tu veux lui faire la guerre, ce sera très difficile. En effet comment le piéger? S'il vient, si tu le pièges, tu le coupes [en morceaux] car il faut absolument que tu le tues avec un coupe-coupe. Pas avec une machette ni avec un couteau, il faut que ce soit un coupe-coupe et que le coupe-coupe lui-même soit bien tranchant parce que, comme je l'ai dit, le génie il a sept têtes. Voilà ce qu'est un génie."

- Les *subiani* sont tout le contraire. Modérément religieux, ils vivent dans les latrines et les endroits sales et s'en prennent à tout individu en état d'impureté: aux femmes qui, en période de menstrues, se seraient montrées négligentes dans leur hygiène et aux hommes qui ne se seraient pas lavés rituellement après avoir eu des rapports sexuels.
- b) Les esprits traités par les praticiens (*waganga*) sont surtout les *wazuu* (sing *mzuu*), des petits esprits nuisibles utilisés par les sorciers (*wachawi*)<sup>15</sup> qui provoquent des maladies intestinales (Horner 1869).
- c) Les esprits traités par les *vilinge* que l'on appelle indistinctement *mashetani* "démons" ou *pepo* "esprits". Décrits comme polymorphes, ils prennent l'aspect du vent ou d'un insecte. On les croise la nuit en chemin, dans les maisons abandonnées ou dans les toilettes. Mais on peut aussi en hériter. D'une jalousie malade, ils provoquent maladies, querelles de famille, divorces et soucis d'argent. Mais si l'objet de leur désir accepte de vivre avec eux, leurs méfaits se transforment en protection.<sup>16</sup> L'expérience de Mzee Thabit, qui en vint à souffrir d'impuissance et mourut, est donnée en récit dans l'annexe 3.

La société des *mashetani* ou *pepo* est le miroir de celle des hommes. Ils tiennent leur identité de leur sexe, de leur position dans la parenté et de leur fonction sociale avec une prédilection pour les métiers où la hiérarchie se traduit par un uniforme (voir les photos en infra). Ils se définissent aussi par leur culture (Arabe, Européen, Mnyamwezi, Mmakonde etc.) visible dans les tenues vestimentaires et des goûts culinaires (voir infra et annexes 1 et 2).

<sup>15</sup> Haji Vuai Mdachi, le 03.12.1989; Maryam Fadhi Pandu, le 23.05.1991; C. Sacleux (1939: 99, *vizuu*); Usi Macho (Jambiani, le 04.03.1990) les compare aux *vibwengo*. Dans son roman *Mzimu wa watu wa Kale* (1974: 22-25), Mohamed S. Abdallah affirme que ce sont des habitants des *mizimu*.

<sup>16</sup> Haji Vuai Mdachi, le 03.12.1989; Papao, le 02.08. 1995. Le sens de ce terme n'est pas le même selon les époques, les régions et les individus. Voir R. Skene (1917: 420), G. Dale (1920: 26, 34), H. Koritschoner (1936 : 211), S.S. bin Omar (1940: 24-25) et J.S. Trimmingham (1964: 114), W.H. Ingrams, (1967: 435). L. Gile (1987: 240). Selon R. F. Gray (1969: 174, 175) chez les Segeju ils ne sont pas très différents des *mizimu*. D'après M. L. Swantz (1970: 182, 193, 328) chez les Zaramo, le terme *shetani* désigne des esprits des morts qui ne sont pas devenus des *mizimu*, qui n'ont pas été enterrés selon les rites adéquates et qui par conséquent affectent les personnes de leurs lignages. A Mafia les *mashetani* sont des esprits terrestres vivant dans la brousse (Caplan 1975: 100).

### ***Mdalanga: légendes et récits mis en scène***

L'analyse du déroulement d'un *mdalanga* montrent que ces cérémonies ne sont pas que des cures. Ce sont également des spectacles durant lesquels des légendes connues de tous sont mises en scène.

*Portrait des esprits éponymes de quelques vilinge de Makunduchi de la fin du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle*

A la fin du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle, on comptait à Kae près d'un *kilinge* par quartier. Au cours des entretiens qui y furent réalisés, les récits de parcours révélèrent tout un monde imaginaire, constitué de valeureux guerriers venus s'incarner dans les initiées comme des personnages de fiction viennent habiter un acteur. Voici quelques exemples de ce qu'en disent leurs hôtes.

a) Kizunguso était un redoutable guerrier arabe. Il tirait son nom de celui d'un grand manguier situé dans le quartier de Mtongani, Kajengwa.<sup>17</sup>

b) Le *kilinge* de *Vunja t'hungu*<sup>18</sup> "Brise calebasse", à Kishunga Mbuzi, au centre de Kae, n'était plus très actif lors de l'enquête mais il avait la particularité d'avoir pour esprit le *jimwi* ou "ogre" connu à travers toute la littérature swahili. Les habitants de Makunduchi affirment que les *majimwi* sont les premiers habitants de la région. Ils vivaient de cueillette et de chasse, ne portaient pas de vêtement et étaient "mauvais". Dans les cérémonies d'initiation ils sont représentés par une jupe de paille.<sup>19</sup> A Bungi, c'est-à-dire dans le *kilinge* de Kishunga Mbuzi, on le décrit comme un glouton obèse, friand de fruits et parlant du nez<sup>20</sup> d'une voix si grave qu'elle faisait trembler le sol. C'est la raison pour laquelle ses adeptes en faisaient autant lors des cérémonies.<sup>21</sup> La légende dit qu'un jour, des parents demandèrent à leur enfant de se rendre auprès d'un très grand arbre afin de le protéger de la voracité de Babu Jimwi. "Il va se gaver. Jimwi est un animal. Il se gava de fruits et de légumes: des potirons, des concombres, des pastèques. Quand il arrivera, chasse-le.

<sup>17</sup> Asha Sose, le 08.08.1992, Nchono, le 14.08.1992.

<sup>18</sup> *Tungu* (ma-) est une grande calebasse dans laquelle on conserve le lait ou le vin de palme (Sacleux1939: 914).

<sup>19</sup> Ali Madai, le 24.08.1992.

<sup>20</sup> Ce qui est aussi une caractéristique des Wamavua les esprits liés au *mzimu* de Kae Kuu (Racine 1995, 1998).

<sup>21</sup> Papao, le 28.05.1995.

Dis-lui qu'on l'appelle ailleurs pour aller manger des potirons", lui dirent-ils. Lorsque Babu Jimwi arriva et voulu cueillir une fleur, l'enfant se mit à chanter:

*Jimwi njoo we*  
*Njoo ulaya maboga*  
*Babu Jimwi njoo we*

Jimwi viens  
 Viens manger des potirons  
 Babu Jimwi viens

C'est ainsi qu'un *mdalanga* en son honneur se déroule sous n'importe quel grand arbre pourvu qu'il soit en fleurs et qu'on y mime ces légendes.<sup>22</sup> A. Werner (1896: 377-390) donne plusieurs versions d'un conte où l'on retrouve les mêmes thèmes. Dans l'une d'elles, moitié yao moitié swahili, le *jimwi* est tué par un serpent, des fourmis et des abeilles. Sur le lieu où il est mort, pousse un plant de potiron qui porte des fruits d'une taille inhabituelle. Les enfants cherchent à les cueillir mais sont pourchassés. Un vieil homme les aide à traverser la rivière. Ils rentrent au village en criant: "Protégez-nous du potiron!" Ce dernier arrive peu après à leur poursuite et demande: "Avez-vous vu mes esclaves?" Les vieux font mine de ne pas comprendre mais il insiste. Alors des hommes puissants se jettent sur lui, le tuent et le coupent en morceaux qu'ils jettent dans le feu puis ramassent les cendres. Malgré cela, le lendemain, un plant de potiron a repoussé à l'endroit même et il finit par avaler tous les habitants du village. A. Werner (1933: 180) signale les mêmes thèmes chez les Xosa et les Zulu où le monstre, une fois tué, est changé en arbre aux pouvoirs magiques.<sup>23</sup> Dans le *mdalanga* de Kiembe-embe à Kidutani dont le détail est donné en annexe, on trouve deux chants (n° 43 et 44) à l'adresse de Jimwi.

c) Le *kilinge* de Nyange<sup>24</sup> à Soko Mzuri, Kusini était, à l'époque de l'enquête, considéré comme ancien. Il est d'ailleurs mentionné par Ingrams (1925: 139-140, repris par Alpers 1984: 683) qui décrit une cérémonie durant laquelle on offrait des biscuits aux esprits marins. J. Gray qui y a assisté lors de la fête du *mwaka* rapporte la légende de ses origines.

<sup>22</sup> Papao, le 18.07.1992, Mwatumu Umadi, le 02.09.1992.

<sup>23</sup> De même que J. Knappert (1970b: 197-198).

<sup>24</sup> *Nyange* est le nom d'un petit poisson de mer (Sacleux 1939: 695).

Il était une fois trois femmes qui se rendirent à la plage pour ramasser des coquillages. Arrivant de la mer, survint un esprit dans une pirogue, un trident à la main. Il appela les femmes dans un jargon qu'elles ne comprirent pas. Elles prirent la fuite mais devinrent folles. Personne n'était en mesure de les guérir jusqu'à ce que le remède fût révélé à quelqu'un dans un rêve. La danse du *nyange* en est le résultat [...] Lors du *mwaka*, la danse a lieu au grand *mzimu* de Kae Kuu. Tous les danseurs sont des femmes mais l'orchestre est composé d'hommes. La danse évoque le mouvement des vagues, les danseuses portent des tridents ou des *ngalawa* peints en rouge et blanc.<sup>25</sup>

A la fin du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle cette danse n'était plus observée autour du *mzimu* de Kae Kuu lors du Mwaka mais la responsable de ce *kilinge* n'était autre que Bi Nyausi Jozole, belle-sœur de Bi Maryam Fadhil Pandu, la responsable du Mwaka à Kae Kuu.

### *L'épopée d'une initiation*

L'initiation ou *mdalanga* comprend deux volets. *Kupiga mdundo* "battre tambour", désigne la formation suivie par l'initiée deux fois par jour pendant une semaine. Elle se termine par les salutations de l'esprit qui, lors de la dernière nuit, vient saluer et décliner son identité. En parallèle se déroule une cérémonie privée appelée *nyungu* "remède". L'ensemble de la cure se termine le jour où l'esprit décline son identité et qu'un pacte est conclu (cf. Racine-Issa 2013).

*Kupiga mdundo* est constitué d'un entraînement (*zoezi*) public qui se déroule matin et soir pendant au moins trois jours. Cette formation, dont le programme détaillé est donné en annexe 1, vise à apprendre les règles de vie dans une nouvelle structure sociale: le *kilinge* au sein duquel les relations sont régies par les relations de parenté des guerriers que sont les esprits.

<sup>25</sup> (Gray 1955: 15-16). Le rouge et le blanc sont les couleurs symboliques des *mizimu* (Racine 1995).





*Mdundo* est un tambour de taille moyenne.<sup>26</sup>

Le tableau ci-dessous résume le programme suivi en 1990 à Kidutani pour la partie “exercices” et à Jambiani pour la cérémonie de clôture d’une autre initiation similaire.

**Tableau n° 2:** Récapitulatif des rythmes suivis à Kidutani et à Jambiani en 1990

| Les peuples | Les métiers | Les danses  | Les personnages mythiques |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Mmakonde 9  | Mjeshi 21   | Kidumbaki 2 | Jimwi 2                   |
| Mnyamwezi 8 | Mtwana 6    | Dansa 2     | Kipindupindu 1            |
| Mzungu 7    | Mpira 2     |             |                           |
| Mmanga 1    |             |             |                           |
| Total 25    | Total 28    | Total 4     | Total 3                   |

<sup>26</sup> Cliché de l’auteur, Tasani, 1992.

Ce programme résume l'histoire de l'archipel. Des métiers et des profils anciens s'effacent et sont remplacés au fil des générations. Ainsi les *Mmakonde*, *Mnyamewzi*, communautés qui se trouvaient en bas de l'échelle sociale à l'époque du sultanat, sont remplacés par *Mzungu* "Européen" et *Mmanga* "Arabe du Golfe".

Les textes des chants se répartissent en quelques thèmes dont le plus important est celui de la guerre<sup>27</sup> et de ses héros.

Toutes les tenues des participantes signalent une forme de pouvoir. Les métiers à uniforme sont prestigieux. Chaque costume a son code, à commencer par la coiffe. Ainsi Bi Nyausi Jozole, du *kilinge* de Nyange à Mzuri, portait deux turbans superposés, l'un blanc, l'autre à rayures.<sup>28</sup> Bi Mwatumu Umadi de Kishunga Mbuzi, également: l'un blanc, en dessous, en référence à son esprit personnel, l'autre noir, par-dessus, renvoyant à l'esprit éponyme (*shina*) du *kilinge*.<sup>29</sup> A Kizunguso, la coiffe était composée d'un chapeau (*kofia*) blanc et d'un turban vert.<sup>30</sup>

La tenue, quant à elle, traduisait la position de l'esprit dans une société en miroir: treillis kaki pour les soldats, tenues blanches pour les infirmières, lunettes de soleil et des bouteilles d'alcool pour les Européens comme le montrent les photos ci-dessous.

<sup>27</sup> Les thèmes relevés sont: la guerre (14 chants) et la conclusion d'un pacte (3), les travaux agricoles et l'alimentation (8), les voyages (5), l'amour, la sexualité, l'enfantement (4), la médecine traditionnelle ou *uganga* (2), la vie politique (2), la solidarité (1), la danse (1), le football (1), la mort (1).

<sup>28</sup> Nyausi Jozole, le 09.08.1992.

<sup>29</sup> Mwatumu Umadi, le 30.08.1992.

<sup>30</sup> Asha Sose, le 07.08.1992.



Mbuyuni, Jambiani, 1990, l'infirmière et le voyage.



Tasani, Kae, 1992, la soldatesque de l'époque coloniale.



Mbuyuni, Jambiani, 1990, *Mzungu* “Européen” est un esprit souvent représenté par la consommation d’alcool.

## Conclusion

L’étude des chants figurant au programme des cérémonies d’intronisation des esprits possesseurs dans les confréries traditionnelles qui officiaient dans le sud de l’île de Zanzibar dans la dernière décennie du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle, laisse entrevoir une représentation en miroir de l’histoire de l’archipel.

Lors de ces initiations, véritables spectacles de rue, légendes et épopées étaient mis en scène, invitation à des émotions esthétiques collectives aujourd’hui écrasées par des formes culturelles mondialisées, de type industriel ou religieux.

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## ANNEXE

## 1. Kilinge cha Mwanahamisi Hamisi, Kiembe-embe, Kidutani – Kae

21 août 1990 de 16h à 17h<sup>31</sup>

- 1 **Mmanga**, Arabe du Golfe. Se danse avec des coupe-coupe en soulevant la jambe à la façon des danses guerrières de la péninsule arabique.

|                                              |                                       |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Nakwenda zetu Maskati</i>                 | Je m'en vais chez nous à Mascate      |
| <i>Nakulya t<sup>h</sup>ende kila wakati</i> | Je mange des dattes tout le temps     |
| <i>Nachaka t<sup>h</sup>ende</i>             | Je veux des dattes                    |
| <i>Nachaka halua</i>                         | Je veux du <i>halua</i> <sup>32</sup> |
| <i>Haya chukua</i>                           | D'accord, prends                      |
| <i>Mmanga wee</i>                            | Toi l'Arabe du Golfe                  |

- 2 **Mpira**, Ballon. Les danseuses en cercle dribblent l'une après l'autre.

|                       |                                       |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Hebu njoo</i>      | Viens                                 |
| <i>Wakati umefika</i> | Le moment est venu                    |
| <i>Mwanangu hora</i>  | Mon enfant, <i>hora</i> <sup>33</sup> |

- 3 **Mjeshi**, Soldat. Les danseuses miment le geste de planter puis de lancer une arachide en l'air afin de la gober.

|                                 |                                       |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Kila mjeshi apande njugu</i> | Que chaque soldat plante une arachide |
| <i>Ibakie moja moja</i>         | Qu'il n'en reste que quelques-unes    |

- 4 **Mmahiya**, Makonde. Après avoir mis du gruau à base de farine de maïs (*sembe* ou *ugali*) dans un récipient, les femmes dansent en activant les bras de bas en haut comme pour pomper.

|                                |                        |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Timu za kazi zimekwisha</i> | Le travail est fini    |
| <i>Tukajilie sembe</i>         | Allons manger du gruau |

<sup>31</sup> Les textes en *kikae* ont été retranscrits selon l'orthographe adoptée dans O. Racine (2002).

<sup>32</sup> Gourmandise d'aspect brun et gélatineux fabriqué à partir d'*arrow-root*, d'œufs, de sucre et de noisettes ou d'amandes.

<sup>33</sup> Terme inconnu. C. Sacleux (1939: 286) signale l'expression *hora hora* dans un chant guerrier de Lamu avec le sens de faire le fier, défier l'ennemi mais il précise que le terme est inusité en dehors de ce contexte.

- 5 **Kidumbaki**<sup>34</sup> ou **kiembe**, Petit rasoir. Rythme de salsa.

|                        |                  |
|------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Yuko wapi?</i>      | Où est-il/elle?  |
| <i>Namtafuta</i>       | Je le/la cherche |
| <i>Na mimi na wewe</i> | Et moi et toi    |
| <i>Tulicheze rumba</i> | Dansons la rumba |

- 6 **Mtwana**, Jeune esclave. Se danse équipé de fusils et de queues de vache que l'on agite d'avant en arrière.

|                            |                                  |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Bibi apige mbio</i>     | Que la femme parte en courant    |
| <i>Na mwana amwangasie</i> | Que le jeune-homme la poursuive. |

22 août 1990 de 9h à 10h

- 7 **Mjeshi**, Soldat. Les danseuses entrent en marchant au pas puis simulent des opérations militaires en se roulant par terre et en faisant mine de viser et de tirer. D'autres ont dans les mains des avions ou des navires de guerre en bois qu'elles font évoluer.

|                                  |                                         |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <i>Fungua milango</i>            | Ouvre les portes                        |
| <i>Tungie bomani</i>             | Que nous entrions dans le fort          |
| <i>Tungie kwa shangwe</i>        | Que nous entrions avec les acclamations |
| <i>Uko huarani</i> <sup>35</sup> | Là-bas dans le lieu où l'on grandit.    |

- 8 Rythme non déterminé.

|                          |                                       |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Karibuni WaUnguja</i> | Bienvenue habitants d'Unguja          |
| <i>Nna yangu yangu</i>   | J'ai des occupations [nombreuses]     |
| <i>Mpiga dundo</i>       | Batteur                               |
| <i>Uje na kondoo</i>     | Il faut que tu viennes avec un mouton |
| <i>Nile na wanangu</i>   | Que je mange avec mes enfants         |

- 9 Rythme non déterminé.

|                              |                                        |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <i>Njoni wanangu ne</i>      | Venez mes enfants                      |
| <i>Tuje tuupange mpango</i>  | Que nous allions faire les préparatifs |
| <i>Kila mmoja atoe chake</i> | Chacun doit contribuer                 |
| <i>Tuutizame mchango</i>     | Examinons les contributions            |

<sup>34</sup> Le *kidumbaki* est une forme populaire du *taarab*. Une femme enroule un pagne autour des reins pour mettre en valeur ses déhanchements et monte sur une chaise pour danser.

<sup>35</sup> Terme inconnu. C. Sacleux (1939: 287) signale *-hua* en *kingazija* comme équivalent de *-ua* "grandir" en swahili. Notre traduction est incertaine.



- 10 **Mjeshi**, Soldat. Rythme du cheval au galop. Les danseuses entrent en marchant au pas puis font du sur-place. L'une d'elle dirige la troupe et donne des ordres.

|                                     |                                                |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Bwana nirudie chombo manuari</i> | Maître, rends-moi mon destroyer                |
| <i>Nisafirie mirima na bahari</i>   | Fais-moi voyager sur les montagnes et les mers |

- 11 **Mjeshi**, Soldat. Les danseuses ont des mitraillettes de bois. Elles miment la guerre en se roulant au sol.

|                                  |                     |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Chukua bunduki</i>            | Prends un fusil     |
| <i>Utie risasi</i>               | Mets une balle      |
| <i>Tuitayarishe kazi ya vita</i> | Préparons la guerre |

- 12 **Mjeshi**, Soldat. Les danseuses sont alignées au garde-à-vous pour une revue des troupes devant le chef des armées.

|                                 |                              |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Tuipange namba moja moja</i> | Classons les numéros un à un |
| <i>Tumuamkie bwana mkubwa</i>   | Saluons le chef              |

- 13 **Dansa**, Danse de salon.

|                            |                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Tumepanga vita</i>      | Nous nous préparons à la guerre |
| <i>Mie jini na wanao</i>   | Moi l'esprit et tes enfants     |
| <i>Hiyo tabu</i>           | C'est un problème               |
| <i>Tabu ndiyo hila yao</i> | Le problème ce sont leurs ruses |

- 14 **Mnyamwezi**. Pas de paroles.

22 août 1990 de 16h30 à 17h30

- 15 **Mpira**, Ballon.

|                                   |                                         |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <i>Waje manahoza na mabaharia</i> | Qu'ils viennent capitaines et matelots  |
| <i>Kampuni moja tucheze mpira</i> | Une seule compagnie, jouons au football |

- 16 **Mtwana**, Jeune esclave. Se danse équipé de fusils et de queues de vache que l'on agite d'avant en arrière. La néophyte (*mwere*) tient à la main une queue de vache.

|                                      |                                                        |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Kinyang'ua, kinyang'ua nnani?</i> | <i>Kinyang'ua, kinyang'ua</i> <sup>36</sup> c'est qui? |
| <i>Mtenda katende mwanawe.</i>       | L'auteur, c'est ton enfant qui l'a fait.               |

<sup>36</sup> Ce terme n'est donné dans aucun dictionnaire.

- 17 Rythme: **Kipindupindu**, Choléra. Les danseuses font des pompes et se roulent par terre (*kupindukia*).<sup>37</sup>

|                                              |                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Kipindupindu napindukia</i>               | Tourner, tourner, je fais un tour <sup>39</sup>             |
| <i>Simba leo mnalia ngondo</i> <sup>38</sup> | Guerriers <sup>40</sup> aujourd'hui vous déclarez la guerre |
| <i>Simba mnalia</i>                          | Guerriers vous rugissez                                     |
| <i>Na kipindupindu napindukia</i>            | Tourner, tourner, je fais un tour                           |
| <i>Simba mnalia</i>                          | Guerriers vous rugissez                                     |

23 août 1990 de 7h30 à 9h15

- 18 **Jimwi**, Ogre. Les danseuses balayent en reculant à petits pas.

|                         |                                             |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <i>Ja punda</i>         | Comme un âne                                |
| <i>Nja-fagia uwanja</i> | Je suis venue balayer la cour <sup>41</sup> |

- 19 **Mjeshi**, Soldat. Ce chant est très proche du n°7. Tous les deux marquent le début de la séance.

|                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Fungua uwanja</i>            | Ouvre la cour                       |
| <i>Tungie bomani</i>            | Que nous entrions dans le fort      |
| <i>Tungie kwa shangwe</i>       | Que nous entrions avec les clameurs |
| <i>Uko uarani</i> <sup>42</sup> | Là-bas dans le lieu où l'on grandit |

- 20 **Mmahiya**, Makonde.

|                                        |                                                              |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Maji, maji linakumbwa mmwambao</i>  | L'eau, l'eau est fendue par la navigation au bord de la côte |
| <i>Panga ringi Unguja uje na wanao</i> | Fais la queue à Unguja pour venir avec tes enfants.          |

<sup>37</sup> Le terme *kipindupindu* qui désigne le choléra est construit à partir de la base *-pind-*, "être courbe" que l'on retrouve dans *mapinduzi*, "révolution" et dans les chants du *Mwaka Kogwa* ou fête du nouvel an. Cf. O. Racine (1995, 2013).

<sup>38</sup> Terme poétique d'origine yao qui désigne la guerre (Sacleux 1939: 680).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. note 46.

<sup>40</sup> Le terme *simba* désigne le lion et, par extension "une personne guerrière invincible, indomptable, féroce, sanguinaire, brutale" (Sacleux 1939: 806).

<sup>41</sup> Autrement dit le lieu où se déroule la cérémonie. Dans la mesure où *pepopunda* (litt. "esprit âne") désigne l'épilepsie, on peut se demander s'il est ici fait allusion à une maladie ou à une mesure de purification du sol en raison de la cérémonie qui s'y déroule.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. note 44.

21 **Mmahiya**, Makonde

|                              |                               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ?                            | ?                             |
| <i>Mwanajini toeni</i>       | Génies sortez                 |
| <i>Nahoza mpakia</i>         | Capitaine prends moi à bord   |
| <i>Wengine wako chomboni</i> | Les autres sont sur le navire |

22 **Mjeshi**, Soldat. Cf. 10.

23 **Mzungu**, Européen. Les danseuses sont alignées et font trois pas en avant puis trois pas en arrière.

|                              |                     |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Manuari kumi na mbili</i> | Douze destroyers    |
| <i>Moja iko wapi?</i>        | Où est l'un d'eux ? |

24 **Mjeshi**, Soldat. Le texte insiste sur la solidarité au sein du *kilinge*.

|                                   |                                                       |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Tulimeni sote kwa ushirika</i> | Cultivons tous en coopérant                           |
| <i>Ukifanya fujo utaazirika</i>   | Si tu mets la pagaille tu en subiras les conséquences |

25 **Mjeshi**, Soldat. Cf. 12.

26 **Mjeshi**, Soldat. Ce chant souligne que la formation, autrement dit l'initiation arrive à son terme.

|                        |                                               |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <i>Tunatoka depu</i>   | Nous sortons du camp d'entraînement militaire |
| <i>Huko mafunzoni</i>  | Là-bas au lieu de formation                   |
| <i>Tarumbeta usoni</i> | Trompettes en tête.                           |

27 **Mnyamwezi**. Le texte met l'accent sur la cure qui est en train de prendre fin.

|                          |                            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Mwana Miza</i>        | Miza <sup>43</sup>         |
| <i>Njo ujilie uganga</i> | Viens te manger ton remède |

28 **Mnyamwezi**. Les danseuses alignées font mine de défricher la terre ou de sarcler en faisant un pas en avant de revenir sur place.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. note 46.

24 août 1990 de 16h45 à 17h45

29 **Mjeshi**, Soldat. Cf. 7.

30 **Mjeshi**, Soldat.

*Boy ametoka mbali  
Katoka Ulaya  
Utie saini  
Unguja ni raia*

Le boy vient de loin  
Il vient d'Europe  
Mets ta signature  
Unguja est libre (litt. citoyenne)

31 Cf. 8. Rythme non déterminé.

32 Cf. 8 Rythme non déterminé.

33 Cf. 20. **Mmahiya**, Makonde.

34 Cf. 21. **Mmahiya**, Makonde.

35 Cf. 19. **Mjeshi**, Soldat.

36 Cf. 3. **Mjeshi**, Soldat.

37 Cf. 4. **Mmahiya**, Makonde.

38 **Mjeshi**, Soldat.

*Kumbe ondokeni nyote  
Unguja si yenu  
Mmoja mmoja na walimu wenu  
Imeshaingia CCM*

Eh bien partez-tous  
Unguja n'est pas à vous  
Un à un avec vos professeurs  
Il est entré au CCM<sup>44</sup>

39 **Mjeshi**, Soldat.

*Njooni wanangu  
Tukae tayari  
?*

Venez mes enfants  
Asseyons-nous, prêts  
?

<sup>44</sup> CCM pour *Chama cha Mapinduzi* "Parti de la Révolution", au pouvoir à Zanzibar depuis 1964.

40 **Dansa**, Danse de salon.

*Nnaomba ruhusa*  
*Nnaenda zangu Pimbi*  
 ?<sup>45</sup>

Je demande la permission  
 Je m'en vais à Pimbi  
 ?

41 **Kidumbaki**.

*Yuko wapi bibi wa kitabu?*  
*Ninamtafuta.*  
*Na mimi, na mimi, na wewe.*  
*Tutapiga picha.*

Où est la femme du livre?  
 Je la cherche.  
 Et moi, et moi, et toi.  
 Nous prendrons des photos.

42 **Mtwana**, Jeune esclave. Il s'agit d'un rythme extrêmement rapide.

43 **Jimwi**, Ogre

*Bwana mkubwa njo*  
*Usikae ujinga*  
*Uje ujirie ganga*

Maître, viens  
 Ne reste pas comme un idiot  
 Viens prendre le médicament

44 **Jimwi**, Ogre. Se danse en sautant à pieds joints et en tournant sur soi-même.

*Kuchak<sup>h</sup>onda kwa mafupa*  
*Kuchalya nini Miza?*<sup>46</sup>  
*Nchaka ntindie ja p<sup>h</sup>ia* (x 2)

Tu maigriras jusqu'aux os.  
 Que mangeras-tu Miza?  
 Je veux tourner comme une toupie.

45 **Mtwana**, Jeune esclave. Cf. 6

Nuit du 24 au 25 août 1990.

Il s'agit de la nuit où la guerre prend fin. L'initiée connaît maintenant les danses et les chants. L'esprit est invité à décliner son identité à la suite de quoi un pacte est scellé qui prend l'allure d'un mariage. Cette alliance – il s'agit également d'un mariage – est célébrée par un banquet et des offrandes à l'esprit apaisé qui va alors se transformer en source puissance au service de celle qui lui prête vie. L'identité qu'il va décliner permet la construction

<sup>45</sup> Le brouhaha n'a pas permis de rétablir le texte de ce passage.

<sup>46</sup> *Miza* pourrait également être interprété comme l'impératif du verbe *kumiza* "avaler" (cf. Sacleux 1939: 556).

d'un statut social parallèle à celui de la vie civile. L'initiée accède ainsi à une nouvelle identité et à un nouveau statut au sein de la société du *kilinge*.

Je me suis trouvée dans l'impossibilité d'enregistrer cette séquence finale à Kidutani, mais j'ai pu assister à une autre cérémonie de clôture à Jambiani quelques semaines plus tard. Le programme est présenté en annexe 2.

## 2. Kilinge cha Mwanaheri Haji

Mbuyuni, Jambiani, cérémonie de clôture enregistrée dans la nuit du 24 au 25 novembre 1990. La cérémonie commence par des fredonnements (*wanalelema*).

- 46 **Mzungu**, Européen. Les danseuses sont alignées par rangées. Des fusils de bois à la main, elles avancent puis reculent.

|                                      |                                    |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Askari jeshi mzuri kabisa</i>     | Soldat absolument vaillant         |
| <i>Kachukua bunduki apigane vita</i> | Il a pris un fusil pour combattre. |

- 47 **Mzungu**, Européen. Se danse comme le précédent.

|                              |                                          |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <i>Lile wa jini, lile we</i> | La la la, génie, la la la                |
| <i>Nimekunywa kungumanga</i> | J'ai bu de la noix muscade <sup>47</sup> |
| <i>Nipige kelele</i>         | Pour crier                               |

- 48 **Mjeshi**, Soldat.

|                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Asikari kea chukua bunduki</i> | Soldat en uniforme, prends un fusil |
| <i>Jifunge ukanda</i>             | Attache ta ceinture <sup>48</sup>   |
| <i>Twende zetu vitani.</i>        | Partons à la guerre.                |

- 49 **Mjeshi**, Soldat. Ce chant est un appel à la conciliation adressé à l'esprit perturbateur.

|                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Asikari jeshi</i>       | Soldat de l'armée          |
| <i>Kazi yako nini?</i>     | Quel est ton travail?      |
| <i>Ukiwa barani</i>        | Si tu es sur le continent  |
| <i>Ufike Unguja</i>        | Viens à Unguja             |
| <i>Utie saini</i>          | Pour signer                |
| <i>Jeshi na namba wani</i> | Soldat <i>number one</i> . |

- 50 **Mzungu**, Européen. Ce chant fut demandé par une des participantes.

|                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Nnawatafuta, nnawatafuta</i> | Je les cherche, je les cherche    |
| <i>Wanajeshi wapige vita</i>    | Que les soldats fassent la guerre |

<sup>47</sup> La noix muscade à forte dose est considérée comme un aphrodisiaque.

<sup>48</sup> Autrement dit: prends garde, fais attention.

- 51 **Mtwana**, Jeune esclave. Ce chant est une demande d'explication à l'esprit perturbateur pour qu'il s'explique sur ses agissements.

|                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Umekuja unanitakia nini?</i>  | Tu es venu, que me veux-tu?      |
| <i>Na mi, niko Unguja barani</i> | Moi je suis à Unguja, sur l'île. |

- 52 **Mahumbwa**, Il s'agit d'un très vieux rythme de Makunduchi qui se danse en cercle en faisant passer un ballon d'une danseuse à l'autre. Il n'y a pas de paroles mais un fredonnement.

- 53 **Mnyamwezi**.

|                             |                                         |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <i>Ba fundi piga msondo</i> | Expert, joue du tam-tam                 |
| <i>Na si tutashangilia</i>  | Et nous nous acclamerons                |
| <i>Tusiwa kama magogo</i>   | Ne soyons pas comme des troncs d'arbres |
| <i>Mambo utajionea</i>      | Tu vas voir par toi-même                |

- 54 **Sindimba**, Makonde. Se danse avec un pagne autour de la taille. Les danseuses font une rotation de la taille et lancent les jambes en avant.

|                                      |                              |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Ninae mtoto wangu</i>             | Je l'ai mon enfant           |
| <i>Nimezaa nipende</i>               | J'ai enfanté pour aimer      |
| <i>Siku ya arusi yangu</i>           | Le jour de mon mariage       |
| <i>Nimkatie kitenge<sup>49</sup></i> | Je dois lui tailler un pagne |

- 55 **Sindimba** ou **Mawila**, Makonde. En langue makonde.

- 56 **Mnyamwezi**.

|                                          |                                          |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <i>Unguja kuna kazi nyingi ya kulima</i> | A Unguja il y a beaucoup de travail dans |
| <i>Mkulima we, mkulima</i>               | l'agriculture                            |
|                                          | Paysan, o paysan                         |

- 57 **Mnyamwezi**. Les danseuses miment qu'elles plantent et mangent des arachides.

|                             |                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Na dondo wa mojamaja</i> | Cueillette une par une |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|

<sup>49</sup> *Kitenge* est un tissu à ramages utilisé pour la confection de tenues féminines de style moderne. Il représente "le" tissu africain.



58 **Mnyamwezi.**

|                                 |                                          |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <i>Yeye ni mbunge wa Bwejuu</i> | Il est le député de Bwejuu <sup>50</sup> |
| <i>Kaja kwake Nyonje</i>        | Il est venu chez lui à Nyonje            |
| <i>Namchaka urafiki</i>         | Je le veux pour ami.                     |

59 **Mtwana**, Jeune esclave. Les danseuses miment une bastonnade.

|                                  |                                                |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Kelinginya kwa ufuta</i>      | Kelinginya raffole su sésame                   |
| <i>Ukenda kwenu, kwenda juta</i> | Si tu vas dans ton village, tu le regretteras. |

60 **Mzungu**, Européen.

|                                |                                         |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <i>Wanasema wee walimwengu</i> | Ils disent, les gens de ce monde,       |
| <i>Mwanamme kupungwa</i>       | Qu'un homme soit initié                 |
| <i>Si amri yangu</i>           | Ce n'est pas moi qui l'ordonne          |
| <i>Ni amri ya Mola</i>         | C'est la décision de Dieu               |
| <i>Walimwengu ni wajinga</i>   | Les gens de ce monde sont des imbéciles |

61 **Mmahiya**, Makonde.

|                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Nimekuja Unguja</i>     | Je suis venu à Zanzibar  |
| <i>Salamu zangu nnatoa</i> | Je salue                 |
| <i>Nipe kikapu</i>         | Donne-moi un panier      |
| <i>Mazao kuyaondoa</i>     | Pour emporter la récolte |

62 **Mmahiya**, Makonde.

|                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Sikilizeni wana wa chama</i> | Ecoutez membres du parti          |
| <i>Kikipita mkondoni</i>        | Lorsqu'il passera dans le courant |
| <i>Chombo chenda rama</i>       | Le bateau tanguera                |

63 **Mzungu**, Européen.

|                                  |                                            |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <i>Wako wapi? E Nnawatafuta.</i> | Où sont-ils? Je les cherche.               |
| <i>Tuchukue, si raha.</i>        | Prenons [nos fusils] ce n'est pas la joie. |
| <i>Pamoja tukapige vita</i>      | Ensemble allons faire la guerre.           |

64 **Mzungu**, Européen.

|                                       |                                                |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Askari wangu</i>                   | Mes soldats                                    |
| <i>Zifunge ukanda</i>                 | Prenez garde (litt. attachez vos ceintures)    |
| <i>Uko Kikwajuni kuna meli iganda</i> | Là-bas, Au Tamarinier, il y a un navire échoué |

<sup>50</sup> Village situé au nord de Jambiani.

65 **Mjeshi**, Soldat.

*Askari wangu mzuri kabisa*  
*Sasa pumzika*  
*Vita vimekwisha*

Mon soldat très vaillant  
 Maintenant repose-toi  
 La guerre est finie

66 **Mjeshi**, Soldat.

*Asikari wote sasa kwa herini*  
*Tunaenda zetu, tuko safarini*  
  
*Tutaonana pindi mwakani*

Maintenant au revoir tous les soldats  
 Nous nous en allons, nous partons en voyage  
 Nous nous reverrons à un moment dans l'année

67 **Mjeshi**, Soldat. La danse s'effectue en cercle. Un plateau circule dans lequel les participants déposent de l'argent. Ce texte fait allusion à un accouchement. Venant juste après des textes qui parlent de paix, on peut l'interpréter comme une allusion à une naissance.

*Hongera mwanangu we hongera*  
*Na mimi hongere we hongera*  
*Mama uchungu,<sup>51</sup> mama uchungu*  
*Nyamara mwanangu oye*  
*Nyamara mwanangu*  
*Tumbo la ubere linauma mno*

Félicitation, mon enfant, félicitations  
 Et moi, félicitations, hé félicitations  
 Maman la douleur, Maman la douleur  
 Tais-toi, mon enfant  
 Tais-toi mon enfant  
 Le ventre proéminent fait trop mal.

<sup>51</sup> *Uchungu* désigne les douleurs de l'enfantement.

3. Le Shetani de Mzee Thabit<sup>52</sup>

1. *Shetani mnyama ambaye ndo huyu anapandisha. Huyu shetani huyu, kazi yake yeye, kote kote uko, akiamua kukupenda anakupenda kweli kweli na anakupa kila kitu unachohitaji.*
2. *Na ukimuudhi na yeye anakuudhi. Na yeye, kukuudhi kwake, anakuua tu, moja kwa moja.*
3. *Kwanza usije ukamkuta mtoto kwenye mwitu ukamtania: "E bwana we nitakuoa" au "Bwana we nimekupenda."*
4. *"Kama umenipenda sawa."*
5. *Kwa sababu alikuwepo mzee mmoja kule Makunduchi, alikwenda kuchoma matunda fulani yanaitwa ngoo mwituni. Alikuwa anaitwa mzee Thabit. Mzee Thabit yule alikuwa anakaa Kishunga Mbuzi pale.*
6. *Akawa anakwenda kuchuma. Akakikuta kitoto kidogo. Kumbé yule mtoto ni yule shetani.*
7. *Akamwambia: "Mtoto we, shoga yangu, njoo hapa. Nikuchumie mie na tena nimekupenda sana. Unakaa wapi weye?"*
8. *Kishetani kikajibu: "Mie ninakaa nyumbani na baba na mama."*
9. *"Basi njoo kesho, nitakuchumia. Utakuwa mchumba wangu we. Ukikua nitakuoa."*
10. *Unaona kazi hiyo? Yule shetani akapenda, kampenda yule mzee.*
11. *Yule mzee, matokeo yake, akaja tena kama kesho. Akamchumie tena. Akakaa.*
12. *Yule mtoto akarudi kwao. Keshapewa ripoti: "Nimekuta babu, kaniambia hivi hivi."*
13. *"Sawa."*
14. *Ikabidi yule mzee, ndio yuko kazini pale, analinda.*
- 1) Le démon c'est un animal qui monte à la tête. Le démon lui, où qu'il se trouve, s'il décide de t'aimer, il t'aime vraiment et il te donne tout ce dont tu as besoin.
- 2) Mais si tu le blesses alors lui aussi il te fait du mal. Et sa façon de faire à lui c'est qu'il te tue immédiatement.
- 3) D'abord s'il t'arrive de rencontrer une fillette dans la brousse, ne t'aventures pas à aller la baratiner du genre "Eh ma jolie, je vais t'épouser" ou bien "Eh ma belle je suis tombé amoureux de toi."
- 4) "Si tu es tombé amoureux c'est bien."
- 5) Parce qu'il y avait un homme à Makunduchi, il était allé dans la brousse pour cueillir des fruits du nom de *ngoo*. Il s'appelait Thabit. Il habitait Kishunga Mbuzi.
- 6) Alors qu'il était parti cueillir ces fruits, il rencontra une jolie jeune fille. En fait c'était un démon.
- 7) Il lui dit: "Ma jolie, mon amie, viens ici que je te cueille des fruits car je t'aime. Où est-ce que tu habites?"
- 8) Le petit démon répondit: "Moi j'habite à la maison avec papa et maman."
- 9) "Eh bien demain viens, je te cueillerai des fruits. Tu seras ma fiancée. Quand tu auras grandi je t'épouserai."
- 10) Tu vois l'histoire? Le démon apprécia. Elle se mit à aimer l'homme.
- 11) Le résultat c'est que le lendemain il revint pour lui cueillir à nouveau des fruits. Il attendit.
- 12) La fillette rentra chez elle. Les siens avaient déjà eu vent de l'affaire. "J'ai rencontré un homme, il m'a dit ceci et cela."
- 13) "Bien."
- 14) Thabit était tout à son affaire, il surveillait.

<sup>52</sup> Papao le 22.08.1995.

15. Akaambiwa: "*Babu vipi? Nimekuja kukutizama.*"
16. Yule babu akasema: "*Eh! Umeshakua mkubwa mara ile?*"
17. Akamwambia: "*Ndio*" [...]
18. Sasa yule mzee, yule mtoto keshakua.
19. Akaja akamwambia: "*E bwana we, nimeshakua mtu mkubwa mimi mchumba wako. Mbona hujaniaoa tena?*"
20. Akamwambia: "*Subiri mwezi ujao.*"
21. Sasa yule bada hajajishtukia tu kama yule sio binaadamu.
22. Akamwambia: "*Subiri naenda kukoga lakini sabuni hamna.*"
23. Sasa yule akaenda. Akafika chooni akakuta sabuni tayari keshawekewa.
24. Maji yale badala ya baridi anayakuta ya moto.
25. Yulya bwana akakaa hivo hivo. Kila akitaka kwenda kukoga, tayari.
26. Akiingia nyumbani, nyumbani mnanukia. Hajajua nini.
27. Sasa yule shetani kampenda yule bwana.
28. Yule ikabidi, ana mke wake, akamwambia: "*Bwana we, mie kesho nakuja.*"
29. Yaani yule shetani anamwambia yule mzee.
30. Akamwambia: "*Sawa njoo.*"
31. Yeye anaona mashara.
32. Usiku kalala na mke wake. wastani., yule shetani yule, usiku kafanya maajabu yake.
33. Kamwondosha kwa sababu kampenda yule bwana.
34. Naye shetani ndio ana mbinu zote.
35. Kamwondosha yule mke wake, kamlaza chini.
36. Yule shetani akapanda kitandani akalala na yule bwana.
37. Bwana anakuja juu: "*Ah!*"
38. Yule bibi anakuja juu anajitizama anajikuta yuko chini.
39. Akamwita yule mume wake. Anaitwa mzee Thabiti.
- 15) Quelqu'un lui dit: "Alors Grand-père ? Je suis venue te voir."
- 16) Il répondit: "Oh tu as grandi d'un seul coup."
- 17) Elle lui répondit: "Oui." [...]
- 18) L'enfant avait déjà grandi.
- 19) Elle vint lui dire: "Mon cher, je suis adulte maintenant, moi ta fiancée. Pourquoi est-ce que tu ne m'as pas encore épousée ?"
- 20) Il lui répondit: "Attends le mois prochain."
- 21) Il ne s'était pas encore rendu compte que ce n'était pas un être humain.
- 22) Il lui dit: "Attends, je vais faire ma toilette mais il n'y a pas de savon."
- 23) Il s'absenta et arriva dans les toilettes où il découvrit qu'on avait mis du savon.
- 24) L'eau au lieu d'être froide, était chaude.
- 25) L'homme continua ainsi. A chaque fois qu'il voulait aller se laver, c'était prêt.
- 26) Quand il rentrait à la maison ça sentait bon. Il n'avait rien compris.
- 27) Et le démon aima l'homme.
- 28) Mais il avait une femme. Elle lui dit: "Mon cher, moi demain je viens."
- 29) C'est-à-dire que c'est la petite diablesse qui parla ainsi à l'homme.
- 30) Il lui répondit: "Bien, viens."
- 31) Lui il croyait que c'était une plaisanterie.
- 32) La nuit, alors qu'il dormait normalement avec sa femme, la diablesse fit ses bizarreries.
- 33) Elle enleva [la femme de] l'homme qu'elle aimait.
- 34) Le démon a toutes les ruses.
- 35) La diablesse enleva la femme et la déposa par terre.
- 36) Elle monta dans le lit et se coucha auprès de l'homme.
- 37) L'homme se réveille: "Oh !"
- 38) Sa femme se réveille, se regarde et découvre qu'elle est par terre.
- 39) Elle appelle son mari. Il s'appelle Thabiti.

40. "Mzee Thabiti vipi? Mbona mimi niko chini?"
41. Akamwambia: "Panda."
42. Akapanda kwenye kitanda.
43. Kupanda kwenye kitanda kapata usingizi, akajishtuka yuko chini.
44. "Vipi? Haya mambo vipi?"
45. Hata asubuhi yule shetani akamwambia: "E bwana we, mimi, uliniambia mwenyewe, bila kukutaka, utanioa."
46. Kwa nini hunioi?
47. Sasa mimi na wewe tutaumana.
48. Ukitaka salama yako, yule mke wako yule, mpeleke kwao."
49. Yule bwana akampeleka yule mke wake kwao lakini hajamwacha.
50. Na yule shetani aliamua kwamba amwache moja kwa moja.
51. Yule bwana, kila akienda nyumbani taimu za kula, chakula tayari.
52. Kila kitu na mtu hamwoni.
53. Akija kule kazini kwake anakutana nae.
54. Wanaongea wanakaa.
55. Akienda kitandani kule keshatandikwa uzuri.
56. Kila kitu nini nini nini. Yule bwana bado hajashtuka.
57. Yule bwana baada ya kufika taimu akamrudia yule mke wake.
58. Yule mke wake kurudi pale nyumbani.
59. Yule shetani akamwambia: "Mbona umenifanya kitendo?"
60. Wewe uliahidi kunioa. Sasa mbona mpaka leo hujanioa?
61. Kwa hivyo mimi ninataka unioe na kama huna pesa mimi nitakupa."
62. Yule bwana hajamfahamu tu bado.
63. Vile vitendo vyote anavyofanywa nyumbani anavifahamu lakini hajui kama lo! Yule mtoto!
- 40) "Thabit, qu'est-ce qui se passe? Pourquoi est-ce que je suis parlerre?"
- 41) Il lui répondit: "Monte."
- 42) Elle monta sur le lit.
- 43) Aussitôt dans le lit, elle fut saisis par le sommeil puis se retrouva parlerre.
- 44) "Qu'est-ce qui se passe? Qu'est-ce que c'est que ces histoires?"
- 45) Le lendemain matin la diablesse dit à l'homme: "Mon ami, tu m'as dis toi-même, sans que je te désires, que tu m'épouserais."
- 46) Pourquoi est-ce que tu ne m'épouses pas ?
- 47) Dorénavant toi et moi nous allons nous battre.
- 48) Si tu veux ton salut, renvoie ta femme chez les siens."
- 49) L'homme renvoya la femme chez elle mais il ne la répudia pas.
- 50) Mais la diablesse avait décidé qu'il la répudierait aussitôt.
- 51) À chaque fois qu'il rentrait à la maison à l'heure du repas, la nourriture était prête.
- 52) Il y avait tout mais il ne voyait personne.
- 53) Quand il allait travailler il la rencontrait.
- 54) Il discutait avec elle, ils restaient un peu ensemble.
- 55) Quand il allait se coucher, le lit était bien arrangé.
- 56) Et tout et tout et tout. L'homme n'avait toujours pas réalisé.
- 57) Au bout d'un certain temps il fit revenir sa femme chez lui.
- 58) La femme revint au foyer.
- 59) La diablesse dit à l'homme: "Pourquoi est-ce que tu te moques de moi?"
- 60) Tu avais promis de m'épouser. Pourquoi ne l'as-tu pas fait jusqu'à maintenant ?
- 61) Je veux que tu m'épouses et si tu n'as pas d'argent, je t'en donnerai."
- 62) L'homme n'avait toujours pas compris.
- 63) Il voit bien tout ce qu'on lui prépare à la maison mais il ne sait pas que ... ça alors ! La jeune femme !

64. Yule shetani yule akamwambia: *"Bwana sasa, utapata habari yangu."*
65. Yule bwana akaanza kuguta sasa. *Ikabidi aende kwa waganga kutafuta dawa.*
66. Lakini sasa ndo shetani keshajua, *keshaanza kumcheza yeye.*
67. Yule bwana akaenda kwa waganga akaambiwa: *"E bwana we!"*
68. Kapewa dawa: *"Nenda nyumbani, fanya hivo."*
69. Kufika nyumbani, ile dawa kaweka. *Anawasha moto, apike.*
70. Achemshe ile dawa, apate kunywa na *kujisimba.*
71. Hata anageuka na ile dawa haipo.
72. Lakini chungu, chungu chake. *katafuta nyumba nzima hajaiona. Keshachukua.*
73. Karudi kwa mganga: *"Bwana we!"*
74. Akaambiwa *"Mie sikufanyii uganga tena."*
75. Yule mganga nae kaendewa na yule shetani.
76. Kamwambia: *"Wewe fulani unamfanyia dawa, lakini baada ya kufanya ile dawa, dawa usifanye, utakwenda wewe."*
77. Matokeo yake, yule shetani akamwuguza yule bibi. Yule bibi akakata roho.
78. Mzee Thabiti akaambiwa: *"Sasa utaniaoa? Mbona hunioji?"*
79. Mzee Thabiti akasema: *"Nitakuoa lakini sina uwezo."*
80. *"Kipi kilichokuwa huna?"*
81. Shetani akamsaidia hela. *Kampa hela.*
82. *"Nyumba yangu mbovu."*
83. Akamwambia: *"Nitakujengea." Yule bwana akakataa.*
84. Siku mbili tatu nae akakata roho, *akafariki moja kawa moja.*
- 64) La diablesse lui dit: "Mon vieux, maintenant tu vas avoir de mes nouvelles."
- 65) L'homme commença à regretter. Il fallut qu'il aille chez les médecins demander des remèdes.
- 66) Mais la diablesse était déjà au courant et avait déjà commencé à se jouer de lui.
- 67) L'homme alla chez les médecins et on lui dit: "Étrange!"
- 68) On lui donna des remèdes: "Rentre à la maison et fais ainsi."
- 69) Arrivé chez lui, il pose le remède, allume le feu pour le préparer.
- 70) Il doit le faire bouillir, le boire et s'en badigeonner.
- 71) Lorsqu'il se retourne, le médicament n'y est plus.
- 72) Et la marmite, sa marmite, il l'a cherchée dans toute la maison sans la trouver. Elle l'a déjà volatilisée.
- 73) Il revint chez le médecin. "Étrange!" Il lui fut-il répondu.
- 74) "Moi je ne te prépare plus de remède."
- 75) Le médecin aussi avait reçu une visite de la diablesse.
- 76) Elle lui avait dit: "Toi tu prépares des remèdes à une certaine personne mais après celui que tu viens de lui faire, ne lui en prépares plus."
- 77) Le résultat c'est que le démon rendit malade l'épouse [de Mzee Thabit]. Elle rendit l'âme.
- 78) Puis elle dit à Thabit: "Et maintenant tu vas m'épouser? Pourquoi est-ce que tu ne m'épouses pas?"
- 79) Mzee Thabit répondit: "Je t'épouserai mais [pour le moment] je n'en ai pas les moyens."
- 80) "Qu'est-ce que tu n'as pas?"
- 81) La diablesse l'aïda financièrement. Elle lui donna de l'argent.
- 82) "Ma maison est en mauvais état."
- 83) Elle lui répondit: "Je t'en construirai une." Il refusa.
- 84) Deux ou trois jours après lui aussi il rendit l'âme, il mourut d'un seul coup.

85. *Huyu ndio shetani alivyo.*

86. *Lakini ukimkubalia anavyotaka:*  
*“Bwana we, mimi niko tayari kuishi na*  
*weye lakini ninaomba uniruhusu nikae*  
*na mke wangu.*

87. *Basi hakuna tatizo wala hakuna dhara*  
*yoyote, na atakusaidia kila hali. Lakini*  
*ukimwudhi ndio matatizo yake*  
*yanakuja hivi.”*

85) C’est ainsi que sont les démons.

86) Mais si tu acceptes ce qu’il veut: “Mon  
ami je suis prêt à vivre avec toi mais je  
demande que tu me permettes de vivre  
avec ma femme.”

87) Eh bien il n’y a pas de problème ni de  
dommage et il t’aidera en tout. Mais si  
tu lui fais du tort alors il provoque des  
problèmes comme ça.”

THE STATE OF PATE IN HISTORY AND TODAY  
(IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE PATE CHRONICLE, TRAVELOGUE 2008)

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There were already market settlement-cities on the East African coast in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and subsequently several states, such as Pate, Mombasa and, Kilwa, were formed. Scientists in East African cities developed the writing of Swahili using the Arabic script and there were Swahili literary works and also chronicles of the history of some of the city-states. It is known that there are two full chronicles of these medieval states on the East African coast, “having an undeniable historical value” (Misyugin 1966: 52); these are the chronicles of Pate and Kilwa. These two chronicles frame the history of the socio-political development of a large geographical region. They describe the history of the two largest – the northern (Pate) and southern (Kilwa) – outposts of the Swahili civilization. The Kilwa chronicle is written in Arabic and is fairly well studied. The chronicle of Pate, created in the *kiamu* dialect of Swahili, is a unique monument of ancient literature.

There are several published versions of the Pate chronicle (Stigand 1913, Werner 1915, Heepe 1928, Tolmacheva 1993). Some discrepancies in these texts are insignificant and they are basically identical. All these chronicles give, in chronological order a description of the life and government of Pate’s 32 rulers, their territorial gains and losses, internal ethnic conflicts and alliances in the struggle against external enemies, and the like. According to Misyugin, they are “a full-fledged written historical material – the primary source of a certain character, quite suitable for historical analysis” (Misyugin 1966: 55).

During my trips to East Africa, I tried to see the historical monuments of the Swahili civilization, to pass, so to speak, in the wake of the former glory. On a number of occasions, I was able to visit all the major islands referred to by the Pate Chronicles: Kilwa, Kilwa Kisiwani, Zanzibar and Pemba,



currently part of the United Republic of Tanzania, and the islands of Lamu, Manda and Pate in Kenya. I was not, though, lucky enough to get onto the island of Pate until the end of 2008.

Previous attempts to reach Pate had been unsuccessful because of the remoteness of this island from the usual tourist routes and the lack of fast transport, which is very important at low tide: you can “get stuck” on an island where there are no overnight hotels. I had already had such a negative experience when the boatman who agreed to take us to the island of Manda, to inspect the ruins there of one of the famous medieval Swahili cities, dating from between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, did not deign to tell us that the ebb tide would begin in an hour or two. We examined the ruins of the city with its mosques, stone houses, the still preserved sewerage system, cobbled streets and returned to the boat, only to find that it was not there, and the tide had retreated from the narrow mangrove channel. Our escort went to look for the boatman and returned, wet to the chest, with the message that our boatman would wait for us on the ocean side of the island as he could not travel along the canal to pick us up at the landing site. As a result, we had to walk for two hours along a narrow path, almost invisible in the dark, through the leafy forest of the island. Even then though, the boatman still did not show up. After a long wait, we managed find another boat which took us to the island of Lamu, to the medieval town of Shela, about four kilometres from the city of Lamu. When we finally reached Lamu, the police were waiting for us at the hotel – it was after 10 pm and two white ladies had still not returned to their hotel! Cases of seizure of foreign tourists by Somali bandits in the Lamu area had already been recorded. Fortunately, the trip to the island of Pate was not so dramatic.

The chronicle narrates that the first of the Nabhani clan to come to Pate was Seleman an-Nabhani: *Mtu alokuya kwanda katika Nabhani ni Seleman bin Seleman bin Muthafar en-Nabhani, na nduze Ali bin Seleman wa Athman bin Seleman. Aliyokuwa Sultan ni Seleman l'madhkur* (Werner 1914: 152).<sup>1</sup> In the text quoted by A. Werner, the first sentence does not refer to the city where Arab migrants arrived. In the text published by Heepe, as well as in

<sup>1</sup> The man who came first from Nabhani is Seleman bin Seleman bin Musafar of the royal family of Nabhani with the brothers Ali bin Seleman and Asman bin Seleman. The Sultan was the Seleman mentioned

the manuscript stored in the library of the Dar es Salaam University (Tolmacheva 1993: 371), the toponym Pate is named: *Mtu wa kwanda kuya Pate...* “The first person to come to Pate was...”

This event dates back to the 600<sup>th</sup> year of the Hijrah, i.e. 1204 AD. According to the legend in the chronicle about the origin of the an-Nabhani dynasty, the first ruler received the throne as a wedding gift from his father-in-law: ... *akaoa binti wa mfalme wa Pate, l’Batawiuna. Na desturi ya Waswahili wote hasa sasa—mtu kikuolea kijana chako, akisa siku saba’a za arusi, henda kumwangalia babake mke wake, humpa kitu, ndiyo kaaida ya jamii ya Waswahili. Alipokwenda Seleman kumwangalia, kamupisa yeye ufalme. Tangu hapo katawali Seleman bin Seleman l’Imadhkur* (ibidem).<sup>2</sup>

Nabhani himself, according to the legend, was the reigning ruler in Oman (... *naye alikuwa mfalme Arabuni...* “and he was king in Arabia”) and a number of researchers believe that this version is reasonable since the Nabhani dynasty ruled in Oman from 1154 to 1406. However, the name of our hero is not mentioned in the existing Arabic documents (Tolmacheva 1993: 168, footnote 1). The chiefs of the “true” Nabhani clan ruled in pate until 1152 (that is, until 1756 AD).

The first boatman in the city of Lamu, with whom I agreed on a trip to the island of Pate, bore the name of Nabahani and knew about his royal ancestors, although very vaguely. Many more bearers of the royal name Nabhani/Nabahani were on the island of Pate. At the same time, the descendants of Nabahani, the so-called Arabs, do not speak Arabic (not counting quoting of the Koran) and have virtually no connections with the Arab world, but somewhat speak disparagingly about their neighbours from the Bajun and Pokomo Bantu ethnoses. The name Nabhani is adorned on many houses, on benches and on mosques in Pate.

According to the chronicle, the state of Pate was very small at first. It included the capital city of Pate and a number of neighbouring cities: *Kwalina na mui katika matlai ya Pate, huitwa Kitaka, kwalina na mui wa pili walikitwa Shanga,*

<sup>2</sup> And he married the daughter of King Pate. And according to the custom of all Swahili people and up to the present time – if someone marries your daughter, then seven days after the wedding he goes to visit his wife’s father who gives him something, this is the custom of the Swahili society. When Seleman went to visit him [i.e. father-in-law], he gave him the kingdom. And from this time the mentioned Seleman bin Seleman rules

*katika matlai ya Pate, na Faza yaliko wa wenyewe Il'Mafaziyun. Ukaketi ufalme wa Pate na mii hini, Kitaka na Pate, na Manda ina mfalme wake, wa Manda mbali.*<sup>3</sup> It should however be said that it is not really so far away – the distance from the island of Manda to the island of Pate is about three kilometres.

The exact time of the founding of these Swahili cities is unknown. The beginning of the formation on the coast and islands of the Swahili ethnic community is usually dated around the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries. The appearance of many small early state entities, usually at the centres of trade (the cities of the Lamu archipelago, Manda, Pate, Malindi, Mombasa, Kilwa, etc.) was a result of ethno-social processes within Swahili “nationality” (Danilov, Zavyalova & Prigoritskaya 2008: 45). In all likelihood, trade settlements emerged earlier, because during the first migrations in the VII-VIII centuries, the Arabs found the already existing Swahili cities on the coast and islands, the names of which were reflected in the Swahili chronicles. It should be recalled that the first chronicles, in particular, the chronicle of the city-state of Pate, were written in Arabic script, which does not always accurately convey the sound of Swahili. Nevertheless, even a simple list of city names “clears up... a very complex and specific history of Swahili toponyms in general” (Misyugin 1972: 51).

The Bantu origin of most of the names of cities leaves little doubt. So, Watamu = *watamu* (nice, good people). The toponym Pate is derived from the verb *-pata* (receive) with a null prefix and a suffix *-e*, i.e. the meaning of the Pate's toponym is “something received”, perhaps “profit, income”. The name of the town of Malindi means “canals” (*kilindi* in the modern language means “channel, fairway” > *lindi* augmentative “big canal”). The toponym Kitaka is formed from the verb *-taka* (want, wish), i.e. “something desirable”. The southern limit of the Swahili civilization is designated in the chronicle by the toponym Kirimba, which, according to V. M. Misyugin, should correspond to the modern toponym Kilwa: Kirimba > Kiriba > Kirba > Kila (Misyugin 1972: 58). However, the authors of the Chronicles were not mistaken, it really was about Kirimba: on a modern map of East Africa, a group of islands, the Kerimba islands, located south of Kilwa, is designated.

<sup>3</sup> There was a town to the east of Pate, called Kitaka, and there was a second city, it was called Shanga, (also) east of Pate, and in the (city) Faza there were (rulers) of the clan of Fasians. The kingdom of Pate spread to these cities of Kitaka and Pate, and Manda had its king, Manda (was) far away.

All of the major Swahili cities from between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries are known. Archaeological evidence, confirmed by carbon measurements, indicates that these cities, including Gede, 18 kilometres from Malindi and Songo-Mnara, are clearly of pre-Islamic origin. According to archaeologist G. Connah, there is every reason to say that “these cities are African, and not Asian in origin, that this is not the outskirts of the world, but a centre for cultural development of local origin” (Connah 1987: 182).

The rulers of Pate expanded the borders of their state, and, indeed, the state of Pate was huge in its heyday. Under Sultan Omar, great-grandson of the first ruler of Suleiman, in the middle of the XI century, Pate controlled virtually all of the islands and the East African coast from Mogadishu in the north to Kilwa in the south. There were many wars (*zita zingi*), often characterised by treachery (*zita za hila*). Here is how the chronicle of Pate describes this period of his history and the ruler himself: *Akapata nguvu sana, akapija jumla ya mii ya Sawahili... kula mui kaweka mtu wake kihukumu, ndiyo asili ya hawa majumbe walioko mrima wote; maana majumbe watumwa wa yumbe. Hiyo yumbe ni ina la nyumba ya ufalme wa Pate*<sup>4</sup> (Werner 1914: 158).

The territorial expansion of the state of Pate within the Lamu archipelago (otherwise it is called Bajun) led to its encompassing a number of cities on the island of Pate (the capital Pate, Shanga, Faza or Rasini and Siu), on Manda Island (the cities of Takwa, Manda and Kitau) and on the island of Lamu (the cities of Lamu and Shela). Outside the archipelago, the viceroys of the royal family of Pate ruled a number of cities on the East African coast – Malindi, Ozi, Brawa, Mogadishu, etc. Thus, the Swahili cities lay along a coastline reaching from the southern regions of modern Somalia to the northern borders of Mozambique. This stretch of coastline is about 3000 kilometres long (Kiriamu 2005: 12). This area of the Swahili medieval civilization also included the Comoros islands, the Lamu archipelago, the islands of Pemba, Zanzibar, Mafia and Kerimba.

It is difficult to imagine how the rulers of medieval Pate, in the absence of high-speed vehicles, managed to wage victorious wars and control such a vast territory. Indeed, the legendary hero of the Swahili epic, the hero

<sup>4</sup> And he received great power and conquered many Swahili cities... to every city he sent his man to rule (on his behalf), this is the origin of the governors who are found all along the coast; those governors are servants of *yumbe*. And *yumbe* is the name of the royal palace of Pate

Liongo Fumo, took two days to cover the distance between the cities of Shanga and Pate (about 10 km), while the average person spent four days on such a trip (Matundura 2004: 36). Of course, in the epic, exaggeration is permissible, but even nowadays, in the era of globalization, we had to sail on a diesel boat for more than 3 hours to get from Pate to Lamu, although the distance is only about 25 kilometres, and then almost an hour on a flat-bottomed boat, because the tide began to turn and our large boat ran aground. At the same time, most of the way ran along a narrow canal, which was deepened and equipped with a lighthouse system only a few years ago. The harbour in the area of the town of Pate is not deep and the banks are overgrown with mangroves. Our boatman tried to first pass along the canal through the mangrove thickets, but this attempt was unsuccessful. Indeed, nowadays foreign guests are a rare phenomenon on the island. On seeing our boat stranded, local residents poured onto the shore with shouts of *Wageni wanakuja! Wageni wanakuja!* (Guests are coming! Guests are coming!) and, then, they tailed us during our tour of the city and its attractions.

So, at the present time most of the medieval cities exist only in the form of debris. On the site of the city of Shela on Lamu island is now a resort village with rich villas and hotels. Local residents are only 200-300 people. From the olden times the Friday mosque of the XV century with a conical minaret was preserved on the coast.

The central part of Lamu city has been preserved well. The city is a smaller version of Zanzibar with narrow, closely built streets. There is an almost complete lack of cars (there are only two cars and a tractor on the island) and the main means of transport comes in the form of six thousand donkeys.

All that remains of the cities on the island of Manda are ruins, protected as museum sites. The coastline of these islands has been intensively developed, so that their original aspect has disappeared. The island of Pate has still avoided this fate, although, in comparison with Lamu, its cities of Pate, Faza and Siu look abandoned. The former metropolitan Pate is still of interest, if only because it has hardly been affected by modern civilization. There is no electricity on the island (although there is a generator that supplies a small peeling mill, and the local people are very proud of it) and the townspeople are engaged in traditional craftsmen practice fishing, navigation and field farming while women perform household work and weave rugs and make mats from coconut palm leaves, also used to cover

roofs. The island of Pate is still a reserved place where you can become acquainted with the traditional way of life and the urban culture of the Swahili community.

Such large cities as Zanzibar in Tanzania and Lamu, Malindi and Mombasa in Kenya have become centres for tourists and their former appearance only survives in the older quarters, which are also subject to restructuring and renovation, while losing their extravagance and authenticity. Modern hotels to attract tourists are being built in the old neighbourhoods, which sharply distort their pristine appearance.

In this respect, the town of Pate is an exception. It is one of those cities whose island location and proximity to the mainland have contributed to the development of maritime trade and, at the same time, protected the inhabitants from the unexpected invasions of the enemy. The hiking trails have not yet been laid this far due to the distance of the island of Pate from the airport on the island of Manda and from the island of Lamu, which is already well known to tourists. The coasts of the islands of Manda and Lamu, separated by a narrow strait, have been built up with European villas and the original Swahili architecture has been overshadowed or even destroyed. Indeed, there is only one 15<sup>th</sup> century mosque left in the city of Shela on the island of Lamu. On the other hand, in the city of Pate, there are many objects that were built during the “golden age” of this city-state.

The modern city of Pate, like the traditional Swahili town, is divided into two quarters. Prosperous merchants lived in the richer stone quarter – this is the “upper city” of Mitayu (*Mitaa ya juu* “upper quarters”). This quarter, as a rule, was surrounded by a wall (*boma*) or a bastion (*buruji*), which separated it from an adobe area inhabited by lesser noble townspeople engaged in fishing and farming. The second quarter, or “lower city”, was called Kitokwa, i.e. “a place for the evicted” (from the passive form of the verb *-toka* “to go out, to leave”). There also are two quarters in the present town of Pate: Mitayu, inhabited by the “Arabs” (*waarabu*, *waungwana*), who consider themselves descendants of the Nabhani family, the founders of the Pate dynasty, and the Kichokwe district, where the ordinary non-privileged Africans (*watwana*), from the Bajun and Pokomo ethnoses, live. Both quarters are mainly built of coral limestone, but the “Arab” area looks more well-groomed and cleaner. In the “African” quarter, you can also see more simple adobe houses with roofs made of palm leaves. In the city, there are functioning mosques and the ruins of a dozen Muslim mosques and Portuguese churches while an old cemetery and

the Sultan's palace have been preserved. Local residents remember their rich past and are ready to tell the story behind each now-dilapidated house for hours.

A typical island house of a wealthy Swahili man was usually two-storeyed. The first floor was intended for slaves, the second floor constituted the owners' premises. The chronicle of Pate describes the wealth of the Swahili house, where even the stairs were silver: ... *yakazidi sana mali katika nti ya Pate, hata wakafanya zitara za feda na ngazi za kutumia za fedha*. "...increased wealth in the country of Pate, they even made silver swords and silver stairs and a lot of utensils made of silver" (Werner 1914: 160). In Pate, a number of houses from the late middle ages have survived and modern houses in Pate are also built from coral limestone in the pattern of the medieval ones. Until now, people have lived in practically medieval "museum" houses with architecture and sewage system that are typical of the Swahili culture, without electricity and other such benefits of modern civilization. Houses are usually grouped around wells. Residential buildings in the Mitayu quarter have walls of from one to two meters thick, which keep cool and provide sound insulation. Narrow passages between houses also offer protection from the heat.

The house in which we were treated to tea had a typical Swahili two-story, gallery layout: on the ground floor there was a veranda with stone benches on the street, where guests were received, talking to neighbours, etc. The walls of this guest veranda were decorated with niches (*madaka*) in which various objects were stored, for example, books, decorative plates, various vessels and other ornaments. The veranda was separated by a door from an internal patio that served economic purposes. The honoured guests were received on the second floor, in the walk-through guest room, furnished with *ulili* beds (folding beds with a braided rope base). From the hall, a door led to four separate rooms for the hosts and their children. There was also a kerosene-fired kitchen and a bathroom (*msala*) on the second floor. In the bathroom, there was a stone pool with water, used for bathing and draining. The sewage system was designed in such a way as to hide the smell in the house or in the street. There is a fine museum of local lore in the city of Lamu, created with the sponsorship of the University of Bayreuth. This is located in the former Sultan's palace. The bathroom in the palace is completely identical to those usually found in the modern city of Pate. Therefore, our contemporaries are truly living in the middle ages! In this respect, the town of Pate is unique and its small population has not yet caused irreparable damage to the medieval appearance of their city.

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MAMA DAISY SYKES (MWAMVUA BINTI MRISHO):  
MUSICA, POLITICA ED EMANCIPAZIONE FEMMINILE IN TANGANYIKA\*

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*Mama* Daisy Sykes (1929-2009) è stata una donna speciale, la cui traiettoria di vita si potrebbe definire atipica e, per certi aspetti, comune alle donne tanzaniane di una certa generazione. Il suo nome di nascita era Mwamvua, Mwamvua *binti* (figlia di) Mrisho, il nome di suo padre che in passato fungeva da cognome. Ma nella cultura swahili una donna è più spesso conosciuta con il nome della primogenita o del primogenito, preceduto dalla parola *mama*. Perciò *mama* Daisy<sup>1</sup> (dalla figlia Daisy, nata nel 1947) è il nome che tutti usano comunemente per riferirsi a lei.

Ho conosciuto *mama* Daisy nel 2000, durante la mia ricerca sul campo sulle donne che negli anni Cinquanta avevano partecipato alla lotta pacifica per l'indipendenza nazionale (1961) nell'ambito del Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), fondato nel 1954. *Mama* Daisy ha fatto parte del TANU, dell'*Umoja wa wanawake wa Tanzania* (UWT), e del *Chama cha Mapinduzi* (CCM), il nome che il TANU assunse nel 1977. Già nel corso della conversazione telefonica che precedette il nostro primo incontro, *mama* Daisy mi chiamò *shoga*,

\* Questo saggio deriva in parte dalla mia tesi di laurea sulle donne che appoggiarono la lotta per l'indipendenza in Tanganyika, tesi basata in larga misura su una ricerca sul campo condotta tra agosto e novembre 2000 in due contesti urbani e due semi-rurali (Dar es Salaam, Morogoro, Kilosa e Kimamba), e scritta sotto la supervisione dei professori Alessandro Triulzi (relatore) e Maria Cristina Ercolessi, correlatrice e ispiratrice dell'argomento di ricerca. Fondamentale nel prendere contatti con *mama* Daisy è stato l'aiuto del compianto lettore di swahili Abedi Tandika (1947-2006), grazie al quale ho incontrato Kleist Sykes (scomparso nel 2017), figlio di *mama* Daisy, e sindaco di Dar es Salaam tra il 2000 e il 2005. Un ringraziamento speciale va alla carissima professoressa Elena Z. Bertoncini, che per quattro anni mi ha insegnato lingua e letteratura swahili con rigore, umiltà, garbo e con un tenero e riservato senso dell'umorismo. È a lei che dedico questo saggio.

<sup>1</sup> Anche Dezi, rispettando la swahilizazione del nome.

appellativo che mi fu affettuosamente ripetuto quando la incontrai, nella sua casa in stile coloniale parte della *Shirika la Nyumba la Taifa* (National House Corporation) nel quartiere di Upanga a Dar es Salaam. Essere definite *shoga* nel contesto di un'interazione prettamente femminile – anche in presenza di un notevole stacco generazionale o culturale tra due donne – non è certo un'esperienza unica per una ricercatrice straniera in Tanzania. Nel mio caso, l'appellativo fu accompagnato da un'accoglienza entusiastica da parte di *mama* Daisy e mi rivelò subito la sua personalità energica e aperta. Tra di noi si creò un rapporto di simpatia reciproca, e da allora ci incontrammo spesso, sia durante la mia permanenza nel corso di quell'anno, sia nei miei viaggi di ricerca successivi. Quando andavo a farle visita, venivo regolarmente invitata a pranzo; a volte la accompagnavo con il suo autista personale (vantaggio di essere la vedova di un uomo autorevole) a trovare la nipote Mwamvua, che allora lavorava in un negozio di telefonia; fu con *mama* Daisy che andai all'aeroporto ad accogliere le spoglie di Bibi Titi Mohamed, sulla quale tornerò a breve, e poi al funerale di quest'ultima.<sup>2</sup>

*Mama* Daisy era una persona in vista a Dar es Salaam. Era la vedova di Abdulwahid Sykes (detto Abdul; 1924-1968), da cui aveva avuto quattro figli (ne aveva avuti due dal matrimonio precedente); era la cognata di Ally K. Sykes e la nuora di Kleist Sykes.<sup>3</sup> Oltre che uomo d'affari, il notevole Kleist Sykes (Pangani, 1894 - Dar es Salaam, 1949) era stato tra i fondatori e primo segretario della African Association (organizzazione politica progenitrice del TAA, da qui nacque il TANU) nel 1929.<sup>4</sup> Nel 1933 Kleist aveva poi fondato

<sup>2</sup> Bibi Titi è deceduta il 9 novembre 2000 in un ospedale sudafricano. Quando la sua salma è stata riportata in Tanzania, ho partecipato insieme a *mama* Daisy e ad altri veterani del CCM al ritorno delle sue spoglie all'aeroporto di Dar es Salaam, e poi ho preso parte al funerale islamico nella casa di Bibi Titi a Upanga. Quando l'allora presidente Benjamin William Mkapa ha preso la parola, ha enfatizzato: "Che cosa sarebbe stato il TANU senza Bibi Titi?", aggiungendo che "il suo entusiasmo è rimasto vivo." Qualche giorno dopo sul canale locale DTV (Dar es Salaam Television) è andato in onda un programma su Bibi Titi intitolato *Nuru ya Wanawake*, al quale *mama* Daisy era stata invitata a intervenire, anche se non ne prese parte.

<sup>3</sup> Il padre di Kleist, Sykes Mbuwan, era un mercenario al servizio dei tedeschi originario di Inhambane, in Mozambico. I cosiddetti mercenari "Zulu" (in realtà si trattava di uomini Shangaan, la cui similitudine con la popolazione Zulu si deve alla comune appartenenza al gruppo linguistico nguni) furono impiegati dai tedeschi in varie campagne militari contro la popolazione locale sia negli anni Novanta del XIX secolo che nella guerra Maji Maji del 1905.

<sup>4</sup> L'African Association (AA), organizzazione semi-politica nata nel 1929, prese il nome di Tanganyika African Association (TAA) nel 1948, in seguito alla rottura tra i leader di Zanzibar e quelli del Tanganyika.

la *Al Jamiatul Islamiyya fi Tanganyika*, un'associazione per la promozione dell'istruzione dei musulmani in Tanganyika. Un'importante anche se breve testimonianza biografica su Kleist è stata scritta dalla nipote Daisy Sykes, la primogenita di *mama* Daisy e Abdul, e si trova nel volume *Modern Tanzanians* edito dallo storico John Iliffe (Sykes Buruku 1973: 95-114).

### **Il marito Abdulwahid “Abdul” Sykes e l'esclusione dei musulmani**

Abdul Sykes era un veterano della Seconda Guerra Mondiale con un certo grado d'istruzione formale malgrado la limitata presenza in Tanganyika di opportunità di scolarizzazione. Sulle orme del padre Kleist, Abdul era stato segretario e vicepresidente territoriale del Tanganyika African Association (TAA, organizzazione fondata nel 1948), e figurava tra i ventuno dirigenti descritti in un promemoria segreto del 26 novembre del 1955, in cui gli amministratori inglesi sottolineavano che Abdul Sykes era un importante membro del TANU che non ricopriva cariche e che fungeva da “aggancio tra il TANU e le organizzazioni islamiche.”<sup>5</sup> Il fratello di Abdul e cognato di *mama* Daisy, l'intraprendente uomo d'affari *mzee* Ally K. Sykes, scomparso nel 2013, è stato uno dei principali fondatori e finanziatori del TANU, di cui possedeva la tessera n. 2. L'altro fratello, Abbas (o Abbasi), scelse in seguito la carriera diplomatica. Esiste una biografia di Abdul Sykes pubblicata nel 1998. L'autore è Mohamed Said, storico amatoriale che grazie alla sua amicizia con la famiglia Sykes ha usato una certa quantità di fonti inedite, tra cui il prezioso archivio privato di Ally Sykes. Si tratta di un libro non strettamente accademico che nel 2000 era distribuito esclusivamente in alcune librerie affiliate alle moschee del centro città. Il volume è stato volutamente ignorato dalla storiografia ufficiale perché in esso, come negli articoli pubblicati nel settimanale islamico *An-Nuur*, Said ha sottolineato con forza il ruolo dei musulmani nella lotta per l'indipendenza del Tanganyika e la loro successiva cancellazione dalla storia.<sup>6</sup> Rispecchiando la tesi di altri

<sup>5</sup> Da R. de S. Stapledon a W. L. Gorell Barnes, Colonial Office, NO. ABJ.22. EAF 46/7/01, SECRET (closed to 1987), Public Records Office (PRO), London.

<sup>6</sup> Che il libro di Said sia stato messo ai margini l'ho potuto constatare personalmente nel 2005, quando una mia citazione del testo a proposito del legame tra musica e politica è stata rimossa dai curatori del mio contributo pubblicato negli atti di un convegno tenutosi all'Università di Dar es Salaam (Suriano 2006). Per gli articoli di Said su *An-Nuur*, si veda la bibliografia. Per una critica al libro di Said, cfr. Brennan 2002/3.

musulmani tanzaniani, Said sostiene che le personalità di rilievo del movimento nazionalista, tra cui la famiglia Sykes, pur avendo dato un apporto fondamentale alla vita politica del Tanganyika siano state messe in ombra dopo l'indipendenza. Said teorizza un vero e proprio sabotaggio messo in atto dal resoconto storico ufficiale (monopolizzato dal TANU) nei confronti dei musulmani, che sarebbero stati deliberatamente marginalizzati dal governo a maggioranza cristiana di Julius K. Nyerere. Secondo quanto mi ha rivelato Said, che ho conosciuto tramite *mzee* Ally Sykes:

Quando ho scritto il mio primo articolo nel 1988, ho nominato Abdul Sykes: non è possibile scrivere la storia del TANU senza menzionare Abdul Sykes, e senza menzionare i musulmani. L'intera edizione di *Africa Events* [...] è stata presa da quelli dell'*Usalama wa Taifa*, è stata sequestrata dalla *State Intelligence*. Hanno preso tutti i giornali per toglierli dalla circolazione. Li hanno... confiscati tutti. Il motivo è che Abdul Sykes è stato offuscato da Nyerere.<sup>7</sup>

Altri intellettuali locali hanno assunto una posizione simile, seppur più blanda. In un articolo sul settimanale *Rai*, Kambi K. Kambi (1994: 6), scrive che

Una corretta storia del Tanganyika non sarà completa senza menzionare nomi come [...] lo scomparso Abdul Sykes, Dossa Azizi Ali [...], Bibi Titi Mohamed, Abbas Sykes, lo scomparso John Rupia, Ally K. Sykes [...], e lo scomparso Hamza Mwapachu.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Mohamed Said, intervista, Kariakoo (Dar es Salaam), 6 novembre 2000. L'articolo al quale Said si riferisce nell'intervista è uscito su *Africa Events*, un bimestrale stampato a Londra (Said: 1988). Fino alla fine degli anni Ottanta l'informazione in Tanzania era interamente controllata.

<sup>8</sup> L'articolo di Kambi mi è stato spedito da Mohamed Said. Tutte le traduzioni dal swahili sono mie. Nyerere aveva probabilmente sentito parlare dei fratelli Sykes da Hamza Mwapachu mentre si trovavano entrambi in Gran Bretagna e si tenevano aggiornati sulle attività del TAA, stabilendo intanto contatti con l'ala fabiana del Labour Party. Nel discorso di addio tenuto il 5 novembre del 1985, quando Nyerere lasciò la presidenza della Tanzania (pur restando presidente del CCM fino al 1990), discorso rivolto in larga parte ai *wazee* musulmani di Dar es Salaam, che lo avevano sostenuto fin dalla fondazione del TANU, Nyerere affermò che era stato Kasella Bantu (attivista radicale del TAA) a presentargli Abdul Sykes. Questa fu peraltro una delle rare occasioni in cui Nyerere parlò in pubblico degli inizi della sua carriera politica, e la prima volta che menzionò il nome di Abdul Sykes in pubblico, associandolo alla storia del TANU. Mohamed Said, comunicazione personale. Per la partecipazione dei musulmani alla lotta d'indipendenza in Mozambico, cfr. Bonate 2000.

Ancora una volta l'argomentazione è che il contributo morale e materiale dei cosiddetti "unsung political heroes" sia stato centrale nella lotta per l'indipendenza. Ma ripercorriamo brevemente alcune delle tappe principali di questa storia.

Nel 1952, tornato in Tanganyika dopo una lunga permanenza oltre confine, il giovane Nyerere iniziò a insegnare alla Francis School di Pugu, a ovest di Dar es Salaam, allora a qualche ora di distanza – da qui l'appellativo *Mwalimu* (maestro, professore, uomo di sapere) con cui peraltro è ancora ricordato in Tanzania e nel mondo. Ogni domenica Nyerere viaggiava da Pugu a Dar es Salaam per partecipare alle riunioni informali del TAA, e in seguito veniva riaccompagnato da due giovani appartenenti all'élite urbana, Dunstan Omari e Dossa Aziz, quest'ultimo tra i pochissimi africani a possedere un'automobile.

Il 17 aprile del 1953 nell'Arnautoglu Hall di Dar es Salaam si tenne un'elezione per alzata di mano. Nyerere, che si era iscritto al TAA solo l'anno prima, ne fu eletto presidente. Ora, l'influente famiglia Sykes era stata presente sulla scena politica locale da circa un quarto di secolo, e sia Abdul che Ally Sykes appartenevano all'intelligentsia del TAA, da cui Abdul era visto come il futuro dirigente. Nyerere, invece, era appena tornato in Tanganyika dopo essersi laureato al Makerere College di Kampala e poi aver ottenuto un Master presso l'Università di Edinburgo. Cattolico, originario di Butiama (Musoma, nella zona del lago Vittoria), dunque non di cultura strettamente swahili,<sup>9</sup> Nyerere aveva ricevuto l'istruzione primaria in lingua zanaki ed era vissuto per alcuni anni all'estero: era di certo estraneo alla politica locale ed è anche plausibile che al momento del trasferimento a Dar es Salaam la sua padronanza della lingua swahili non fosse ritenuta soddisfacente da alcuni *wenyeji*.<sup>10</sup> Non solo, ma il fatto che indossasse regolarmente

<sup>9</sup> Se usato in riferimento alle persone, il termine swahili connota gli abitanti della costa tra la Somalia meridionale e il Mozambico settentrionale, la cui lingua madre e la cui complessa cultura sono dette appunto swahili. Tale identità include l'appartenenza all'Islam. Ma in Tanzania la parola *waswahili* viene spesso usata per indicare gli africani in generale. Oppure, riferendosi ad alcune presunte caratteristiche della gente della costa, il termine può essere impiegato con un intento derisorio o dispregiativo, per indicare una persona disonesta, bugiarda o ritardataria.

<sup>10</sup> Intervistata da Susan Geiger (1997), Bibi Titi Mohamed ha sottolineato di aver insegnato il swahili a Nyerere. Secondo la metodologia delle fonti orali, tale affermazione potrebbe essere letta come segno di un'elevata sicurezza di sé da parte di Bibi Titi (per le fonti orali, cfr. Contini & Martini 1993; Passerini 1988; Portelli 1991, 2007). A prescindere dal

*kaputula*, calzoncini corti, pare fosse malvisto e aspramente criticato da vari membri del TAA, specialmente i *waungwana* musulmani di una certa età e prestigio sociale, che consideravano tale abbigliamento a dir poco inappropriato per un adulto rispettabile. Insomma, agli esordi della sua carriera politica Nyerere era un giovane outsider poco conosciuto e visto con un certo sospetto da chi allora in città contava. Eppure fu scelto come presidente del TAA. Anzi, pare che la decisiva elezione del 1952 sia stata una mera formalità e che Abdul Sykes stesso fosse d'accordo a eleggere Nyerere. Che Sykes fosse il candidato più atteso è suggerito dal fatto che non partecipò alla votazione e che gli fu chiesto di lasciare la sala insieme a Nyerere (Said 1998: 131). La scelta del *Mwalimu* alla guida del TAA è stata comunemente imputata all'obiettivo cosciente della leadership di rafforzare l'organizzazione grazie al potenziale rappresentato da un africano con un alto livello d'istruzione formale, capace di parlare bene inglese e dunque sostenere la causa dell'indipendenza del Tanganyika di fronte alle Nazioni Unite.<sup>11</sup> Secondo Mohamed Said:

A quei tempi, Nyerere era l'unico ad avere una laurea! [Quindi i leader del TAA], persino quelli che avevano una certa perplessità [nei suoi confronti], si resero conto che sarebbe stato adatto a guidare il Paese all'indipendenza. Questo è il motivo principale, a mio avviso, per il quale Nyerere fu scelto alla guida del TAA, e in seguito del TANU.<sup>12</sup>

Come vedremo, dal racconto di *mama* Daisy traspaiono sia l'iniziale "osservazione" cui Nyerere fu sottoposto dai suoi pari che l'apertura progressiva verso di lui grazie alla sua personalità affabile. Da presidente, Nyerere condusse il TAA alla svolta verso il TANU, fondato il 7 luglio del 1954. Alla fine del marzo 1955 Nyerere lasciò l'insegnamento scolastico per dedicarsi a tempo pieno alla presidenza del TANU. Sembra che la decisione di lasciare l'impiego non sia stata presa da Nyerere, ma sia scaturita dalle pressioni dei suoi compagni di partito, in particolare della famiglia Sykes.<sup>13</sup> In quel periodo Abdul contava

fatto che si tratti o no di un'affermazione interamente accurata, i motivi sopraelencati rendono plausibile che agli esordi della sua carriera il giovane aspirante leader Nyerere rischiasse di non essere preso sul serio dai *wazee wa mjini*.

<sup>11</sup> Il Tanganyika era tecnicamente un mandato, non una colonia, e pertanto era sotto l'egida della Società delle Nazioni e poi dell'ONU dal 1948.

<sup>12</sup> Mohamed Said, intervista, Kariakoo (Dar es Salaam), 6 novembre 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Mohamed Said, comunicazione personale.

ancora politicamente al punto che, secondo Mohamed Said, alcuni veterani del TANU (i cui nomi Said non ha voluto rivelarmi) ritengono che sarebbe stato Sykes a scrivere il discorso che Nyerere presentò al Consiglio di Amministrazione Fiduciaria dell'ONU nel 1955; e in seguito avrebbe addirittura scritto il primo draft della costituzione del Tanganyika (ibidem).

### **Le donne del TANU e le reti informali di musica swahili**

Nei primi anni Cinquanta la casa di Abdul Sykes e *mama* Daisy si trovava al centro di dibattito politico sul futuro del Tanganyika. *Mama* Daisy fu testimone e protagonista del fermento politico di quel periodo, sia pure non sempre con un ruolo di primissimo piano, a causa degli impegni nella cura dei figli e di un certo controllo esercitato dal marito.

La partecipazione delle donne alla causa dell'*Uhuru* superò in pochissimo tempo le aspettative dei leader del TANU. Nell'ottobre del 1955, a soli quattro mesi dalla nascita della Women's Section, la sezione femminile del TANU, l'allora segretario organizzativo del partito Oscar Kambona scrisse alla società fabiana di Londra che la neo-presidente della Women's Section e cantante nel gruppo *Roho Mgeni* Bibi Titi Mohamed (1926-2000) aveva già fatto iscrivere ben 5000 donne. Alla fine del 1955 il numero di iscritte al TANU superava addirittura quello degli uomini. "Malgrado sia semi-istruita", tuttavia "sta ispirando una rivoluzione nel ruolo delle donne africane", dichiarava entusiasta Kambona (Geiger 1997: 12).

Secondo John Iliffe (1979: 572), al momento dell'indipendenza Julius Nyerere e Bibi Titi Mohamed erano probabilmente gli unici leader del TANU i cui nomi erano conosciuti in tutto il Tanganyika. Un elemento che dà la misura dell'enorme popolarità della figura di Bibi Titi è che nel 1962, subito dopo il raggiungimento dell'indipendenza, il suo volto fu stampato su un *kanga*. Nella monografia pionieristica contenente interviste alle donne del TANU condotte dalla storica statunitense Susan Geiger (1997: 187) nel corso degli anni Ottanta e nei primi anni Novanta, Bibi Titi Mohamed menzionava *mama* Daisy definendola una leader a livello locale. Detto da un personaggio chiave nella lotta per l'indipendenza, significa che *mama* Daisy ha avuto un certo peso politico.

Anche se un'analisi dettagliata della partecipazione femminile alla lotta per l'indipendenza esula dal tema di questo saggio, è utile sottolineare la convergenza tra la posizione di Susan Geiger, quella della ricercatrice tanzaniana



Rehema Nchimbi,<sup>14</sup> e i risultati della ricerca da me condotta: negli anni Cinquanta le donne del TANU, musulmane e cristiane, istruite e non, nelle città e nei villaggi, puntarono a un doppio obiettivo: l'indipendenza del Tanganyika e una più generale emancipazione di genere. Inoltre il loro vigoroso sostegno al TANU si avvale di un ampio uso di reti di relazioni informali. Per esempio, per convincere altre donne ad aderire alla causa dell'*Uhuru*, le iscritte al TANU mobilitarono i loro gruppi musicali preesistenti. Anche se *mama* Daisy si è limitata ad assistere alle esibizioni senza fare parte di alcun *chama*,<sup>15</sup> nel corso delle interviste, lei e le altre 12 donne da me intervistate hanno fatto spesso riferimento ai gruppi femminili di *ngoma*,<sup>16</sup> di *lelemama* o di *taarab*,<sup>17</sup> sostenendo

<sup>14</sup> In appendice alla sua tesi di Master, Rehema Nchimbi (1995: 126-127) riporta un documento inedito in swahili datato 7 luglio 1993, reperito presso la sede del CCM di Arusha. Questo fascicolo raccoglie le testimonianze e le rimostranze di quattro donne e due uomini che affermano di essere stati dimenticati dal partito e lasciati in condizioni di miseria dopo aver contribuito notevolmente alla propagazione del TANU negli anni Cinquanta.

<sup>15</sup> *Chama*: nel XIX secolo era una corporazione o una società di danza. Ma i *vyama*, le istituzioni che organizzavano molti dei rituali delle *ngoma*, nei villaggi e nelle cittadine dell'Africa orientale precoloniale giocarono dei ruoli molto più importanti di ciò che lascerebbe supporre la comune traduzione "gruppi di danza". I membri di un *chama* erano suddivisi in base al rango, il più alto dei quali era l'*akida*. Per poter operare in modo efficace, ogni *chama* era legato a qualche potente protettore. Oggi il termine designa qualsiasi forma di unione volontaria (partito politico, associazione, società, club) cui possono appartenere persone di diverso credo religioso o gruppo linguistico-culturale. Anche un gruppo musicale di *ngoma* è un *chama*. Invece *kundi/kikundi* indica specificamente un gruppo di persone omogenee, dello stesso gruppo linguistico-culturale o appartenenza religiosa, mentre *jumuiya* è un'associazione nell'ambito di un *chama*. *Shirika* indica esclusivamente un'associazione a carattere economico. Abedi Tandika, comunicazione personale.

<sup>16</sup> *Ngoma*: danza, percussioni, o una combinazione dei due; esibizione pubblica di danze e musica che segna ogni momento importante nella vita tradizionale swahili: ogni celebrazione rituale, rito di passaggio, ogni occasione festiva o di dolore.

<sup>17</sup> *Lelemama*: danza competitiva femminile apparentemente originaria di Mombasa e in seguito resa popolare a Zanzibar, era "la danza delle città e degli itinerari carovanieri, la danza delle donne 'emancipate'" (Iliffe 1979: 238; cfr. anche Glassman 1995: 144. Per la politicizzazione dei gruppi di *lelemama* in Kenya, si veda Strobel 1976). *Taarab*: poesia cantata swahili nata nella Stone Town di Zanzibar all'inizio del XX secolo e in seguito diffusasi in tutta la costa orientale di Kenya e Tanzania, e in seguito in vari centri urbani dell'interno dell'Africa orientale. Si tratta di un genere festivo e nuziale, con forti influenze musicali egiziane e indiane, che fonde queste caratteristiche con quelle proprie della musica swahili. Le donne hanno giocato un ruolo centrale in questo processo di africanizzazione. Un elemento fondamentale nel *taarab* nella prima metà del XX secolo era la vita associativa che ruotava attorno ai club di ammiratori. Cfr. Topp Fargion (1993: 109-125); Gunderson e Barz (2000); Aiello (2006).

che negli anni Cinquanta essi ebbero un ruolo decisivo nell'incoraggiare uomini e donne alla partecipazione politica.<sup>18</sup> Le capacità organizzative precedentemente acquisite in queste forme associative (conoscere e diffondere informazioni sul luogo e l'ora di una data competizione o esibizione di danza; stabilire con quali mezzi raggiungere il luogo; accordarsi su che cosa cucinare e dove farlo; decidere che *sare* indossare)<sup>19</sup> incisero non poco sulle successive attività politiche femminili, confluendo nel TANU. La vita sociale, a Dar es Salaam come in altri contesti urbani swahili, ruotava attorno alle associazioni di danza, fatto che *mama* Daisy attribuisce alla mancanza di altre occasioni di ritrovo:

Perché ai quei tempi non c'erano altri modi per far sì che le donne si incontrassero: dovevi necessariamente appartenere a un [gruppo di] *ngoma*, di *taarab*, [a una squadra] di calcio e così via.<sup>20</sup>

Non dissimile fu la funzione del calcio: ai club aderivano non solo giocatori, ma tifosi (tra cui donne) di provenienza, classe e religione diverse, e le partite di pallone divennero un potente veicolo di aggregazione e mobilitazione politica (Said: 1998; Tsuruta 2007: 198-212).

È importante sottolineare che a Dar es Salaam la maggior parte dei gruppi musicali, soprattutto quelli femminili, non erano a carattere etnico, ma erano fondati sull'appartenenza a una comune cultura urbana swahili, come spiega *mama* Daisy nel testo che segue. La partecipazione a un gruppo di danza contribuiva a creare una comune identità sociale e culturale e un senso di sorellanza (*ushoga*) che andava oltre le barriere etniche, elementi spendibili nelle attività politiche. In altre parole, nel momento in cui le donne entrarono nel TANU, esse seppero trasferire nella mobilitazione politica le capacità sviluppate nei gruppi di musica e danza. Nella nostra intervista, Mohamed Said ha evidenziato che le reti femminili erano già *pronte* al momento della nascita del TANU, e che le donne non ave-

<sup>18</sup> Anche se *mama* Daisy ha insistito sulla centralità dei gruppi musicali, dalla mia ricerca è emerso che anche le solide reti di relazioni createsi sulla base di attività economiche femminili come la vendita di *pombe* abbiano avuto un ruolo di primo piano nel contribuire alla causa dell'*Uhuru*.

<sup>19</sup> Non a caso, storicamente in ogni gruppo femminile di *ngoma* esisteva il titolo specifico di "addetta alla cucina". Nella cultura swahili, nel corso di celebrazioni quali matrimoni o riti di passaggio, per mostrare la loro comune identità e appartenenza a un gruppo, le donne indossano una sorta di uniforme, detta *sare*, che spesso consiste in *kanga* dello stesso colore.

<sup>20</sup> *Mama* Daisy, intervista, Upanga (Dar es Salaam), 25 settembre 2000.

vano fatto altro che “metterle al servizio del partito.”<sup>21</sup> Pur non avendo ricevuto alcuna formazione politica, le donne (molte delle quali vendevano cibo o distillavano *pombe* informalmente) acquisirono una forte coscienza politica e il loro impegno multiforme è stato fondamentale nel difendere la causa dell’*Uhuru*. Eppure nel periodo immediatamente successivo all’indipendenza, i leader del TANU, dopo aver usato i gruppi di danza a proprio vantaggio, insistettero per il loro scioglimento e perchè le donne aderissero solo al TANU e alle organizzazioni ad esso affiliate – e fondate da Nyerere.

### **Canalizzare le energie femminili in attività appropriate: limiti dell’emancipazione femminile**

Nel corso di un’intervista sulla sua partecipazione al TANU, *binti* Mwasaburi Ali, altra donna dinamica, ben inserita nel tessuto culturale urbano e swahili, e con un buon matrimonio alle spalle (era sposata al notevole Azizi Ali), ha fatto riferimento a un discorso di Nyerere, mostrandosi in pieno accordo:

“Non è un gruppo di *lelemama* questo! In cui le giovani donne cantano, e non c’è altro da fare [...]. Vi fate belle e basta, voi donne cantate e vi divertite. Ma il TANU non è così! Donne! Non è come starsene lì a ballare e non c’è nient’altro! [...] Un gruppo di *ngoma* è diverso dal TANU.” [...] L’*Uhuru*, come ha detto il *Mwalimu*, non è come il *lelemama*! In cui sali [su un palco] a ballare, e non partecipi ad altre attività! Questo partito richiede impegno!<sup>22</sup>

*Mama* Daisy ha fatto delle affermazioni simili, mostrando di avere interiorizzato la posizione di Nyerere secondo cui in fondo musica e danza non erano attività abbastanza serie. Eppure durante la lotta per l’indipendenza le esibizioni musicali avevano giocato un ruolo di primo piano nel diffondere il messaggio del TANU, e i leader del partito non avevano esitato a sfruttarne il successo.

Nelle nostre conversazioni *mama* Daisy ha anche trattato temi quali continuità e cambiamenti nelle attività e nei ruoli femminili negli anni Ses-

<sup>21</sup> Mohamed Said, intervista, Kariakoo (Dar es Salaam), 6 novembre 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Mwasaburi Ali (*binti* Azizi Ali), intervista, Ilala (Dar es Salaam), 5 settembre 2000.

santa e nei tre decenni successivi, analizzandone le cause da vera “addetta ai lavori”: non solo è stata membro del Central Committee del CCM nel distretto di Ilala, ma Bibi Titi Mohamed la volle nel Central Committee della UWT (*Umoja wa wanawake wa Tanzania* o Union of Tanzanian Women, sigla inglese per attirare le donne “occidentalizzate”) fin dalla fondazione. Associazione femminile affiliata al TANU e successivamente al CCM, la UWT nacque per volere di Nyerere il 2 novembre 1962, undici mesi dopo il raggiungimento dell’indipendenza.

Come si vedrà nella parte conclusiva del testo dell’intervista, *mama* Daisy sottolinea il tentativo costante di unire le donne a prescindere dalle divisioni interne e dal livello di istruzione, e menziona il fatto che la UWT si concentrò sull’emancipazione femminile organizzando attività quali corsi di cucina o di cucito. Anche se per motivi di spazio non è possibile riportare la parte dell’intervista in cui *mama* Daisy parla ampiamente della UWT, è utile sottolineare che tale associazione ha attirato numerose critiche per essere responsabile della “normalizzazione” dei ruoli “tradizionali” di genere e dell’“addomesticamento” delle donne: dopo anni di partecipazione politica trasgressiva (nel senso che nel corso delle campagne per attirare nuovi iscritti e sostenere moralmente i leader le donne si erano spinte ben oltre i ruoli di genere socialmente accettati), dal 1962 in poi esse furono inquadrare in sfere ritenute prettamente femminili, quali gli insegnamenti legati alla corretta igiene e alla cura dei figli. Per alcune femministe tali attività hanno rappresentato un chiaro passo indietro, al punto che la UWT è stata accusata di non essere affatto l’erede e l’incarnazione della sezione femminile del TANU. In effetti, nel 1962 la UWT sostituì nella struttura, nelle attività e nell’approccio altre associazioni preesistenti – di chiara matrice borghese, cristiana e coloniale, delle quali fu ordinato lo scioglimento – come la Youth Women Christian Association (YWCA) e il Tanganyika Council of Women (TCW), che all’inizio degli anni Sessanta era presieduto dalla moglie di Nyerere.

In un passaggio sulle donne della UWT nel corso di un’intervista con Susan Geiger, la sociologa statunitense Margaret Snyder, che ha vissuto in Africa orientale e che è stata consulente della UWT nel 1964, ha menzionato la figura di *mama* Daisy:

Quando le vedevi per la prima volta nei loro *buibui* neri, pensavi: “Santo cielo! Poverine”; e poi scoprivi che avevano una chiave di casa qui e un pacchetto di sigarette lì, e le guardavi con occhi alquanto diversi. Si trattava di un gruppo di donne della stessa generazione.

C'era *mama* Hawa, e *mama* Daisy, che era una donna più giovane, non istruita, [e] costituiva una sorta di ponte tra le *mama* e le donne giovani e istruite.<sup>23</sup>

Donna musulmana non certo di estrazione sociale elevata ma sposata con un uomo importante, fin dai primi anni Cinquanta *mama* Daisy ebbe la possibilità di interagire con ambienti sociali non conformi alla sfera delle attività femminili nell'ambito della comunità swahili. Come si potrà osservare nel suo racconto di vita, l'ampia rete di conoscenze – come pure il nome Daisy dato alla primogenita avuta dal matrimonio con Abdul Sykes – riflette uno stile di vita inusuale nel Tanganyika coloniale come pure nei decenni successivi. La prolungata interazione con diversi contesti sociali e culturali è anche riscontrabile nel suo modo di parlare, per esempio nell'uso sia pur sporadico di termini inglesi, spesso swahilizzati – come *mafaundaz* (founders) o *kudraiving* (un caso di code switching) – che in questo caso sta a indicare una mentalità aperta e cosmopolita piuttosto che un tentativo di esibire un'istruzione occidentale. Altre volte *mama* Daisy pronuncia termini swahili in modo spiccatamente arabeggiante: *tarekhe* per *tarehe*; *hishma* per *heshima*. Questa dizione, peraltro graficamente visibile nella stampa swahili degli anni Quaranta e Cinquanta, è ancora comune tra gli anziani ed è generalmente adottata dai parlanti swahili musulmani più giovani che vogliono apparire sofisticati identificandosi con la cultura araba. Al tempo stesso, le esperienze e gli incontri fatti da *mama* Daisy negli anni Cinquanta sono legati a un momento storico di intense attività politiche, in cui numerose donne (soprattutto quelle relativamente giovani e urbanizzate) si spinsero, seppure temporaneamente, oltre i loro ambiti socialmente accettati: parlarono in pubblico, tolsero il velo, viaggiarono nella stessa automobile con uomini che non erano i loro mariti. Molte pagarono un caro prezzo per ciò che la mobilitazione politica comportava: trascurare i figli e il marito era ritenuto scandaloso, al punto che varie donne del TANU andarono incontro al divorzio e alla perdita della reputazione. Non bisogna però considerare queste donne come vittime, né come indomite eroine in lotta per cambiare la società: una tale lettura non mi interessa, né *mama* Daisy vedeva se stessa in questo modo. Per lei, come per molte altre, si è trattato piuttosto di capire le norme restrittive nei loro confronti e i modi di aggirarle o adattarsi. Il testo che segue, tratto da due interviste condotte a settembre e a novembre del 2000, e da me in seguito tradotte e trascritte, può

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Snyder, intervistata da Geiger, Kampala, 27 gennaio 1996 (Geiger 1997: 192).

essere visto come una metafora dei punti di forza e dei limiti della partecipazione politica femminile. Da questo racconto si comprende come la dominazione britannica e ancora di più il controllo maschile (di mariti e leader politici) abbiano reso necessarie continue negoziazioni; al tempo stesso traspaiono i pregiudizi e gli ostacoli che ancora oggi si presentano alle donne tanzaniane. Come dimostra il caso delle donne del Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) di Sékou Touré nella Guinea degli anni Cinquanta e nel periodo successivo all'indipendenza (Schmidt 2002, 2005), le esperienze e le affermazioni di *mama* Daisy sono applicabili ad altri contesti africani.

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## Interviste

- Mama Daisy (Mwamvua binti Mrisho), Upanga (Dar es Salaam), 25 settembre 2000; 18 novembre 2000.
- Mohamed Said, Kariakoo (Dar es Salaam), 6 novembre 2000.
- Mwasaburi Ali (binti Azizi Ali), Ilala (Dar es Salaam), 5 settembre 2000.



## Testo dell'intervista biografica<sup>24</sup>

### *La scuola coranica, la Girl School, i due matrimoni*

*Maria Suriano:* Dunque, mi sono già presentata e ho spiegato l'argomento della mia ricerca storica. Vorrei sapere di te e della tua famiglia: come ti chiami, dove sei nata, e così via.

*Daisy Sykes:*<sup>25</sup> Mi chiamo Mwamvua *binti* Mrisho. [Mrisho era] il nome di mio padre. Sai, noi in passato usavamo molto [come cognome] i nomi dei nostri padri. L'usanza di chiamarsi col cognome del proprio marito risale a tempi recenti, ma molti sanno che il mio nome è Mwamvua Mrisho.<sup>26</sup> Sono nata nel 1929, nel villaggio di Kisarawe, nella zona costiera, eh!<sup>27</sup> Ma si trova qui vicino, nelle vicinanze di Dar es Salaam. Mio padre era di origine nyamwezi,<sup>28</sup> ma era nato a Zanzibar; mia madre era una Zaramo di qui.<sup>29</sup>

*MS:* Mi racconti di tuo padre e di come si stabilì a Dar es Salaam?

*DS:* Non so come sia giunto qui, ma andò via da Zanzibar, arrivò qui, qui sposò mia madre, e nacqui io. Innanzitutto, mio padre era di origine nyamwezi, mia madre una Zaramo. Perciò io appartengo a entrambe le etnie: Zaramo e Nyamwezi, le mie

<sup>24</sup> Occorre precisare che il testo qui presentato è frutto di discussioni avvenute in due date diverse (vedi la bibliografia), accorpate per ragioni di scorrevolezza in un unico testo. Le parole riportate tra due asterischi sono tratte da un'intervista avvenuta in seguito rispetto a quella principale.

<sup>25</sup> Qui di seguito userò le iniziali *MS* (Maria Suriano) e *DS* (Daisy Sykes).

<sup>26</sup> Oggi le donne prendono comunemente il cognome del marito, come specifica la stessa *mama Daisy*.

<sup>27</sup> Espressioni come eh! ehee! eheee! sono usate nella lingua swahili con significato enfatico e non sono accompagnate da una particolare espressione del viso. Il significato è trasmesso dal tono, dalla lunghezza del suono e dalla inflessione finale. Nel testo ho tentato di riportare questa espressione così com'è, per sottolineare l'importanza che l'interlocutrice attribuisce di volta in volta a un determinato argomento. Anche le espressioni: mmh! (di conferma) e aha! (quest'ultima è una decisa negazione: niente affatto!) sono state trascritte così come vengono pronunciate.

<sup>28</sup> Nyamwezi: gruppo linguistico-culturale della zona centro-occidentale della Tanzania. Gli Nyamwezi vennero maggiormente a contatto con la costa swahili nel corso del XIX secolo quando furono impiegati come portatori nel commercio carovaniero, convertendosi all'Islam e integrandosi progressivamente con la cultura swahili. Molti furono trasferiti a Zanzibar dove fino al 1897 lavorarono come schiavi nelle piantagioni di chiodi di garofano introdotte agli inizi del XIX secolo dai sultani omaniti.

<sup>29</sup> Zaramo: popolazione autoctona di Dar es Salaam originaria dei monti Uluguru a 200 km di distanza.

etnie sono entrambe.<sup>30</sup> Dopo di me nacque mio fratello. Due soli figli: io sono la primogenita e poi viene mio fratello, che purtroppo è scomparso. Poi mio padre andò via da qui e si trasferì. Andò a Zanzibar. Andammo ad abitare a Zanzibar e lì mi iscrissero a scuola, una scuola coranica. Ho studiato l'Islam, il Corano. In seguito mia madre disse: "Su, torniamo a casa, a Dar es Salaam." Perché a lei non piaceva la vita lì a Zanzibar. Sai, era abituata qui, con la sua famiglia vicina: a quei tempi, persino Zanzibar sembrava lontana! Decisamente! Dato che lei aveva nostalgia di casa, dovettero tornare qui [a Dar es Salaam]. E quando tornammo, iniziai a frequentare la scuola, la Girl School. La scuola di Uhuru, la Uhuru Girl School, per sole ragazze.<sup>31</sup> [...] Dunque, studiai lì fino alla quarta [elementare], perché avevo già iniziato un po' in ritardo dato che avevo studiato il Corano. Dunque, studiai fino alla quarta, poi entrai nella pubertà. In passato, a [partire dalla] prima mestruazione, i nostri genitori non ti permettevano più di tornare a scuola a studiare: una bambina musulmana, una bambina zaramo! [Sarebbe andata] un po' meglio [se avessimo seguito le regole della] etnia di mio padre: avrei potuto continuare a studiare. Ma l'etnia dei nostri genitori, [l'etnia] zaramo, prescrive che la propria figlia debba stare dentro [casa]. Devi imparare le danze, così. Quindi, purtroppo rimasi a casa, mi vennero insegnate le danze.<sup>32</sup> Dopo circa due mesi, o tre, si presentò un pretendente che voleva sposarmi, proprio vecchio, molto grande d'età [ride], eh! E io avevo più o meno, forse... quattordici anni.<sup>33</sup> Ebbene, ci sposammo.<sup>34</sup> Fui presa in moglie, ed ebbi due figli. Il primogenito, un maschio, e poi una femmina. Quando la secondogenita aveva solo tre mesi, o quattro, mio marito mi lasciò. [...] Allora fui davvero contenta, vedendo che mi trovavo a casa dei miei genitori [ride]! Stavo coi miei fi-

<sup>30</sup> È l'etnia del padre a determinare l'appartenenza identitaria dei figli. È interessante notare che, poichè *mama* Daisy è nata e cresciuta nella zona costiera, la sua identità è determinata dall'Islam e dalla cultura swahili, che il padre Mrisho aveva precedentemente abbracciato.

<sup>31</sup> *Uhuru* è il nome della strada, allora chiamata Kichwele.

<sup>32</sup> Qui si riferisce alla fase in cui era una *mwali* (o *mwari*; pl., *wali*), una ragazzina appena entrata nella pubertà, pronta per la *pardah* (segregazione femminile) e per le cerimonie d'iniziazione che precedono il matrimonio. La donna che si occupa di dare insegnamenti a una *mwali* nei riti femminili di passaggio dall'infanzia all'adolescenza è conosciuta come *kungwi*.

<sup>33</sup> Qui e in seguito il segno grafico '...' non indica un'omissione nel racconto, ma significa che *mama* Daisy ha avuto un'esitazione o ha fatto una pausa prima di proseguire nella narrazione.

<sup>34</sup> Il verbo *kuoa* (sposare, sposarsi) può essere usato solo dagli uomini. Le donne usano il passivo del verbo, *kuolewa* (essere presa in moglie), termine che rimanda a un passato recente in cui era l'uomo a scegliere la moglie e a procurarsi la dote.

gli, mio padre e tutti gli altri [parenti] erano qui, non mi preoccupai. Rimasi lì, per fortuna. E quando mio figlio maschio aveva due anni, allora per fortuna incontrai *bwana* Abdulwahid Sykes.<sup>35</sup>

MS: Come vi siete incontrati?

DS: Dunque, ero andata a una festa da ballo in onore di quelli che erano stati in guerra ed erano tornati. I giovani di qui, della città, avevano organizzato una serata per accogliere gli altri giovani che erano tornati dalla guerra: “Organizziamo una bella *dansi* per accoglierli, per divertirci!” [si decise]. Proprio qui [a Dar], una *dansi* in una hall. Se si tratta di una danza locale, la chiamiamo *ngoma*. Se è all’occidentale la chiamiamo...eh, *dansi*.<sup>36</sup> Allora chiesi a mio padre il permesso [di andare] con delle mie amiche. Eravamo state tutte nella stessa scuola, e ci andammo insieme. Per fortuna lì incontrai Abdul. Ci scambiammo i saluti [...], gli dissi che ero già stata sposata. E poiché mio padre era molto severo, e quella sera era stato invitato anche lui, io avevo paura persino di rivolgere la parola a un uomo! [Ride]. Ebbene, gli riferii che ero stata sposata, che ero stata lasciata, e che stavo a casa [dei miei genitori]. Per fortuna, quando il defunto *bwana* Abdul vide che non avevo un marito ed ero ancora giovanissima – eh? – inviò a casa di mio padre le notizie [necessarie per la richiesta di matrimonio]. Degli anziani vennero a portare la notizia: “*Bwana* Abdul Sykes vuole sposare tua figlia.” Così, secondo i nostri costumi, viene portata una lettera, vengono degli anziani a leggerla,<sup>37</sup> e ti chiamano per chiederti: “Allora, vuoi quest’uomo? Sposalo!”<sup>38</sup> D’accordo. E una volta che hai accettato, vieni presa in moglie. Prima devi accettare, eh! Se è il secondo marito, puoi rifiutarti. Ma se è il primo, non puoi rifiutare né fare nulla: se [i tuoi genitori già] lo conoscono, è fatta. Ma nel caso del secondo marito, l’altro, se sei già stata sposata, hai dei figli, [e i tuoi familiari] sanno che sei adulta, devono necessariamente

<sup>35</sup> Quando *mama* Daisy nomina il defunto Abdul Sykes, al nome antepone sempre (tranne una sola volta) il termine di rispetto *bwana*, e altre volte lo chiama *baba watoto wangu*. Pur avendo già avuto due figli di primo letto, *mama* Daisy usa questo termine unicamente per riferirsi ad Abdul Sykes, il marito che ha davvero contato per lei.

<sup>36</sup> *Dansi* o *densi*: moderni balli da sala accompagnati da un genere musicale con forti influenze sudamericane in voga negli ambienti urbani dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale (per i conflitti generazionali, di classe e di genere legati alla *muziki wa dansi*, cfr. Suriano 2011).

<sup>37</sup> La persona inviata con la lettera, l’intermediario o *mshenga*, in genere è un parente o un amico.

<sup>38</sup> Qui *mama* Daisy utilizza la forma attiva *kuoa*. Certo, potrebbe essersi confusa, ma tale scelta linguistica potrebbe anche essere legata al fatto che storicamente al momento del secondo matrimonio una donna ha una parte attiva nella scelta del marito.

chiederti: “Conosci quest’uomo?” [Tu rispondi:] “Sì.” [E loro:] “Sei d’accordo [a sposarlo]?” Così, accettai, fui presa in moglie. Lasciai i miei figli da mio padre e mia madre, e andai ad abitare da *bwana* Abdul Sykes.

### *La politica in casa*

Dopo il matrimonio, appresi che il padre dei miei figli era uno che amava i partiti, le riunioni. La gente andava e veniva da casa: quelli dei partiti dei lavoratori, del Tanganyika African Association e quant’altro. Fino all’arrivo del *Mwalimu* Nyerere, [che] venne a casa nostra dopo aver lasciato il lavoro. Venne ad abitare da noi.

MS: Fu prima o dopo l’elezione di Nyerere a presidente del TAA nel 1952?

DS: Mi pare che [Nyerere] fosse già stato eletto presidente del partito. Me lo riferì *bwana* Abdul, non ricordo se fecero l’elezione prima o dopo che lasciasse il lavoro [di insegnante a Pugu. Nyerere] rimase [a casa nostra] forse per due, tre, quattro mesi. [...]

MS: Che ricordo hai di Nyerere?

DS: Mi resi conto che il *Mwalimu* era una persona con molto buon senso, era molto calmo, si mostrava molto calmo... Ma purtroppo a quei tempi noi donne non potevamo assolutamente passare del tempo con un ospite maschio. Quando veniva, stavo seduta con lui, non parlavo. La mattina, quando si alzava, andavo a preparare il tè, ci salutavamo: “Come va, *shemeji*?” “Bene!” “Come ti sei svegliato?”, “Ah, bene!” E basta, se ne andava. [Un giorno], quando il padre dei miei figli tornò a casa, mi spiegò che quell’uomo era una persona... un loro amico, che era venuto [a stare a Dar], e che [sia lui che i compagni di partito] trovavano fosse la persona adatta a unirsi a loro negli impegni politici. E mi spiegò che, prima di trasferirsi qui, [a Nyerere] era stato raccomandato: “Quando vai a Dar es Salaam, incontrati con *bwana* Abdul Sykes, che è il segretario principale del TAA.” E credo che a dirglielo sia stato il defunto *bwana* Mwapachu, Hamza Mwapachu, che aveva studiato lì, in Inghilterra. Avevano studiato alla stessa Università.

MS: Come si incontrarono, Mwapachu e il *Mwalimu*?

DS: Non so come accadde [...]. Ma fui alquanto stupita del fatto che [Nyerere] fosse venuto a [stare a] casa, che uscivano insieme... Andava e veniva [da casa]. [Mio marito mi disse:] “È la persona con la quale stringeremo un’alleanza perché sembra essere l’uomo adatto a noi nelle nostre attività del partito.” Ma ora, tu [che sei una] donna, non puoi dire che ti sieda con lui, gli fai domande, [quali:] “Allora, *bwana*, da dove stai venendo?” [...] No, [non parlavamo molto], purtroppo lui stava in un’altra ala [della casa]. Io stavo in un settore e lui stava dall’altra parte, dove abitavano i miei cognati. Venni a

sapere che il *Mwalimu* Nyerere era nato nel 1922, e il padre dei miei figli nel 1924, perciò il *Mwalimu* Nyerere era più grande. Dopo averlo frequentato, [i leader] ritennero che il loro compagno fosse una persona di buon senso. Entrambi avevano studiato, ma il *Mwalimu* Nyerere era andato al Makerere, eh.<sup>39</sup> Il padre dei miei figli aveva superato [l'esame], ma non andò al Makerere. I colonialisti [inglesi] gli dissero che [...] che era [troppo] giovane di età per essere ammesso al Makerere, mm? Ma mio marito è stato molto utile al partito! Eh? [I componenti della] famiglia Sykes furono i primi africani a possedere una *petrol station*, a mandare avanti una pompa di benzina, a Ilala, nella strada tra Lindi e Uhuru. Dunque, la famiglia Sykes e Dossa si impegnarono costantemente per mandare avanti il partito: Dossa Azizi, John Rupia, i fratelli Sykes. [Erano loro] le persone su cui [Nyerere] contava per aiutarlo, per tutto ciò che riguardava la sua vita, eh! Tutto. La macchina [che usavano] era la macchina di Dossa, eh? Hai sentito parlare di queste cose? La usavano tutti, e trasportavano i leader del TANU. Abbiamo ospitato molti di loro a casa nostra, come ad esempio il *Mwalimu* Stephen Mhando.<sup>40</sup> [...] Venne [anche] Lucy Lameck; ci fu presentata e stette da noi.<sup>41</sup> Il TANU non aveva fondi, non c'era nulla, e tutta la sua esistenza [dipendeva da gente capace di acquistare] benzina per le automobili. [Il TANU] fu guidato maggiormente da [...] Dossa Azizi, John Rupia e i Sykes. Fu dopo molto tempo che Nyerere si costruì la casa a Msasani. [...]

MS: Abdul che ne pensava, dell'elezione di Nyerere alla guida del TAA?

DS: Quando ci fu l'elezione [del leader del TAA], mio marito non era dispiaciuto, ne fu contento. Quando quel giorno tornò a casa – me lo ricordo come se fosse ora! – [mi] disse:

<sup>39</sup> Il Makerere College fu fondato a Kampala nel 1922, e ammetteva solo studenti che avessero superato lo standard VIII, titolo che non era possibile conseguire in Tanganyika fino al 1933. Nel 1938 il Makerere acquisì lo status di Università. Nel 1950 vi studiavano solo 41 studenti da tutto il Tanganyika. Erano soprattutto Chagga, Haya, Sukuma, Zigua, Bondei e Nyakyusa, gruppi linguistico-culturali che avevano conosciuto un ampio processo di cristianizzazione. Nel 1955 il numero degli studenti provenienti dal Tanganyika era salito a 150, tra cui quattro donne. Nel 1959, su una popolazione di dieci milioni, c'erano solo 318 studenti nello standard XII (l'ultimo dei quattro anni di scuola secondaria), mentre il numero di certificati scolastici, che permetteva di proseguire gli studi, era di soli 245 (Iliffe 1979: 34; 44; 446).

<sup>40</sup> Stephen Mhando, un Bondei di Muheza, era un insegnante che aveva studiato al Makerere e con idee politiche radicali. All'interno del TAA fece parte del political subcommittee.

<sup>41</sup> Attivista del TANU proveniente dalla zona del Kilimanjaro, Lucy Lameck era una delle poche donne con un alto livello di istruzione formale nel Tanganyika degli anni Cinquanta. Subito dopo l'indipendenza fu nominata viceministra dello Sviluppo Comunitario e delle Cooperative.

Siamo appena tornati da un'elezione, eh? \*Abbiamo scelto il nostro *president*, e il segretario, e così via. E il *Mwalimu* ce l'ha fatta, abbiamo votato per lui,<sup>42</sup> quel nostro ospite che è venuto [a stare] qui. E così via.\*

Avevano votato, come venni a sapere, e Nyerere lo aveva superato, non so, di... come di due voti, seppi, eh! Ma Abdul, vidi che non era risentito, era assolutamente consenziente. “Ah, abbiamo visto che il nostro compagno è adatto! È capace. Allora è meglio che continui lui”, [mi disse]. Venne [a casa dicendo] così, ricordo che mi disse così. Né [subito dopo] mi disse che c'era stata una votazione, e che il suo compagno lo aveva superato. Questo sono venuta a saperlo soltanto in seguito.<sup>43</sup> Quando venne [a casa], disse [solo] che lo avevano scelto, che il *Mwalimu* Nyerere sarebbe stato il nostro presidente, il presidente del partito, “Ed è un fatto positivo perché appare la persona adatta, sarà capace! [aggiunse]. E dopo che Nyerere fu eletto, veniva [ancora] a casa, si scambiavano visite, eh! Si frequentavano ancora. [Nyerere] usava ancora la macchina di *mzee* Dossa, insieme a mio cognato Abbasi, eh! Si frequentavano! Ma forse dopo del tempo... Non so, forse dopo l'indipendenza... [Anche] Abdul andava dal *Mwalimu*, ci andava senza problemi, mi diceva semplicemente: “Torno da casa di Nyerere.” E andava a prendere sua moglie che allevava polli. Così, da amici! Eh! No, continuava ad andare, non veniva respinto, non ci andava esitando. Sai, quando uno diventa *president* non puoi fargli visita senza un appuntamento. Ma [mio marito] partecipava [ancora] alle riunioni del TANU; ci andavamo [entrambi], si incontravano lì. Alle riunioni del TANU andavamo entrambi: lui alle riunioni pubbliche del TANU, io del TANU Women's Section [dal 1955]. Lui ci andava in quanto membro del TANU, perché vi apparteneva, proprio come suo fratello minore Abbasi. *Mzee* Dossa era *treasurer*; c'era Stephen Mhando. Si incontravano tutti! Eh! *Bwana* Abdul smise di parteciparvi assiduamente [solo] dopo l'indipendenza. [...] Molta gente diceva che Abdul era stato abbandonato, che il suo amico lo aveva abbandonato. Dopo l'indipendenza la gente diceva così: “Il *Mwalimu* ha abbandonato il suo amico, non gli ha dato incarichi, ha scelto [altre] persone e ha affidato loro ministeri.” Andavano dicendo così. Eh? Ma non sapevamo perché! [Ride]. Forse no, [Nyerere] non si dimenticò di lui. In seguito Abdul se ne andò, ebbe un posto di *assistant* in una prigione.

<sup>42</sup> È significativo che qui *mama* Daisy, nel riportare le parole del marito, usi la prima persona plurale: “*abbiamo* votato per lui”, come a sottolineare che anche Abdul Sykes – il quale non partecipò all'elezione – fosse d'accordo a eleggere Nyerere.

<sup>43</sup> Qui *mama* Daisy si contraddice visibilmente, dato che poco prima ha riportato che il marito le aveva riferito dell'elezione nei dettagli subito dopo il suo ritorno a casa. Questa confusione si potrebbe interpretare come segno del fatto che Abdul Sykes non fosse così soddisfatto del risultato come *mama* Daisy sostiene, e che il periodo seguente non fu privo di difficoltà.

Lasciò Dar es Salaam per Tabora. Io non andai. E da Tabora fu [poi] trasferito a Tanga. Un giorno incontrai il *Mwalimu*. Era dispiaciuto, e mi disse: “*Bwana* Abdul ha avuto un altro lavoro!” Ma – come Nyerere stesso mi disse – [Abdul] era andato a chiedergli consiglio: “Eh, *bwana*, ho avuto un posto di *assistant*.” Dunque, non so come mai presero questa decisione, ma quando incontrai il *Mwalimu*, chiacchierammo e lui mi disse: “Ah! [con dispiacere], ad Abdul ho detto: Non avere fretta di accettare questo impiego, aspetta.” Allora io dissi: “Aha! *Bwana*, lui lo ha ritenuto un buon lavoro, un posto adatto a lui. Eh? Ed è andato via! [...] [Abdul ha deciso che] sarebbe andato per primo, avrebbe visto come andavano le cose, e poi [semmai] sarei andata anch’io” [risposi a Nyerere].

### *Come raggiungeremo le donne?*

Ora, nel periodo in cui [i leader appena menzionati] erano alla guida del partito, a casa di Abdul Sykes, lì ad Aggrey Street – questa casa esiste ancora oggi – dunque, nel periodo in cui gli uomini partecipavano a questi incontri, vennero dei delegati dall’ONU. Fecero un’assemblea pubblica. Noi donne vi partecipammo numerose. Era pieno di donne! Lì a Mnazi Mmoja,<sup>44</sup> eh!

MS: C’eri anche tu, ad accogliere la delegazione del 1954?

DS: Io non ero presente [...]. Ma quando il padre dei miei figli tornò a casa, mi spiegò: “Sono venuti dei delegati delle Nazioni Unite, credo che siano venuti a controllare l’andamento del partito, che tipo di iscritti ci sono, e quanti sono.” Gli stranieri che erano venuti avevano dichiarato: “Se volete che il vostro partito avanzi, fate iscrivere le donne, e in tante! E sarà così che il partito prospererà!” Perché quelli [della delegazione ONU] erano venuti a verificare: “Allora, tu – Nyerere – vuoi ottenere l’indipendenza? Hai degli iscritti al partito? Di che tipo sono i tuoi compagni di partito, e quanti sono?” Ma poiché [...] videro che noi donne eravamo in molte, sentii [gli uomini] dire: “Ah, il *Mwalimu* ha riferito [che secondo il parere degli] stranieri se vogliamo progredire, dobbiamo far iscrivere le donne, e in tante!”

MS: Chi ebbe l’idea?

DS: Fu un’idea collettiva [...]! Credo sia stata un’idea comune [presa] nel corso dei loro incontri! E allora pensarono: “E come raggiungeremo le donne?” Così

<sup>44</sup> Concepito sotto l’amministrazione britannica come *cordon sanitaire* per separare la Zona II (*Uhindini*, l’area commerciale di Dar es Salaam assegnata alla popolazione di origine asiatica) dalla Zona III (Kariakoo, il primo quartiere africano ufficialmente approvato dal governo coloniale), Mnazi Mmoja è un parco dove si trova anche la Arnautoglu Hall inaugurata all’inizio degli anni Cinquanta.

decisero all'unanimità di cercare il modo di coinvolgere le donne. E in quel periodo c'era *mama* Tatu Binti Mzee, che sarebbe entrata nel *Central Committee* del TANU [...]. La informarono della situazione, che volevano trovare delle donne che potessero attirare altre donne. *Mama* Tatu Binti Mzee disse:

Io non ne sono capace! Non posso! Però c'è una mia parente che è in grado: lei canta nel nostro gruppo di *ngoma Roho Mgeni*, delle donne ndengereko. Questa mia parente è molto brava! Vi aspetto, andiamo a cercarla, credo che lei sarà capace di trovare il modo di coinvolgere le donne.

Sai, in tante noi donne a quei tempi ci vergognavamo. [*Roho Mgeni*] è solo una *ngoma*, delle donne di città, delle donne swahili, della costa. Di qui. [...] *Roho Mgeni* significa che l'anima è come uno straniero che è venuto a trovarti: viene una volta sola, chiacchierate, e l'indomani se ne va. Perciò per l'essere umano e la sua anima è la stessa cosa: ti puoi abbandonare in qualsiasi momento [...]. \*Era il solo gruppo formato su base etnica [...], ma tutti gli altri gruppi non erano divisi in base all'etnia. [...] C'erano alcuni gruppi che non davano importanza all'etnia; qualsiasi etnia entrava a farne parte. Erano gruppi in cui si suonava soltanto: si suonavano e si cantavano solo le melodie swahili. C'erano il *taarab*, il *lelemama*, ed altre danze alle quali partecipavano tutti i gruppi etnici. Arabe, swahili, qualsiasi etnia: in modo che le swahili di qui, della città, potessero capire le canzoni che cantavamo, le parole che dicevamo. Ma non puoi prendere una donna che viene da Tabora, diciamo della regione interna: non capisce il swahili! E le nostre canzoni [...] le cantavamo in swahili, eh! Ma quelle che abitavano qui, le donne nyamwezi o sukuma che [già] conoscevano il swahili, facevano parte eccome dei nostri gruppi di *ngoma*, eh! Tutte le altre donne, specialmente le Zaramo, sono capaci di capire le nostre canzoni, i testi.\* (..) Io sono nata a Dar es Salaam, sono cresciuta a Dar es Salaam, ho studiato qui, eh? L'appartenenza etnica era sentita, le donne ndengereko si riunivano tra di loro, ballavano le loro *ngoma*, non in particolare in lingua ndengereko; [...] i testi erano in swahili. [...] *Mama* Tatu Binti Mzee era in questo gruppo, e lei e Bibi Titi erano parenti.<sup>45</sup> [Bibi Titi] [...] andava in giro a cantare. Perciò [Tatu Mzee] pensò di

<sup>45</sup> Tatu *binti* Mzee era imparentata con Bibi Titi tramite la seconda moglie di suo padre, che era la sorella del terzo marito di Bibi Titi, Boi Suleiman, e di Schneider (swahilizzato Sheneda) Plantan. A quanto pare fu da quest'ultimo che Bibi Titi e Tatu Mzee ricevettero le tessere prima ancora della formazione della sezione femminile del TANU.



chiamare la sua parente, perché Bibi Titi, lei sì che era una che cantava [...] canzoni swahili, *vigelegele*,<sup>46</sup> e così via [...]. Dunque, *mama* Tatu Binti Mzee andò a cercare Bibi Titi, che divenne la nostra presidente.

MS: Come sei entrata a fare parte della sezione femminile del TANU?

DS: Se [Bibi Titi] era presidente, doveva necessariamente avere delle iscritte al comitato, eh? Così mi fu spedita una lettera. [Fino ad allora] io avevo preso parte alle riunioni del TANU, ci andavo. Si trattava di quelle pubbliche però. Non facevo [ancora] parte di alcun comitato del TANU, no. Ma se c'era un'assemblea, il padre dei miei figli mi diceva: "Oggi c'è un'assemblea in un determinato posto." Ci andavo. Noi donne ci andavamo, era richiesta la nostra presenza. Dunque, mi mandarono la lettera seguente: "*Mama Mrs* Sykes, ti convochiamo perché vogliamo dar vita a una organizzazione speciale di donne, e ti invitiamo a diventare membro del comitato. Perciò ti preghiamo: in questa data non mancare." Fu l'ufficio del TANU a spedirmi questa lettera. In quel periodo il nostro segretario era [Zuberi] Mtemvu,<sup>47</sup> eh! In questa lettera spiegavano che io, Maria Nyerere, la moglie di Stephen Mhando – si chiamava Hilda Mhando – e la scomparsa *mama* Sakina – era decisamente anziana! [dovevamo recarci alla sede del TANU. Ci fu detto:] "Vi preghiamo di venire insieme qui per dar vita a un gruppo di donne." Eh? Credo che ognuna di noi abbia ricevuto questa lettera, eh? Ci andammo. Purtroppo, *mama* Maria Nyerere non venne, né la moglie di Stephen Mhando. Ma io, *mama* Sakina, la defunta Tatu Binti Mzee e altre [ci presentammo]. [...] A noi presenti, Mtemvu spiegò che eravamo state convocate allo scopo di dare vita, a partire da quel momento, a un comitato speciale per coinvolgere le altre donne, in modo che tutte le donne di Dar es Salaam si unissero. \*[Mtemvu disse:] "Ma questo è [un comitato] speciale, è la *Section* delle donne, e Bibi Titi sarà la vostra presidente, e voi [sarete] membri dell'organizzazione." [...].

<sup>46</sup> (Sing. *kigelegele*): trilli di gioia emessi dalle donne, ottenuti facendo vibrare la lingua, per esprimere gioia nei momenti di aggregazione, dai matrimoni ai comizi politici. Anche oggi in campagna elettorale le donne sono le più visibili e richiamano l'attenzione con canti, balli, esclamazioni di approvazione e *vigelegele*.

<sup>47</sup> Zuberi Mtemvu, abile oratore e assistente segretario del TANU originario di Morogoro, su consiglio di Nyerere si licenziò dall'impiego formale per mettersi interamente al servizio del partito (gli impiegati governativi non potevano infatti prendere la tessera). Il governo coloniale lo etichettò come comunista insieme a Stephen Mhando. In seguito Mtemvu diede le dimissioni e formò l'African National Congress (ANC, chiaramente ispirato all'omonimo partito sudafricano), in opposizione al TANU.

MS: Bibi Titi fu eletta?

DS: Non ci fu una *election* per sceglierla, no, no! Eravamo lì, nella piccola sede del TANU, eh! A [via] Lumumba [allora New Street.] Esiste ancora oggi. E da quel momento [decidemmo che] bisognava usare qualsiasi mezzo per attirare le altre donne qui in città. Programmammo che il giorno tre di ogni mese avremmo fatto un'assemblea pubblica all'Arnautoglu [...]. C'era una macchina che passava e chiamava tutte le donne per andare [...] all'Arnautoglu, per coinvolgere le donne [...]. E le donne risposero alla chiamata, e venivano all'Arnautoglu. Cantavamo, ballavamo, poi Bibi Titi faceva un discorso: "Amiche! Voi, eh! Dobbiamo incontrarci, dobbiamo fare questo, eh! Lo scopo principale è rivendicare l'indipendenza, ma non possiamo rivendicare l'indipendenza senza fare delle riunioni." Poi cantava e noi la accompagnavamo. Ci divertivamo, e [poi] ce ne andavamo [...].

MS: Che cosa vi spinse a iscrivervi, e che mezzi utilizzavate per attirare nuove iscritte?

DS: In molte abbiamo aderito [al TANU] qui a Dar es Salaam. Molte sono morte, alcune sono vive. Noi donne ci siamo iscritte in tante perché il TANU ci attirava, sentivamo che dovevamo unirvi ed essere in tante, noi donne. Perché sai, noi donne siamo persone che amano far baldoria, e così via, e richiamare l'attenzione, eh? Incoraggiare. Le donne si sono impegnate molto, in vari modi: con *ngoma* e canti, col fare baccano, con *ngoma*, *taarab* [...]. Se un leader veniva [in visita], quando arrivava cantavamo: "*Kimaso maso, mwanangu usimwone*."<sup>48</sup> *Kimaso maso*, cioè gli occhi delle persone cattive. Ignorale! [Dicevamo] a chi veniva. Ora, non dicevamo *macho*: dicevamo *kimaso maso*, in modo che non fosse chiaro che si trattava degli occhi. Oppure [cantavamo] *Hongera Mwanangu*.<sup>49</sup> *Hongera*, quando [Nyerere] entrava [in] un'assemblea. O [intonavamo]: "*TANU yajenga nchi, TANU, ah ah, TANU yajenga nchi*."<sup>50</sup> Cantavamo soprattutto le nostre canzoni swahili, eh!

MS: Come facevi con la famiglia?

DS: Fortunatamente, quando mi sono sposata con *bwana* Abdul, ho avuto altri figli: il primo abita qui; poi ho avuto una femmina, che è morta; e poi è venuto Kleist. Poi ne ho avuto un altro, Adam, che è andato a studiare negli Stati Uniti e ha sposato una

<sup>48</sup> *Kimaso maso, mwanangu usimwone* (in swahili arcaico *maso* sta per *macho*): canto nuziale molto conosciuto che Bibi Titi eseguiva ai matrimoni prima che in sostegno ai leader del TANU.

<sup>49</sup> *Hongera Mwanangu* (congratulazioni figlio/a mio/a), anch'esso un canto nuziale.

<sup>50</sup> *Nsasi zyabela mitwe* era originariamente un canto bellico *nyamwezi* eseguito al ritorno da una battaglia vittoriosa. Nel settembre del 1958 i membri del TANU mantennero la melodia *nyamwezi* ma tramutarono il ritornello in *TANU yajenga nchi*, e nel 1977 in *Chama Chetu Cha Mapinduzi chajenga nchi* (Said 1998: 256).

donna americana, afro-americana, e ora è in Nigeria; hanno tre figli. Poi [ebbi] Omar, che è scomparso nel 1995; era sposato, ha lasciato dei figli. Ho avuto due figli dal primo marito, ma dal secondo ne ho avuti cinque. Nel periodo in cui iniziai a occuparmi del TANU, ebbi un figlio. Mentre mi occupavo delle attività del TANU insieme a *bwana* Abdul, ne ebbi un altro, poi altri. E [in quei periodi] restavo a casa. E se non avevo un figlio [neonato] andavamo, ci univamo [agli altri. Quando i figli erano un po' più grandi,] li lasciavo a casa, con una bambinaia, o li portavo da mia madre, eh! E così mi occupavo [di politica]. [...] Ora, molte donne avevano paura di iscriversi a questo partito, perché erano consapevoli che: "Ah, questo partito rivendica l'indipendenza." Altre dicevano: "Le donne sono ignoranti" e cose simili. [...] Ad altre, i mariti non permettevano di venire alle riunioni. Sono cose riguardanti la situazione del passato, eh? Io sono grata del fatto che mio marito non mi impediva [di andare in] alcun posto: se si trattava dell'associazione TCW [Tanganyika Council of Women] del governatore [Twining], vi entravo. Se era il gruppo *Girl Guidi*,<sup>51</sup> vi entravo. Poiché il nostro livello d'istruzione in passato era basso, furono avviati dei corsi all'Arnaudoglu [Community Centre] per le donne adulte, e io ci andavo, per imparare. Mio marito mi dava il permesso e basta. [...] Altre donne aspettavano l'arrivo di una lettera ai mariti per avere il permesso [di partecipare alle attività pubbliche]. Ma io sono grata che il padre dei miei figli non era così, era una persona che apprezzava tutto ciò che a me piaceva fare per emanciparmi. [...] [Noi donne] andavamo continuamente di casa in casa [a dire]:

Amiche, lo vedete quest'opuscolo del TANU? Eh? Noi donne, dobbiamo fare tutte parte di questo partito. A mio avviso noi donne dovremmo conseguire un'istruzione adeguata. Il governo ci trascura. Dobbiamo iscriverci al partito: ci emanciperemo, otterremo condizioni [di vita] migliori, una buona istruzione!

Allora persuadevamo le [altre] donne, finché [non dicevano]: "Ah, allora, se è così, scrivi il mio nome. [...] Molte donne presero la tessera, [costava] solo cinquanta scellini a quei tempi."<sup>52</sup> [...]

MS: Chi suggeriva la strategia da adottare per convincere le altre a iscriversi?

DS: Non venivamo costrette, eravamo noi stesse a renderci conto che: "[...] Le donne non escono, vengono rinchiusi in casa dai mariti, eh! Allora andiamo a cercarle nelle loro case! Ciascuna nella strada dove vive." Oppure uscivamo,

<sup>51</sup> Girl Guides: l'ho scritto rispettando la pronuncia di *mama* Daisy, che aggiunge la "i" a fine parola. Tale associazione di Scout esisteva anche in altre colonie britanniche.

<sup>52</sup> Il costo effettivo era di due scellini e 50 centesimi al mese.

andavamo alla sede [del TANU]. Dicevamo: [...] “Se vediamo altre donne, le coinvolgeremo: Amiche! dovete entrare in questo partito!” Ma alcune [dicevano:] “No no!”... Le vedevo in ansia. [...] Eh, si preoccupavano. [...]. Sai, cose di noi donne, noi donne swahili. Sai com'è [...], siamo gente della costa. [Swahili] non è [solo] un termine famoso. Noi stesse tendiamo a credere che le donne della costa siano swahili [solo] perché parliamo swahili. Eh! [Essere swahili implica anche che le donne] si vergognassero di partecipare. Se una donna usciva di casa, doveva coprirsi con il *buibui* dalla testa ai piedi. Neppure il viso doveva essere visibile, i loro mariti non volevano, non potevi uscire se non ottenevi il permesso da tuo marito. Se tuo marito non voleva, allora restavi a casa. Perciò ci venivano spedite le lettere [a casa], in cui si diceva per esempio: “Oggi c'è una riunione, da' a tua moglie il permesso di venire!” E così via. Eh? Non potevi uscire senza il permesso di tuo marito. La nostra religione islamica, la gente della costa è fatta così: non puoi uscire così, senza il permesso di tuo marito...Ma io ringrazio il padre dei miei figli, che era un uomo che non mi impediva nulla, specialmente gli impegni riguardanti l'avanzamento del partito, perché era una persona che amava molto la leadership. In qualsiasi luogo andasse, andavamo insieme. Alle riunioni, persino se erano di uomini, io andavo con lui. Me ne stavo qui, in un angolo. Le donne erano poche, ma se venivo a sapere che Bibi Titi era lì, e le altre erano lì, ci andavo. Lui non me lo impediva. \*Le donne dicevano: “Eh! la nostra compagna [Bibi Titi] sta di fronte a degli uomini a fare comizi.” Era capace di parlare senza preoccuparsi. A quei tempi noi donne non eravamo capaci di fare cose simili, e molti mariti non erano d'accordo. Nel mio caso, il padre dei miei figli non mi impediva queste cose. Se c'era un *party* in cui partecipavano donne e uomini, ci andavo col padre dei figli, con mio marito. Ma essere capace di stare in piedi davanti alla gente a fare un comizio... non molte donne ne erano capaci. Tra di noi nessuna poteva. Sì, Bibi Titi ha avuto questa occasione. Era sposata, ma suo marito le aveva dato il permesso. Seguiva Nyerere, e molte altre persone, e [partecipava al]le assemblee maschili, eh! Del partito. [...] Ma quando eravamo state iscritte al TANU da un po' di tempo, il *Mwalimu* ci disse che dovevamo abbandonare l'abitudine di nasconderci, di coprirci indossando il *buibui*. Coperte da capo a piedi, non potevi camminare per strada scoperta.\* Bibi Titi, dopo che suo marito aveva accettato che entrasse nel partito, eh! – suo marito le diede il permesso – si impegnò molto, a dire il vero, a coinvolgere molte donne, cantando le sue canzoni; con i suoi comizi. Perché lei aveva la possibilità di seguire il *Mwalimu* Nyerere, di andare di regione in regione. Noialtre non potevamo [occuparci di politica] in quel modo perché eravamo impegnate qui a Dar es

Salaam, perché avevamo figli piccoli, eh? [...] Bibi Titi aveva una sola figlia, che era già grande, eh? Una ragazza grande. Lei aveva la possibilità [di viaggiare], e suo marito le dava il permesso! Ma anche mio marito mi dava il permesso, non c'era alcun posto in cui mi impedisse di andare! L'unica cosa è che spesso ero impegnata coi figli. Allora non conoscevamo cose tipo le gravidanze programmate, non ne sapevamo nulla. Partorivi [ride]: un anno la gravidanza, un anno il bambino [il tono è ironico e rassegnato]. Ero bloccata dai figli. Ma se non avevo problemi coi figli, andavo dappertutto. Eravamo unite, giorno e notte.

Se il partito non aveva fondi, facevamo un *fund raising*. [...] È un modo per ottenere soldi. Per esempio si organizzavano [performance di] *ngoma*, in un posto al chiuso, e si pagava il biglietto. La gente entrava col biglietto, c'erano [...]; molti canti [inneggianti] all'indipendenza [...]. Quando il *Mwalimu Nyerere* arrivava, lo accoglievamo festosamente.<sup>53</sup>

*In passato non c'erano altri modi per far sì che le donne si incontrassero*

[Oltre a far parte del TANU], *mama* Tatu Binti Mzee cantava in un gruppo di *taarab* chiamato *Al-Watan*, era un membro di questo gruppo. Era un gruppo di uomini, e le donne vi cantavano soltanto. Cantava canzoni di *taarab*, quelle canzoni: “*E-e-e!*” [imita lo stile emettendo un suono simile a una lamentela]. Ma era avvolta nel suo *buibui*, così! [si copre il capo per imitarla.] C'era un *tashkoti*,<sup>54</sup> una tastiera; *mama* Tatu Binti Mzee suonava, cantava e suonava. [Anche quelli di] *Yanga Afrika* erano dei grandi sostenitori del [TANU].<sup>55</sup> *Al-Watan* era legato a *Yanga African*. [...] \*Quelli di *Yanga*

<sup>53</sup> *Chereko chereko*, letteralmente “gioia nei festeggiamenti dei matrimoni, e di quando una ragazza ha la prima mestruazione” (AAVV 1981: 32).

<sup>54</sup> *Taishokoto*: strumento di origine giapponese, è una sorta di banjo.

<sup>55</sup> Introdotto a Zanzibar dai missionari inglesi verso la fine del XIX secolo, il calcio divenne popolare negli anni Venti. Trent'anni più tardi a Dar es Salaam c'erano 38 squadre regolarmente registrate. In genere le squadre sembravano nascere e vedere la loro fine nel corso di una generazione, proprio come le varie mode delle danze. Ma Young Africans (*Yanga*, seguendo la pronuncia swahili – *mama* Daisy alterna tra *Yanga Afrika* e *Yanga African*), fondata nel 1926, è tuttora una delle due maggiori squadre della Tanzania. Essa assunse un certo rilievo negli anni Trenta e fino agli anni Quaranta i sostenitori erano soprattutto gli uomini istruiti, mentre in seguito divenne la squadra preferita dai lavoratori non specializzati, gente dei quartieri popolari come Kariakoo. La composizione delle squadre rifletteva le divisioni e la struttura sociale delle città swahili (sedicenti *wenyeji* contro *wageni*; *waungwana* contro *washenzi*). Fin dagli anni Trenta a Zanzibar esistevano contatti tra Young Africans e il TAA. I colori di questa squadra erano il verde e il nero: quando nel 1954 il TANU scelse come simbolo gli stessi colori, divenne automatico

organizzavano una partita di pallone, (...) e il ricavato aiutava il TANU (...). Quelli dell'UTP [United Tanganyika Party, rivale del TANU appoggiato dagli inglesi] credevano che: "Ah! Chi è quello? Uno degli Yanga? Eh? Allora si riunisce [semplicemente] ai suoi compagni membri di Yanga!" Invece era un inganno: noi eravamo nel corso di una rivendicazione [politica]! Volevamo riscattarci dal colonialismo!<sup>56</sup>

Dei gruppi di *lelemama*, uno si chiamava *Submarini*, un altro *Safina*. [...]. Poi c'era *British Empire*, eh, eeh! [...] e *Ratusudani*, la gioia dei neri. *Ratulaili* era un gruppo di *taarab*, che significa "la gioia della notte", eh!? Come i fiori che gli arabi chiamano *Ratulaili*, i *wazungu* li chiamano *queen of night* [night queen] [...]. Anche *Nuru la anwari* era [un gruppo di] *lelemama*... Io ero in *Good Luck*, era un gruppo di *taarab*. Cantavo soltanto, cantavo le [loro] canzoni [come ammiratrice, non come componente del gruppo]. Noi donne ci incontravamo lì: sì, perché in passato non c'erano altri modi per fare in modo che le donne si incontrassero: dovevi per forza essere in un [gruppo di] *ngoma*, o di *taarab*, o di calcio e così via. Poi quando [...] è nato questo partito, il TANU, molti gruppi sono spariti, perché le donne si incontravano molto spesso nei partiti politici.<sup>57</sup> [...]

MS: Quale era il rapporto tra il TANU e i gruppi musicali?

DS: Il TANU [diceva]: "Non interferite con i gruppi di *ngoma*, no, no! Se entri nel TANU, dovrai occuparti [solo] di ciò che riguarda le vicende del TANU." Nel momento in cui la politica significò essere nel TANU, allora non ci associammo ai gruppi musicali. Se [coinvolgevamo] *Al-Watan*, si suonava, si ballava. [Delle squadre di calcio], chiamavano soprattutto *Yanga Afrika*, mmh! *Yanga Afrika* si è dedicato molto ad associarsi con il TANU: il TANU non aveva fondi, eh!? Allora vari gruppi di volta in volta si offrivano per le esibizioni di *ngoma*, per fare un *fund raising* per racimolare una data somma. Eh! [Quelli di] *Yanga Afrika* potevano farlo organizzando una partita di pallone: il pubblico entrava, [assisteva alla partita], e i ricavi andavano a sostegno del TANU. [Oppure] i membri di *Egyptian* organizzavano un concerto di *taarab*, la gente vi entrava a pagamento, e i soldi guadagnati venivano portati [al partito] [...].

MS: Come facevate per convincere le donne in altre zone, nelle campagne?

DS: Per esempio, noi a Dar es Salaam che ci conoscevano tutte e conoscevano i nostri problemi, le nostre difficoltà, ora andavamo [nelle aree rurali], e spiegavamo:

identificare i tifosi di questa squadra con i sostenitori del TANU. Cfr. Iliffe (1979: 393); Said (1998: 188; 2000: 9); Tsuruta (2007: 198-212).

<sup>56</sup> Mama Daisy, intervista, Upanga (Dar es Salaam), 18 novembre 2000.

<sup>57</sup> Come spiegato in precedenza, il termine *chama* viene usato in swahili sia per designare un gruppo musicale che un partito politico.

Amiche! C'è questo partito [...] che può apportare l'indipendenza, in modo che potremo decidere da noi le nostre cose, noi cittadine di questo Paese, mmh? Come avete sentito, anche il *Mwalimu* Nyerere ne fa parte e, come avete saputo, il *Mwalimu* Nyerere fa i suoi discorsi, eh? Se otterremo l'*Uhuru*, avremo l'istruzione. Per esempio: [al momento noi donne] non abbiamo un'istruzione adeguata. Noi donne veniamo chiuse dentro e basta, senza avere la possibilità di far nulla, senza essere a conoscenza di nulla. Ma questo partito [...] è per l'emancipazione! Per stimolare noi donne a istruirci, per far sì che i bambini abbiano l'istruzione e tutto il necessario!

Molti, sì... molti uomini pensavano: “Eh, dove deve andare di nuovo mia moglie, deve andare a portare il progresso. Ma quale progresso!? Che cos'è?” Non so: forse, secondo le esperienze di alcune mie compagne, [gli uomini reagivano così]. Ma a dire la verità, nei luoghi in cui andavo io, molte ti prestavano ascolto, dicevano: “Ah, davvero? D'accordo!” [aderendo prontamente]. Dunque, specialmente se si erano trovate d'accordo [con il messaggio e l'obiettivo politico], [...] prendevano [la tessera]. [...] A quei tempi la cosa più difficile per noi donne era andare a convincere la gente [ad aderire al TANU]. [...]. [Le] incoraggiavi [dicendo]: “Il *Mwalimu* Nyerere [...] ci sarà, terrà un discorso. Venite ad ascoltarlo, eh? E Bibi Titi, sarà pre-sente anche lei. [...] Venite, ascoltatela.” Perciò accorrevano numerose.

MS: Come erano i rapporti tra donne di diversa estrazione sociale?

DS: Le donne emancipate – anche se non ce n'erano molte che avevano studiato, specialmente della costa – non erano in molte. Semmai le nostre compagne dell'interno [del Tanganyika], o le cristiane: ce n'erano molte [...]. [Nel TANU] c'erano molte donne, a dire il vero... molte musulmane, perché tante [erano] della costa. Qui eravamo in tante a far iscrivere [le altre, e] molte erano musulmane. Nell'interno, ogni partito si basa sulle condizioni di vita degli abitanti: se lì, in un villaggio, ci sono molte musulmane, tutte [le altre] devono necessariamente essere musulmane. Se nella zona in cui si trova un dato villaggio ci sono molti cristiani, ci saranno senz'altro molte donne cristiane. Ma qui a Dar es Salaam c'è una mescolanza. Nonostante ciò la maggioranza [dei membri del TANU] erano donne musulmane, mmh! [...] Ma tra di noi ci conoscevano, ci conoscevano e ci univamo [al TANU]. [...] Per molti uomini era difficile entrare nel TANU. Addirittura molti uomini sono stati inseriti nel TANU da alcune delle loro mogli, dopo che noi donne avevamo convinto gli uomini. [...]

*La partecipazione politica: il velo, l'uniforme della Youth League e gli obiettivi della UWT*

Una parte della TANU Women's Section [...] entrò nella TANU Youth League, eh! [...] Se appartenevi alla Youth League, dovevi indossare una maglietta e una gonna. Senza *buibui* né altri indumenti. Ora, i mariti non volevano questa cosa, che le loro mogli andassero in giro senza *buibui*, eh! Ma molte altre accettarono. Quelle che non avevano un marito a impedirglielo, entrarono numerose nella Youth League. [...] E il *Mwalimu Nyerere* veniva in qualità di leader [...] Altri dicevano: "Ho visto delle donne, alcune indossano un vestito verde, eh!" Quei vestiti verdi venivano indossati perché erano gli indumenti del partito, del nostro partito, e [i colori] della bandiera [del TANU]. Molte ragazze indossavano una gonna nera e un vestito verde. Se c'erano riunioni pubbliche, [alcune] andavano ad assistervi, ed è così che molte donne furono coinvolte. Altre avevano i mariti che non volevano che le mogli togliessero il *buibui*, e che dicevano: "Aha! Io non voglio che mia moglie si vesta in questo modo!" [Allora le donne] venivano indossando il loro *buibui*. Ma in seguito, a un certo punto il *Mwalimu Nyerere*, prima ancora di ottenere l'indipendenza, indisse un'assemblea. Vide che era piena di donne, ma tutte indossavano il *buibui*, tutto nero. Tutte! E in un'altra riunione pubblica ebbe a dire:

Amiche, donne. Eh? Siete come... i vostri *buibui* fanno in modo da rendervi invisibili, eh! Gente apatica: non vi occupate di nulla. Voi donne dovete uscire! E se i *buibui* vi fanno permanere in uno stato di ignoranza, io li rifiuto! Toglietevi! Andate a occuparvi di cose come... lo studio: andate alle lezioni per adulti. Sono accessibili, eh! Se conseguiremo l'*Uhuru*, voi donne sarete libere di andare a lavorare negli uffici. Ma se indossate i *buibui* resterete sempre ignoranti e non potrete emanciparvi. Eh?

Allora alcuni [mariti dicevano]: "Non andare, moglie mia, perché lì dovrai toglierti il *buibui*!" Molti avevano timore. La stessa Bibi Titi diede inizio a un comizio [con queste parole]:

Amiche! I *buibui* sono i nostri abiti di noi musul...[segno] di rispettabilità, mmh! Ma non temete di venire alle riunioni: chi può toglierlo, lo tolga pure; chi non può, ci venga comunque! Mmh? Anche se indossi il tuo *buibui*, vieni! Abbiamo questo partito che vuole la nostra emancipazione, donne! Mmh! Che vuole il progresso, eh!



In passato sono stata l'unica a Dar es Salaam, fui l'unica donna che iniziò a non indossare il *buibui*. Io sono l'unica donna a Dar, musulmana, che ha cominciato a non indossare più il *buibui*. Mio marito era d'accordo, disse: "Non voglio. Non voglio [che porti] il *buibui*." Persino mio suocero [Kleist], il padre di mio marito diceva: "A che serve, *mama*, il *buibui*? è pericoloso per strada, con le automobili. E voi [donne], perché vi coprite il viso in questo modo? Eh?" Sì perché, quando in passato indossavamo il *buibui*, ci coprivamo il viso [...]. Molte donne lo indossavano coprendosi da capo a piedi – *gubigubi*. Allora mio marito mi disse: "Non voglio [che porti] il *buibui*." A mio marito non piaceva, prima ancora che Nyerere lo dicesse [pubblicamente], prima ancora che Bibi Titi facesse la sua dichiarazione. Se di giorno andavo a occuparmi di faccende femminili, mi diceva: "Indossalo pure. Ma se esci con me, andiamo in un posto, a un *party*, al cinema, non voglio che lo metti." Al punto che venni a sapere che la stessa Bibi Titi ebbe modo di lamentarsi in pubblico dichiarando:

Eh?!? [esclamazione di sorpresa] il *Mwalimu* ci dice che dobbiamo smettere di indossare il *buibui*. Ma come potremo [...] andare in giro senza *buibui*? Noi siamo abituate a indossare il *buibui*! Semmai *mama* Daisy, lei sì che può! Ne è stata capace!...L'ho incontrata [addirittura] per strada, per i negozi, senza *buibui*!

[...] Ma non lo disse con disprezzo, bensì come una battuta, un *joke*, *ujoki*, *utani*! Ci sono riunioni pubbliche in cui la stessa Bibi Titi indossava il suo *buibui*, sul palco, sullo *stage* col *Mwalimu* Nyerere, agli inizi. Ho una foto. [Era] con il *Mwalimu* Nyerere. Il *Mwalimu* disse:

Se non hanno uno scopo positivo...i *buibui* che cosa li mettete a fare? Diventate donne che non possono fare nulla! Non potete fare nulla! Eh! Molte volte venite solo sottomesse dai vostri mariti, che vi dicono di coprirvi. Se non sono i *buibui* a rendervi più *wajinga*, allora indossateli! Se li indossate e poi vi emancipate, partecipate al progresso, allora potete portarli! Ma se vi rendono *wajinga*, toglietevi, è meglio che li mettiate da parte! [Ride].<sup>58</sup>

<sup>58</sup> A mio avviso qui *wajinga* (*mjinga*: ignorante, incolto/a; anche stupido/a) vuol dire donne apatiche, incapaci di agire a causa di un prevalente oscurantismo culturale che le opprimeva e ne impediva la piena partecipazione politica.

Parlava bene, e davvero tutte le donne di Dar es Salaam iniziarono... Persino la stessa Titi, che aveva detto quelle cose su di me, anche lei iniziò a toglierlo! Eh! Una donna in passato non poteva stare davanti a una folla a parlare, eh! Doveva coprirsi col *buibui*, e in questo senza dubbio eravamo sottomesse ai [costumi degli] arabi. Se andavo a eventi come i nostri matrimoni swahili, ai nostri funerali, cose di donne, per strada, lo indossavo. Ma se andavo alle riunioni [politiche], non lo mettevo. Se andavo a un *party* con mio marito, non lo mettevo. Mentre in precedenza lo indossavo anche se andavo a un *party*. Abdul, il padre dei miei figli, mi diceva: "Non voglio che metta il tuo *buibui*!" Allora quando arrivavo nei pressi del luogo dell'evento, [per esempio] alla casa dove si teneva il *party*, lo toglievo. Lo avvolgevo in un foglio di carta, lui lo reggeva! [Ride]. Lo manteneva. E che [altro] avrebbe dovuto fare? Io stessa [all'inizio] avevo paura di togliemelo, nemmeno i miei genitori erano d'accordo, dicevano: "Perché nostra figlia si è tolta il *buibui*?" Lui diceva: "Dato che è mia moglie, fa come voglio io!" [Ride]. Eh! Ad alcuni questo stava bene, ad altri no. E molte persone sparlavano, e dicevano [di me]: "Eh, se la incontri per strada non indossa nemmeno il *buibui*, [al punto che] penserai che sia una Luo!" Sono quelle etnie del Kenya: qui in città vedevamo le loro donne che andavano per strada senza *buibui*; perché persino le cristiane, pur non indossando il *buibui*, si coprivano coi *kanga*. Ma lasciare [il capo] così [del tutto scoperto], camminare così, era una grossissima impresa per una donna, eh! Perciò anche le donne cristiane si coprivano coi *kanga*; [persino] le donne [originarie] di Bombay si mettevano i *kanga*! Smettere di indossare i *buibui* non è stata una cosa negativa, tranne che si trattava di un fatto culturale, lo avevamo preso dagli arabi in passato, era un segno di rispetto per le donne. In passato, le nostre antenate non avevano i *buibui*, andavano in giro soltanto coi *kanga*. Ma quando è stata introdotta questa cultura religiosa arabizzata, fu introdotto il *buibui*, per coprirci. [...] [...] Dunque [andò] così, finché le donne, una a una, non comin-ciarono a uscire allo scoperto. [...] [Il fatto di non portarlo più] ci ha fatto emancipare molto, sottraendoci all'ignoranza. Anche a Zanzibar per le donne come noi fu difficile toglierli, ma al giorno d'oggi non li indossano, mmh!

Ma le giovanissime iniziarono a iscriversi alla Youth League. Indossavano una gonna nera e una blusa verde, eh? Ma altre non potevano accettare [...]. Persino il defunto padre dei miei figli diceva:

Aha! Se fai parte del TANU, [va bene], ma la Youth League, indossare una maglietta verde ecc., no, no! Nel TANU Women's Section puoi, se state tutte insieme in un comitato. Ma [la TANUYL] a me non sta bene!

Quindi io, anche se ero ancora molto giovane, [non appartenevo alla Youth League]. Per lui era una cosa sconveniente. [...] Ora, eh! Una volta conseguita l'*Uhuru*, visto il modo in cui noi donne avevamo lottato per l'indipendenza, il partito decise che le donne dovessero dotarsi di strumenti propri in modo che potessero decidere da sé il da farsi per far partecipare donne di ogni tipo, di qualsiasi religione ed etnia [...] La UWT è nata perché esistevano [vari] gruppi femminili, ma erano tanti e piccoli: di *ngoma*, per l'emancipazione, e così via. Allora [i leader] dissero che volevano fare in modo che le donne fossero una sola cosa, che si emancipassero, che facessero politica. Ci voleva un'unica associazione che mettesse insieme tutte le donne. Perciò fu fondata la UWT. E la nostra prima presidente fu Bibi Titi Mohamed, e doveva necessariamente essere lei perché aveva iniziato nel TANU [...] Le donne di tutto il Paese furono chiamate qui, vennero a Dar es Salaam, mandarono le loro delegate, cinque, sei. Così demmo vita a questa associazione. [...] Ora tra noi donne fu deciso che non importava se avevamo le nostre danze su base etnica, ma dovevamo avere un'unica associazione che comprendesse tutte le donne, per la causa dell'emancipazione femminile. In passato non avevamo un'istruzione sufficiente, non avevamo l'autorità neppure per stare, che so, davanti a una folla a parlare. Ma ci sono state alcune che si sono distinte. Bibi Titi si è distinta, e noi tutte insieme ci siamo unite a lei. Tutte noi ci siamo distinte per aiutare il TANU, così: noi donne diventammo una cosa sola. [...] E fondammo la UWT per eliminare la discriminazione etnica, religiosa, eh! Tutte le donne del Tanganyika: *kitu kimoja*! Eeh! Per raggiungere autonomamente l'emancipazione nostra e dei nostri figli. Perciò furono creati gruppi femminili di cucito, di cucina [...], così: per emanciparci autonomamente.

**LINGUISTICA STORICA E ANALISI MORFOSINTATTICA**  
***HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS AND MORPHOSYNTACTIC ANALYSIS***



THE USE OF *LI*, *WA*, AND *NGA* IN PRE-STANDARD SWAHILI TEXTS  
(POEMS, PROVERBS, AND CHRONICLES)\*

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Thanks to its relatively old manuscript culture,<sup>1</sup> we are able to document language change in Swahili. Even if we take into account that Swahili is not a monogenetic unit,<sup>2</sup> and even if the modern dialect scene clearly shows a long history of mutual borrowings along the coast, the language structure as it is documented in texts which were written down before and during the 19th century can provide us with insights into the history of the language.

The language of these texts is mainly based on the northern dialects spoken in Pate and Lamu.<sup>3</sup> KiMvita, the dialect of Mombasa, plays a minor role, since according to all our knowledge, the flowering period of Swahili

\* This study is dedicated to Elena Bertoncini Zúbková. We have been in close contact since the late seventies of the last century. I am grateful to her for so many talks on Swahili literature and linguistics. My special thanks go to her for her numerous contributions to the annual Swahili Colloquium, which she attended faithfully every year from 1988 – 2017 the only participant of whom this can be said. As usual, I thank Ruth Schubert for polishing up my English.

<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive summary of the state of research, see Vierke (2014).

<sup>2</sup> Discussed in details by Güldemann (1992).

<sup>3</sup> It is not possible to define clear-cut linguistic features of the old texts in question. It appears that in particular, KiPate seems to be a special case because of its present-day similarities with KiAmu. Whereas Nurse (1982b: 167) reconfirms the views of early grammarians like Charles Sacleux and C. H. Stigand, namely that KiPate is a “separate dialect” which “has a proud history”, Mohamed Bakari (1985: 278) considers it as a variant of KiAmu and maintains that “Kipate does not constitute a dialect of its own.” Today (according to Nurse 1982b: 191; repeated by Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 565), KiPate differs from KiAmu only in two phonological features. In addition, in discussing the loan processes from north to south, Nurse & Hinnebusch (1993: 565) point to a “common Amu/Siu/Pate [language cluster] at an early point, probably before ca. 1600 (the Ki-Ngozi referred to by Swahili writers?) which intruded into Southern Swahili.” On the KiNgozi debate, see Reinhard Klein-Arendt (1987).

poetry coincided with the time when Pate and Lamu had reached the summit of their political power. The famous Inkishafi, the swan song of the glorious times of Pate, is mainly based on the Kiamu dialect, although some authors have suggested that there exists at least one “southern” version.<sup>4</sup> Derek Nurse (1988: 113/14) is quite right in pointing out that “The pre-eminence and the cultural and linguistic norms of the Northern communities was accepted the length of the coast”. Therefore, a direct historical line of evolution cannot be drawn from the language documented in the old texts to the language that is known today as KiSwahili sanifu.<sup>5</sup> It should also be taken into account that the overwhelming proportion of our data stems from poems, and only a small part from prose texts. Nevertheless, the old data give us an idea how some grammaticalisation processes might have happened in Swahili. The most striking examples stem from the domain of the verbal predicate and from the formation of relative clauses.

The aim of this paper is mainly descriptive. It will show how the two present day markers for past and conditional in modern Swahili, /li/ (past) and /nge/ or /ngali/ (conditional), might have developed. In addition, /na/ and /wa/ are also considered. The reason for choosing this topic is the fact that when grammaticalisation processes of African languages are discussed, only the Swahili morphemes /ta/, /me/ and /ja/ are quoted as clear-cut outputs of an evolutionary process. But the cases of /li/ and /ngali/ (which has not seriously been considered) remain somewhat vague,<sup>6</sup> probably because of their word category status: while the first three morphemes go back to fully inflectional verbal stems, the origin of the latter two is linked to “defective” verbs or copulas.

All the morphemes dealt with in this paper belong semantically to the lexical class of existential expressions, but with different semantic specifications: /li/ means “to be, to exist”, /na/ “to be with”, and /nga/ “to be like”. Their grammatical properties contrast with those of the fully inflectional verbal stems, to which /wa/ must be counted, the other verb of being in Swahili. The latter also conveys the meaning of “to be”, but with the clear inchoative connotation of “to become”. Interestingly, all four (/li/, /wa/, /na/

<sup>4</sup> See Dittmer (2006) for a detailed linguistic analysis of all known versions.

<sup>5</sup> The modern language that is authorised by the Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa (Tanzania).

<sup>6</sup> As an example, Bernd Heine and Mechthild Reh (1984: 130) state only: “Standard Swahili ... has grammaticalized the copula *li* to a past tense marker.” Likewise, in later publications, Heine only mentions the same fact, without discussing the channel or the trigger of the process.

and /nga/) are documented not only elsewhere within the Bantu family, but also in other Niger-Congo languages.<sup>7</sup>

In this study, I will refer to /li/ and /nga/ as “copula verbs”, since – as far as their morpho-syntactic behaviour is concerned – they stand in between the affirmative copula /ni/ and the above-mentioned full verbal stem /wa/. While, in general, an equation sentence with /ni/ is characterised by a nominal subject (noun or independent pronoun) or a preceding clause,<sup>8</sup> the copula verbs (on the other hand) require dependent subject pronouns. Accordingly, the form of the subject pronoun will serve as a diagnostic feature in this paper.

As already indicated, in contrast to /wa/, the copula verbs cannot be inflected by tense morphemes. Nevertheless, there are exceptions from this constraint in the old texts: /li/ can be preceded by /a/ (but not /nga/)<sup>9</sup>, conveying only then past states of affair;<sup>10</sup> on the other hand, /nga/ can be preceded by /ki/ (but not /li/), however only as copula in nominal predicates. Thus, we notice small differences in the grammatical behaviour of the two copula verbs. In addition, /li/ is involved in the grammaticalisation processes of two compound morphemes, the persistent<sup>11</sup> /kali/ and the conditional marker /ngali/. The latter formation type points again to its copula character. Nevertheless, both copula verbs /li/ and /nga/ developed into pre-verbal grammemes in modern Swahili.

The negative copula /si/ is probably subject to the same constraints as /ni/. As will be shown below, it also serves as the negative counterpart of

<sup>7</sup> See Mieke (1992) for the reconstructed Bantu forms and their distribution.

<sup>8</sup> The occurrence of /ni/ will not be discussed in this paper. However, it should be noted that in the old texts, identification and description are (still) morphologically distinguished in so far as the former is marked by /ni/, but the latter by the class pronoun in question. Thomas Bearth (1995: 217ff) points out that in modern Swahili this distinction became blurred in favour of an increasing use of /ni/ or by omission of a copula constituent.

<sup>9</sup> The occurrence of initial vowels /-(a)ngali/, /(e)ngeli/, and /(e)nge-/ in KiT'ik'uu should be explained by vowel assimilation processes and not by the prefixing of a functional vowel. According to Nurse (1982a: 104), all three morphemes are used interchangeably to express the conditional in the past.

<sup>10</sup> It was Alice Werner (1921-23: 355) who suggested at first that /a/ (preceding /li/) must be interpreted as a past tense marker, which it is also documented elsewhere in Bantu, but not in any Swahili dialect.

<sup>11</sup> This term has been introduced by Thilo Schadeberg in 1973, see Schadeberg (1990).



/li/, mostly in non-tensed relative constructions, but also (rarely) when it occurs as negative copula.

### **The corpus and writing conventions**

The corpus comprises all the poems that have been analysed in former publications of the present author (Miehe 1979, Miehe et al. 2004, Miehe & Vierke 2010), as well as the poems assigned to Zahidi Mngumi and compatriots.<sup>12</sup> In addition, proverbs (Taylor 1891), chronicles (Hichens 1938, Tolmacheva 1993), and all the stories characterised by Edward Steere (1870: viii) as “the best and purest language of Zanzibar” have been taken into consideration.

The writing conventions used by the different editors have been left untouched. In particular, this concerns disjoint or conjunct writing of the predicate, and the marking of special phonemic characteristics of the Northern dialect, like dental or rhotacised pre-nasalised consonants and aspiration of consonants. All non-English translations of the Swahili examples in the data have been translated into English. In order to save space, there is no interlinearisation of the Swahili examples, but the respective morphemes and their boundaries have been marked. The sources of the examples are given in brackets.

### **The use of /li/**

The semantic value of /li/ (“to be”, “to exist”) can be best perceived when it functions as copula in nominal predicates. However, the different steps of its grammaticalisation (and desemanticisation) process are visible when /li/ occurs as auxiliary in complex predicates.

The (past tense) marker /a/ can be clearly identified only with subject pronouns without final /a/. Swahili does not distinguish between short and long vowel phonemes so that in the case of /a-li/ (cl.1), /wa-li/ (cl.2), /ya-li/ (cl.6), and /pa-li/ (cl.16) the past tense is not overtly marked.

<sup>12</sup> The editing of these poems has been prepared by experts of old Swahili poetry from Africa and Europe under the direction of Clarissa Vierke in the course of several workshops held in Bayreuth and Hamburg (2015-2017).

/li/ without /o/ of reference

/li/ as copula in nominal predicates

In general, this type of construction forms presentational expressions which are characterised by only one nominal constituent and which mostly occur in natural discourse situations. Nevertheless, our corpus is full of them because of the narrative character of the poems. In this sense, many of the non-tensed /li/ constructions (3-5) can be classified as presentational expressions, and the same is true for some which are indicated as past tense (6-10). However in the latter case, equation constructions seem to prevail. Thus, these construction types partly overlap, and a clear-cut distinction between identification (with referential nominal predicate) and classification (with non-referential nominal predicate) is not possible in Swahili. Non-referential subjects are expressed by cl. 9 /i/ pronouns (1-2).

- |      |                                                           |                                                                                                       |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (1)  | A-li-tenḁa, i-li shani                                    | He did [it], it is wonderful (Fatuma 300)                                                             |
| (2)  | I-li amiri Wahhabu                                        | It is the commander Wahabu (Herkal 186)                                                               |
| (3)  | Ni-li hali, nawambia<br>Ni-li hali nisememe <sup>13</sup> | So is my situation, I tell you (Anzarun 297)<br>Firmly, I stand (Haudaji 351)                         |
| (4)  | Tufe tu-li waumini                                        | So that we may die as believers (Fatuma 26)                                                           |
| (5)  | Tangu tu-li siṭi haṭa tu-li<br>maiṭi                      | Since when we were virgins (till now when)<br>we are (as good as) dead (Taylor 1891: 1) <sup>14</sup> |
| (6)  | Wa-li kama ya zibungu<br>watako kunyakua                  | They were like eagles looking for prey<br>(Herkal 426)                                                |
| (7)  | Y-a-li kiza na ghubari                                    | There was darkness and dust (Herkal 770)                                                              |
| (8)  | Naye a-li muntu wa akili<br>na taratibu jema              | And he was a very shrewd man of sound<br>caution (Lamu Chronicle, p.20)                               |
| (9)  | Wote wa-li mulabasi<br>kwa kanzu na suruwaa               | All were dressed in long shirt and trousers<br>(Herkal 191)                                           |
| (10) | Zango za mapambo<br>z-a-li za msaji na abunusi            | The poles were made of teak and ebony<br>(Inkishafi 39)                                               |

<sup>13</sup> < /-simama/ “to stand”.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor (1891: 1) quotes this phrase (which according to him was in current use by old women) in his comment on the proverb *Adhabu ya kaburi ajua maiṭi* (The torture of the grave, (only) the dead man knows it).

The same construction type is used for a great variety of locative expression:

- |      |                                  |                                                    |
|------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| (11) | Ni-li hapa mbele yako            | [Me] in your presence (Mikidadi 387)               |
| (12) | U-li-we <sup>15</sup> mbali haka | You are far away (from all creatures) (Ngamia 275) |
| (13) | Wa-li mbwa ndani kwa ndani       | They stayed inside (Masahibu 461)                  |
| (14) | Wa-li mumo husunini              | They were inside the castle (Herkal 481)           |
| (15) | A-li yiu farasini                | He was sitting on his horse (Herkal 518)           |

Non-referential locative subjects are mostly indicated by cl.16 /pa/ (16), rarely by cl.15 /ku/ (17). This is in contrast to locative possessive constructions where /ku/ prevails.

- |      |                                                  |                                                                               |
|------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (16) | Pa-li kiza duniani                               | It was dark in the world (Herkal 552)                                         |
| (17) | Kw-a-li usiku wa mwezi<br>kwenda kondowa kinyezi | [It] came the night of the month which took<br>away the light (Kijuma, p.144) |

A special construction type renders past progressive situations. Instead of being followed by an adverbial adjunct, /li/ has the locative preposition /kati(ka)/ added to it, which in turn is followed by the (infinite or finite) verb. This construction type is well documented throughout the corpus. As a rule, the main verb occurs in its infinitive form with /ku/ (18-20), while the nominalised verb may also receive the locative suffix /-ni/ (18). Occasionally, the progressive meaning is strengthened by /ki/ (21).

- |      |                       |                                                                |
|------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| (18) | A-li kati ku-tinda-ni | He was engaged in chopping off (the dry branches) (Herkal 909) |
| (19) | Wa-li katika ku-nena  | They were still talking (Herkal 196)                           |
| (20) | A-li katika ku-nena   | He continued talking (Herkal 818)                              |
| (21) | A-li kati a-ki-vunda  | He was engaged in cutting off (Herkal 906)                     |

#### /li/ as auxiliary in complex predicates

This formation provided the prerequisites for generating a new past tense morpheme in Swahili. It developed out of complex verbal predicates that

<sup>15</sup> The final /we/ represents the 2nd pers.sg. /wewe/.

consisted of the finite form of /li/ (tense-marked by /a/) followed by the nominalised main verb (prefixed by /ku-/). In the course of time, /ku-/ dropped out, but it has been preserved in protected positions (before vowel-initial and monosyllabic verb stems).

The grammaticalisation process has been decisively supported by the fact that the most used anaphoric subject pronouns in human speech, those of cl.1 /a/ and cl.2 /wa/, remained unchanged when the tense marker /a/ was added. Consequently, by false segmentation of the sequence /a-li-verb/ or /wa-li-verb/, /li/ increasingly gained the function of expressing past situations. It became more and more compounded with the main verb, which promoted the grammaticalisation process. However, when used with other subject pronouns, /a/ remained overtly marked. This usage can still be observed today in Standard Swahili.<sup>16</sup> When (occasionally) /li/ (without /a/) occurs in the old documents, this may be due to later scribes or dialectal influences from the south. It should also be pointed out that relative clauses mostly appear without /a/. The main verb may follow with or without /ku/:

- |      |                      |                                         |
|------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| (22) | A-li-ku-mu-sukumia   | He drove him on (Herkal 117)            |
| (23) | Kiṭaṭusi n-a-li-ngia | I was filled with disgust (Mi'iraji 28) |

Aspectual specification is marked on the main verb. Examples (24)-(28) illustrate the perfective reading. Occasionally, the old subject pronoun of cl.1 /u/ is found with perfective constructions (27), and complex predicates may be disconnected by an adjunct (28):

- |      |                                                                                               |                                                                                                |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (24) | Ila n-a-li-i-kuzie <sup>17</sup><br>n-a-li na bora hirizi                                     | If I had not fortified myself and had been in possession of the excellent amulet (Anzarun 278) |
| (25) | Wa-li-kutene <sup>18</sup> Warumu                                                             | The Romans gathered together (Herkal 167)                                                      |
| (26) | Y-a-li-fiye <sup>19</sup> yumi<br>makumbi yande, kuwa<br>mazibala y-a-li-siriye <sup>20</sup> | The babble of voices died down, so that only a few remained (Inkishafi 52)                     |

<sup>16</sup> See Mieke (1979: 214ff) for an overview of the discussion of the apparently different functions of both variants (/a-li/ and /li/) from Krapf's times up to Ashton.

<sup>17</sup> < /-kua/ "to grow".

<sup>18</sup> < /-kutana/ "to meet together".

<sup>19</sup> < /-fa/ "to die".

<sup>20</sup> < /-saa/? "to remain".

- |      |                                   |                                      |
|------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (27) | Na babake u-li-file <sup>20</sup> | And her father died (Katirifu 25)    |
| (28) | A-li papo a-simeme <sup>21</sup>  | There where he stood (Herkal-Kn 923) |

Surprisingly, the corpus contains also a few complex predicates with /me/, the modern perfective morpheme which has also passed through a formidable grammaticalisation process. This process appears to have been accomplished by the end of the 19th century, since the use of /me/ is increasingly documented in more recent texts, for instance in Kijuma's letters and poems. Only five examples of /ali+/me/ have been observed in the data. They stem from three poems (Abdurrahman, Anzarun and Inkishafi), but in the latter it occurs only together with the verb /-keti/ "to sit".

- |      |                                                                    |                                                                                                     |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (29) | Hayo alipotamka<br>kw-a-li ku-me-pambauka                          | When he said this, day had broken<br>(Abdurrahman 441)                                              |
| (30) | Wakaṭi hono yakini<br>wa-li me-wa-wa ṇḁani<br>sahaba, waso kinyezi | At that time he had truly brought inside<br>those companions who showed no sadness<br>(Anzarun 149) |
| (31) | A-li me-keti nyumbani                                              | He was sitting in his house (Masahibu 460)                                                          |

The imperfective reading is marked by /ki/ on the main verb. The complex predicate expresses past progressive situations. Again, the different steps of the grammaticalisation process become visible in the examples:

- |      |                                                   |                                                                      |
|------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (32) | Wa-li-ky-enenda kititi                            | They travelled in the shortest time (Katirifu 128)                   |
| (33) | K'umbi za msana z-a-li-ki-vuma                    | The halls of the men were buzzing (with voices) (Inkishafi 40)       |
| (34) | Masheikhe na masharifu<br>wa-li wa-ki-ya-tamani   | Which scholars and nobles have been<br>longing for (ZM 21-2)         |
| (35) | Mupaze phaṭu kwa kuwa –<br>kuwa mw-a-li-ki-ya-ona | Beat the cymbals vigorously, because you<br>saw it before (ZM 146-2) |
| (36) | Wa-li u-ki-m-ṭukuza                               | You had it carried (Ngamia 144)                                      |
| (37) | Wa-li, maṭo wa-ki-owa                             | They were watching with their eyes (Ngamia 338)                      |

<sup>21</sup> < /-simama/ "to stand".

*The compound copula /ka-li/*

Here, /li/ is preceded by the frequently occurring marker /ka/, which generally has a consecutive function. Linked to the existential copula verb /li/, the consecutive notion of /ka/ is expanded to include a lasting or persistive specification, so that the construction expresses unexpected continuous situations. The compound morpheme /ka-li/ is said to be a typical feature of the KiMvita dialect, while in the Southern dialects the compound /nga-li/ gained this function.<sup>22</sup> However, /kali/ occurs throughout the corpus, even in one of Steere's Zanzibar stories (44). As can be seen in ex. (42), the compound morpheme may be cliticised by the locative /ko/.

- |      |                                                              |                                                                                                               |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (38) | Wa-kali koko kuzimu                                          | They are yet in their graves (Kiyama 88)                                                                      |
| (39) | Ki-kali ku-ñara uzi                                          | It still shone in its fabric (Anzarun 70)                                                                     |
| (40) | Pangananito kwa safu<br>nyongo<br>zi-kali kumoya             | Order yourselves well in lines, backs<br>together (ZM 19, 2)                                                  |
| (41) | Haṭa sasa ningakoma<br>ni-kali ku-m-ṭumikia                  | Although I'm at my end, I am still at his<br>service (Ngamia 108)                                             |
| (42) | Tu-kali-ko ha-tu-ya-fa<br>wenye kula zuma                    | We are still alive, we haven't died yet<br>(Kijuma, p.272)                                                    |
| (43) | Kusimama i-kali kw-enda                                      | Standing is still going (Aphorism 146)                                                                        |
| (44) | Ni-kali ni-ki-enda katika<br>barra                           | And I am going through the wilderness<br>(Steere, p.346)                                                      |
| (45) | A-kali ki-pita ndiani, watu<br>wa Siu wakamutokea<br>ghafula | As he was passing along the road, the men<br>of Siu rushed out on him suddenly (Pate<br>Chronicle, p.156/185) |

Example (45) is found in Alice Werner's version of the Pate Chronicle, which in Martin Heepe's version<sup>23</sup> appears simplified in so far as the same episode has only /ki/ instead of /kali-ki/:

<sup>22</sup> Sacleux holds that /kali/ goes back to /ngali/ by "permutation": "Nikali est sorti de ningali par mutation assimilative de g en k après n assourdi" (1909: 217). However, the hypothesis of an independent development of two compound forms originally expressing (minimally?) different notions appears more plausible.

<sup>23</sup> Both versions have been re-published by Tolmacheva (1993).

- /li/ + /o/ of reference*

The examples are ordered in the same way as above. As already indicated, subject pronouns of relative clauses are scarcely specified by the tense marker /a/. This is in accordance with the modifying function of relative clauses that does not require any tense marking.<sup>24</sup>

/li-o/ as copula

|      |                                                            |                                                                     |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (47) | Wote wapisieo <sup>25</sup> nyuma<br>wa-li-o wa-li ghulama | Of all messengers who have ever existed<br>(Herkal 698)             |
| (48) | Mu-li-o kuko toshani                                       | You who are there, you are enough (Herkal 132)                      |
| (49) | Muwangi uchamkuwa –<br>uwite wa-li-o mbali                 | And the echo summons those who are afar<br>(ZM 38-1)                |
| (50) | Paṭiani... kalamu ya sufuri,<br>i-l-o ndjema kwanḍikia     | Fetch... a pen made of metal, which is good for<br>writing (Esha 1) |
| (51) | Walau kweṭhu hakuna<br>ki-l-o na ṣawabu sana               | And we have nothing of greater value (Anzarun<br>525)               |
| (52) | Huisi mambo ya-li-y-o                                      | You don't know how things are (Kijuma, p.367)                       |

<sup>25</sup> < /-pita/ “to pass”.

These constructions may be cliticised additionally by referential locative concords. While the above quoted non-cliticised constructions are rarely used in Standard Swahili, the latter is frequently observed in current language usage:

- |      |                                              |                                                                  |
|------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (53) | Munitambulile saya –<br>ya-li-yo-mo warakani | You should disclose to me the content of the<br>letter (ZM 38-2) |
| (54) | Mu-li-yo-po mashairi –<br>huhuḡiayani hirimu | You poets who are here, witness your peers<br>(ZM 35-1)          |

*/li-o/ as auxiliary in complex predicates*

In complex predicates, /li/ receives the referential morpheme in question, while the main verb follows in its nominalised form (often still marked by /ku-/) or in a finite form when the predication is specified by aspect. It is this construction type that provides the proto type of the modern synthetic relative construction.

- |      |                                                                                                         |                                                                                                       |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (55) | Ni maovu ya lahani<br>wa-li-yo-ku-m-tendea                                                              | It is evil and wrong, what they did to him<br>(Esha 90)                                               |
| (56) | Siku tu-li-o kw-ondoka                                                                                  | On the day we set out (Herkal 887)                                                                    |
| (57) | Salamu kabaliyisha,<br>babakwe a-lo-mw-ambia                                                            | And passed on the greeting which her father<br>had told her (Esha 33)                                 |
| (58) | Wawapi majababiri<br>wa-lo wa-ki-takabari?<br>Wawapi wenye ziburi<br>wa-lo wa-kee <sup>26</sup> duniya? | Where are the mighty, where are the proud,<br>where are the haughty great men on earth<br>(Kiyama 29) |
| (59) | Ziṭa, a-li-zo-ki-ngia                                                                                   | With the war through which he came among<br>them (Abdurrahman 18)                                     |

*/li/ + locative /o/ as copula*

The referential concords of all three locative classes are still in use with /li/, but with partly modified function. While the use of cl.18 /mo/ and cl.15 /ko/ is limited to locative reference, cl.16 /po/ may also designate time reference. But see examples (61-63) with locative reference.

<sup>26</sup> < /-kaa/ “to stay”.



In contrast to Standard Swahili, in the old texts, the locative-copula construction<sup>27</sup> is always formed with /li/ in between the subject pronoun and the locative referential concord.

- |      |                                             |                                                                       |
|------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (60) | Ṭw-a-li-mo suṭhe moṭoni                     | We were all in hell (Abdurrahman 332)                                 |
| (61) | Pale a-li-po bushiri                        | There where the prophet was (Herkal 988)                              |
| (62) | Nambia wa-li-po, k'a-w-amkiye <sup>28</sup> | Tell me where they are, so that I can greet them there (Inkishafi 56) |
| (63) | Na wa-li-po hadharani – wawale mu-wa-yuwa-o | And in the audience were those whom you already know (ZM 38-2)        |
| (64) | U-li-ko ha-ku-yilia <sup>29</sup>           | And I came to you (Herkal 790)                                        |

In complex predicates, the same construction types are observed as above: /li/ is linked to an infinite or finite main verb:

- |      |                                           |                                                         |
|------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| (65) | A-li-po ku-kusudia                        | Where he wanted to go (Herkal 177)                      |
| (66) | Pate a-li-ko-zaliwa                       | [Mwana Kupona] born at Pate (Kupona 98)                 |
| (67) | Wa-li-ko wa-ka-wendea                     | And they went to them where they were (Herkal 485)      |
| (68) | Sahaba za Muhammadi wa-li-po wa-ka-wendea | They went to where Muhammed's friends were (Herkal 547) |
| (69) | A-li-po u-lele <sup>30</sup> hapa         | While he lay here (Ayubu 327)                           |
| (70) | Wa-li-po u-ki-abudi                       | While you were at prayer (Ayubu 64)                     |

There are also a few examples with locative subject pronouns. It appears that in the old texts, /kuliko/ is also still used as a purely locative expression and not as a marker of comparison, as is the case in the Standard language. The final /-e/ in ex. (74) indicates cl.1 /ye/, the abridged form of /yeye/; for a similar clitic, see above ex. (12). It does not represent the (Standard) referential concord /ye/.

<sup>27</sup> This term has been used by Lutz Marten (2013) to distinguish it from “locative-possessive constructions”.

<sup>28</sup> /k'a-/ Kiamu = nika- in Standard.

<sup>29</sup> /ha-/ Kiamu = nika- in Standard.

<sup>30</sup> < -lala “to sleep, to lie”.

- |      |                                                                                  |                                                                                   |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (71) | Na kula pa-li-po phengo<br>tupate kupaziwa                                       | So that wherever there is a gap, we manage<br>to plug it (Haudaji 179)            |
| (72) | Nipulishile <sup>31</sup> kauli<br>kunilingana rasuli<br>ku-li-ko mi sheikhi Ali | I heard the voice of the prophet calling me,<br>me, Sheikh Ali (Herkal 917)       |
| (73) | Ku-li-ko hawa juhali<br>nimependa kuwazili                                       | There where those ignorant ones are, I will<br>strike them down (Abdurrahman 570) |
| (74) | Lana ya Mola Jabari<br>i ko-li-ko-e, kafiri                                      | May the curse of the Mighty Lord rest on him,<br>the infidel (Anzarun 240)        |

*/li/ linked to the comitative /na/*

This construction type expresses association. Again, in contrast to Standard Swahili, */li/* is inserted between the subject pronoun and */na/*:

- |      |                                                   |                                                                                                            |
|------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (75) | Wakaеkeza safari<br>nyoyo zi-li-na sururi         | They turned their attention towards the<br>journey, and their hearts were full of joy<br>(Abdurrahman 631) |
| (76) | Leo ndiya nda khatwari –<br>tendani mu-li-na hofu | Today the road is dangerous, act with caution<br>(ZM 34-1)                                                 |
| (77) | Ila naliikuzie<br>n-a-li-na bora hirizi           | If I had not fortified myself and had been<br>in possession of the excellent amulet<br>(Anzarun 278)       |
| (78) | Hao watu wa Weyuni wa-li-na<br>nguvu sana         | Those people of Weyuni were very strong<br>(Lamu Chronicle, p.9)                                           |
| (79) | Nami n-a-li-na jaraha<br>nifanyize mbaha          | I had a wound, but I didn't care (Du'a 7)                                                                  |

The same construction type occurs with locative subject pronouns, mostly with cl.15 */ku/* as non-referential subject pronoun:

- |      |                                            |                                                                  |
|------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (80) | Kw-a-li-na Mabwana na<br>Mawaziri          | There were lords and ministers (Inkishafi 61)                    |
| (81) | Pa-li-na na muumini<br>nyuma akamwan damia | There was one believer, who followed<br>behind him (Haudaji 520) |

<sup>31</sup> < -pulika “to listen” = -sikia in Standard.

However, the Standard type (without /li/) also occurs in the data, but with cl.16 subject pronoun /pa/:

- |                                                |                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (82) Khamuona u kiṭini<br>na mbee pa-na mizani | And I saw someone on a chair, in front of<br>him was a pair of scales (Mi'iraji 335) |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### *Negation of /li/*

There are two principal negation patterns in Swahili verbal predicates which are distinguished by the position of subject pronoun and different negation markers. The indicative paradigms are negated by the pattern /ha/ + subject pronoun + predicate which may be complemented by special markers on the verb in some paradigms. The other pattern is subject pronoun + /si/ + predicate. It occurs in nominal predicates and in dependent phrases.

Thus, the general negative copula is /si/. Besides its function of negating equation constructions with /ni/ (83), it also serves as a negation marker in copula constructions with /li/. As already indicated, the latter require dependent subject pronouns, and so it is here.

However, the Janus-faced character of /li/ as oscillating between the categories of copula or verb appears again in negation. The vast majority of examples in the corpus show patterns like pronoun + /si/ + predicate which represent the copula interpretation, but there are also examples with /ha/ + pronoun + (verbal) predicate which, by contrast, negate possession constructions and complex verbal predicates with /li/ (specified by /ki/). This evidence shows that the general assumption that in Swahili affirmation and negation paradigms are organised in strictly different ways is only valid for simple predicates.

### */si/ as negative counterpart of /li/*

Nevertheless, analysis of the old texts reveals that the pattern pronoun + /si/ + non-verbal predicate is not just the opposite of its affirmative counterpart with /li/. While the latter expresses identification or classification of an entity, the examples below convey an underlying associative meaning in the sense of “not being with”. For that reason, some editors of old texts suppose that /na/ is omitted after /si/ in such cases. However, Taylor (1891: 14), when commenting on aphorism Nr. 75 (see below ex. 90), affirms this prac-

tice as current usage: “lisilo, that has not (as in § 429), cfr. the form lisilo-kuwa = that is not. The relative of the verb “to have” must always be expressed by the form asiye, wasio; usio, etc. It is a diction chiefly met with in Zanzibar to use lisilo na for “that has not”. Lisilo kuwa na, is correct but long: and is either past or present in its sense.”

The first example (83) illustrates the use of /si/ in equation constructions. All the following examples represent (formally) the negated pattern of copula constructions with /li/. There seems to be no difference in meaning between the examples with or without the /o/ of reference:

- |      |                                           |                                                                           |
|------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (83) | Ndiyo ni mtendji Fumo si Mwongo           | [Liyongo] Fumo is a true man of action, not of empty words (Liyongo 3-29) |
| (84) | Ya-si kiza na sisimba                     | Where there is no darkness and no scorpions (Herkal 430)                  |
| (85) | Wa-si kuti wa-si mayi                     | They had no food and no water (Herkal 732)                                |
| (86) | Abađi wali kizani – nyumba zao zi-si nuru | They are forever in darkness, their houses have no light (ZM 28-3)        |
| (87) | Mapambo, ya-s-o mişaa                     | Decorations which are unparalleled (Fatuma 178)                           |

/si/ can also be linked to following nouns by respective connectives; see also (95):

- |      |                                       |                                                                  |
|------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (88) | Wa-si wa shiđa ila ye pweke manyikani | You will have no problems except (to capture) him (Liyongo 2-11) |
| (89) | Wa-si wa shamba                       | Being among those without farms (Liyongo 2-16)                   |

Relative constructions may be specified by respective class concords:

- |      |                                |                                                                   |
|------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (90) | Hakuna kubwa li-si-lo ukomo    | There is no matter so great as to have no end (Aphorism 75)       |
| (91) | Naapa wallahi, a-si-yo shabihi | I swear, by God, the Incomparable (Liyongo 12-32)                 |
| (92) | Zi-si-zo muanga na muwangaza   | Those who are without rays of light and brightness (Inkishafi 58) |

Again, the locative subject pronouns of classes 17 /ku-/ and 16 /pa-/ indicate non-referential location. These phrases are often preceded by

other clauses, so that they serve as complements or modification of antecedent predications.

- |      |                                             |                                                             |
|------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| (93) | Pa-si mutu azidiyo<br>wala mume kupungua    | No one had too much and no one was left out<br>(Herkal 259) |
| (94) | Pa-si mtu a-si-o-po                         | There was no one missing (Herkal 515)                       |
| (95) | Pa-si pa kukimbilia                         | There was no way to escape (Haudaji 835)                    |
| (96) | Mu wanena kula siku –<br>tukiona pa-si kuwa | You are all talk, and we do not see results<br>(ZM 33-3)    |
| (97) | Ku-si yua ku-si mwezi                       | There was neither sun nor moon (Herkal 550)                 |

Locative constructions with following (nominalised) verbs in turn, serve as complements of antecedent predications. In conveying the meaning “there is no place”, they figure as quasi-conjunctions denoting “without”:

- |       |                       |                                           |
|-------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| (98)  | Pa-si-po ku-limatia   | Without hesitating (Herkal 134)           |
| (99)  | A-si-po-kw-ima ndiani | Without loitering on the way (Herkal 152) |
| (100) | Wa-si-po-mu-tadia     | Without rebelling against it (Herkal 502) |

/si/ linked to the cominative /na/

There are only a few examples of this construction type. Presumably, the insertion of /na/ emphasises that something is lacking:

- |       |                                                                                      |                                                                                                                              |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (101) | Naye ka toka Imamu ...<br>a-si-na hamu na ghamu                                      | And the Leader departed ... without<br>worry or grief (Haudaji 112)                                                          |
| (102) | Na Mume uniketele <sup>32</sup> –<br>pa-si-na huja pa-si-na                          | My husband has rejected me without<br>any reason (ZM 7-3)                                                                    |
| (103) | Wakakaa ... mitima i-si-na ashi                                                      | They sat down, with no suspicion in<br>their hearts (Fatuma 91)                                                              |
| (104) | Kaketi kwa siyara njema na mii<br>yote katika ta’a yake pa-si-na<br>kuharibika yambo | And (of ) all the towns under his sway<br>there was none destroyed for any<br>reason whatever (Pate Chronicle,<br>p.141/173) |

<sup>32</sup> < /-kataa/ “to reject”.

### Negation with /ha-/

This construction type is less documented in the texts. The first examples represent possessive constructions, where the affirmative subject pronoun is substituted by its negative counterpart:

- |       |                         |                                                    |
|-------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| (105) | Kwangu s-a-li-na usono  | There was no peace in me (Ngamia 224)              |
| (106) | Kwa Esha zema ha-li-na  | He had no good intentions toward Esha<br>(Esha 84) |
| (107) | Nao ha-wa-li-na khabari | They had no information (Lamu Chronicle, p.9)      |

Example (108), which is specified by the referential locative marker, is a special case. It is the beginning of an old nursery rhyme which is documented only by Taylor (1891: 88, note to aphorism 379), but not in other poems. Charles Sacleux (1939: 791) has an entry /salipo/, but describes it as an unusual form without giving any example. We come across a similar form in (109). Werner (1932: 88) calls it “an archaic past tense” and refers to Taylor’s entry. Although such a paradigm is presented in full by Johann Ludwig Krapf (1850: 52), Sacleux (1909: 199), quoting /si-li-sema/, describes it as an extremely unusual construction which occurs only in questions with the 1st pers.sg. This statement seems to be in accordance with the evidence of (109).

- (108) S-á-li-po na s-á-li-po! I was not there and I was not there!  
 Tu-li bándáriní We were at the landing-place (Taylor, p.88)
- (109) Kamwambia, “s-a-li-nena?” And I said to her, “Did I not say?”  
 (Miqdad 21)

In contrast to all this, the following examples are well documented in the corpus. Neither these nor similar formations are discussed by the grammarians. It is again /li/ that is marked for negation, the main verb following in either its infinite or its finite form:

- |       |                                         |                                                                |
|-------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| (110) | Konḍoka ha-li-ki-weza                   | He could not get up (Abdurrahman 491)                          |
| (111) | Kwa afia na uṭoto<br>sa-li-ki-ona uzito | When I was vigorous and young, I felt<br>no pains (Ngamia 111) |

- |       |                                                                                    |                                                                                                             |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (112) | Walau bin adamuwala majini<br>zalimu<br>ha-wa-li ki-ku-nuzumu<br>ndani hawakumaizi | Neither men nor violent spirits have<br>seen inside or know anything about<br>what is in there (Anzarun 49) |
| (113) | Ha-wa-li wa-ki-i-weza<br>ku-i-sikilia, nduza                                       | They could not enter, my brothers (into<br>this dark castle) (Anzarun 51)                                   |

### **The use of wa**

In contrast to /li/, there is no impact of /wa/ on the grammaticalisation processes of preverbal function morphemes. Nevertheless, it has generated a lot of modern Swahili conjunctions.

#### */wa/ as copula*

While /li/ stands for stative existence, /wa/ conveys the dynamic notion of “becoming”, as the following examples illustrate:

- |       |                                               |                                                             |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| (114) | Mṭumbuu hu-wa p’apa                           | A sprat becomes a shark (Aphorism 552)                      |
| (115) | Kwa ku-wa wangi jifiri<br>wakinga kama bahari | It was a huge crowd, they were like the sea<br>(Herkal 539) |

It also occurs with cliticised locative referential concords:

- |       |                                             |                                                                   |
|-------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (116) | Haṭa kayuwa khalisi<br>ku-wa-ko Shekhe Alia | Till she knows for sure that Sheikh Ali is<br>there (Haudaji 177) |
| (117) | Shekhe Abalhasani<br>ki-wa-ko yaṭanelea     | When Sheik Abalhasan is there, I will know it<br>(Haudaji 184)    |

However, in such formations /wa/ is frequently realised as /we/ which evidently represents an old phenomenon. While /na-we/ in (118) can be understood as a subjunctive construction, /we/ in the other two examples cannot be explained in any satisfying way.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> However, as some interpretations seem to suggest, (see for instance (175), /we/ could represent a shortened variant of the perfective stem of /wa/ (/we(l)e/), but possibly this supposition is too hypothetical.

- |       |                                                       |                                                                                |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (118) | Na Bwana Maḡi na-we-po –<br>wa Bwana Bwana Isufu      | And Bwana Madi should also be there,<br>and Bwana Bwana Yusuf (ZM 3-4)         |
| (119) | Na wa-lo-ku-we-ko Weyuni<br>wa-ka-mukuliwa Wayubili   | And they who were at Weyuni were called<br>the Wayubili (Lamu Chronicle, p.12) |
| (120) | Bahaḡi yethu yalikuwa nzuri<br>wa-li-po ku-we-ko Lamu | We were lucky while you were in Lamu<br>(Kijuma, p.74)                         |

In our texts, /wa/ is preferably used with the narrative consecutive marker /ka/, thus emphasising its inchoative character:

- |       |                          |                                                                          |
|-------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (121) | I-ka-wa kama kuna yuwa   | And it was as bright as the sun (Mi'iraji 632)                           |
| (122) | I-ka-wa mayuḡo yasimsiye | And then there is the regret which for him is<br>unending (Inkishafi 17) |
| (123) | Moto u-ka-wa makaa       | So that fire becomes coal (Herkal 796)                                   |
| (124) | Ziumbiwao, zi-ka-wa-po   | Those who were created are there (Fatuma 18)                             |

*/wa/ as auxiliary in complex predicates*

When /wa/ becomes part of complex predicates, the main verb follows in its infinite form:

- |       |                                               |                                                                                         |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (125) | Hata wakisa jipanga<br>i-ka-wa ku-pinga kunga | So when they had put on their arms, they<br>ranged themselves for battle (Mikidadi 755) |
| (126) | Tu-ka-wa ku-aḡamana                           | We followed each other (Kijuma, p.142)                                                  |

The next example represents modern complex predicates. It manifests the two most spectacular changes in the Swahili verbal inflection system, namely, the introduction of /li/ as past tense marker and /me/ as perfect marker, both triggered by clearly visible grammaticalisation processes. At the same time, it becomes obvious that (as a side effect) /wa/ took over the function of /li/ in comparable constructions in the old texts (see 3.1.2):

- |       |                                                 |                                                                                        |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (127) | Na mume wake a-li-ku-wa<br>me-peekwa Goa sabiki | And her husband had been carried away to<br>Goa previously (Pate Chronicle, p.145/177) |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



*/wa/ + /po/ in subordinate clauses*

When the referential locative marker of cl.16 /po/ is cliticised to /wa/, the respective construction figures as a subordinate clause in conditional sentences. This special function may be interpreted as the result of the interaction between a time-referenced /po/ and the inchoative “verb of being” /wa/, roughly in the sense of “when it becomes” or “when it appears”. Together with the non-referential subject pronoun of cl.9 /i-/, the grammaticalisation process towards the modern conjunction /iwapo/ “if, when” appears as already accomplished.

- |       |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (128) | Hunelezi nami kalibaini,<br>li-wa-po na sura nisikataye? | Won't you describe it to me, so that I<br>will recognise it, so that I won't reject it<br>(but accept it) should it be beautiful?<br>(Inkishafi 11) |
| (129) | Kulla pa-wa-po simazi<br>uye ukitwondolea                | If we are in trouble, may you come and<br>help us out (Herkal 973)                                                                                  |
| (130) | I-wa-po kazi ha-wez-i<br>mvikeni mandakuzi               | If he cannot do this work, put him in<br>irons (Masahibu 64)                                                                                        |
| (131) | I-wa-po kw-amba ni kweli                                 | And if it is true (Haudaji 178)                                                                                                                     |

The conditional function may be strengthened by adding the pre-verbal marker /ki/:

- |       |                                             |                                                                                           |
|-------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (132) | Silioni la kushinda<br>pa-ki-wa-po pa-lekea | I cannot see any chance of winning, even if<br>it may seem there is a chance (Herkal 871) |
|-------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

*The question word /hu-wa-ye/*

Further, the study of the old texts reveals the usage of an evidently forgotten question word /huwaye/ that can be translated as “how”. With the exception of Sacleux (1939: 457), who quotes it with /ku-/ instead of /hu-/: “kuwadye? Comment? lit. être comment”, this formation is not mentioned in other dictionaries. /wa/ is preceded by the habitual marker /hu-/ and is cliticised by the question marker /-ye/. The question word which really represents a kind of copula construction in the sense of “is it so?” seems to have been frequently used in older times:

- |       |                                                    |                                                                              |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (133) | Hu-wa-ye kuiwangaza                                | How can you see it like that? (Herkal 278)                                   |
| (134) | Hu-wa-ye kuifinika                                 | How come that people hide? (Herkal 827)                                      |
| (135) | Hu-wa-ye mambo kuzinga –<br>yakaswihi kurejewa     | How have things changed? How is it<br>permissible to return to her? (ZM 5-3) |
| (136) | (Fulani) akikubali ni vita,<br>akikataa, hu-wa-je? | If he accepts, it is war: if he refuses, how<br>must it be? (Aphorism 8)     |

Some related constructions:

- |       |                                                |                                                                                                |
|-------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (137) | Suluhu hizo vi-wa-je –<br>naye endele ukaya    | How can there be reconciliation, when he<br>deserted me and then just reappeared? (ZM 7-<br>4) |
| (138) | Simba mla-wat'u akiliwa,<br>hu-wa-ni?          | When the man-eating lion is (himself)<br>eaten, what matters it? (Aphorism 488)                |
| (139) | Mwangazaṭi hu-wa ku-wa –<br>ṭini kupatika ṭini | The one who looks down gets what is on the<br>ground (ZM 54-3)                                 |

### The use of nga

The old texts reveal a great variance in using /nga/ and its compound forms. It is evident that /nga/ differs to some extent from /li/, the most clear evidence being the fact that it may precede /li/ to form a compound, while the other way round is not possible. In addition, it can be preceded by /ki/ in nominal predicates (to strengthen its function as a comparison morpheme), which is not possible with /li/. However, similar to /li/ (and unlike /wa/) /nga/ has been involved in grammaticalisation processes of the verbal predicate. /nga/ and its compound form /ngali/ are used in nominal and verbal predicates. In our data, its function ranges from comparison in main clauses to expressions of unexpected conditions in subordinate clauses. Probably it is its function to express non-real situations (so rarely used in colloquial language) that has contributed to the uncertainty among Swahili speakers and which has been reflected by grammarians from Krapf (1850) to modern linguists.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See Miehe (1979: 244ff) on early analyses of this morpheme, and Sukari Salomé (1983) on its discussion by modern native Swahili grammarians. The following section summarises the findings of Miehe (2000) in a slightly modified manner.

*/nga/ as copula*

In its simple form, /nga/ is rarely documented in nominal predicates. It occurs most frequently with a preceding /ni/ that since Steere's times (1870) has been interpreted as the 1st pers.sg. subject pronoun. The most prominent occurrence of /nga/ is in the Liongo tradition. It appears three times in the famous Mashairi (Takhmisa) ya Liongo, expressing proud self-praise which is otherwise unknown in Swahili poetry:

- |       |                                              |                                                                      |
|-------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (140) | Ni-nga mana kozi sioneki<br>Niwakuapo        | I am a young falcon, I am not seen when<br>I pounce (Liongo 8)       |
| (141) | Ni-nga mana taya shirikeneni na<br>mana tope | I am like a young vulture, who shares<br>with wild beasts (Liongo 9) |
| (142) | Ni-nga watu sao ja mfano kama<br>badui       | I am as though those people were like<br>outcasts (Liongo 15)        |

Apart from the Liongo tradition, the phrase /ni-nga/ is also documented three times in what is probably the oldest piece in the Swahili literary tradition, the Hamziya. Interestingly, Kinene wa Mutiso, in his complete edition of the poem (2005), seems to understand /ni-nga/ as a compound consisting of the copula /ni/+nga/ without any reference to the 1st pers.sg.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, it appears most likely that /ni/ is a personal pronoun, since the copula /ni/ normally equates two entities, and there is no evidence that it ever preceded another copula.

There are two further examples in our data: example (143) showing /nga/ without inflectional marking stems from one of Steere's stories (Sultan Darai).<sup>36</sup> The last example (144) is found in the few stanzas of the Hamziya which were published by Jan Knappert (1968).<sup>37</sup> It is the only example which is marked as a relative phrase.

<sup>35</sup> He translates /ninga/ into Standard Swahili as "ni kama" (2005: 252), although he quotes the phrase "ninga mwanakozi" (see ex.140). Likewise, he translates /ninga kama/ as "mfano ni kama" (ibidem: 193, 210), again without reference to the 1st pers.sg., although at least the context of the stanza quoted at page 240 points to the latter.

<sup>36</sup> Steere (1870: ix), however, disqualifies the language of its narrator as follows: "The dialect by a class less refined and educated, less exact in its style and with more Arabic words, is represented by the tales told me by Masazo, who was for a long time our cook and house steward".

<sup>37</sup> It corresponds word for word to stanza 454 in Mutiso's edition (2005: 319).

- |       |                                                  |                                                                                    |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (143) | Na hawa wote wana mali, si<br>kwamba nga maskini | And all these people have property, not<br>as though they were poor (Steere, p.54) |
| (144) | Na sala i-nga-yo ja <sup>38</sup> misiki         | Prayer is like musk (Hamziya, p.56)                                                |

*The compound copula /ki-nga/*

The comparative function of /nga/ is reinforced by compounding it with the situative morpheme /ki/. The occurrence of the compound is restricted to nominal predications. Although small in number, it is found throughout the poems of the 19th century (in particular, in the Chuo cha Herkal), but not in the poems attributed to Zahidi Mngumi, in the Inkishafi, or in the prose texts. It may occur with or without a subject pronoun:

- |       |                                       |                                                                    |
|-------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (145) | Usowe u-kinga mbazi,<br>unawirie kowa | His face was red like blood and glowed<br>like glass (Ngamia 141b) |
| (146) | Akauka kinga nyuni                    | He left like a bird (Katirifu 137)                                 |
| (147) | A-kinga mwenye wazimu                 | He was like a madman (Herkal 640)                                  |

*/nga/ + /po/*

This formation is documented only three times, and only in the Inkishafi. /po/ evidently indicates locative reference and is followed by the comitative /na/ in (148), designating possession. The other two examples are preceded by the habitual marker /hu-/, as in (149).

As is the rule with verbal predicates, /nga/ figures here as a concessive marker:

- |       |                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (148) | Ukwasi u-nga-po na tafakhuri,<br>wakanakiliwa ili safari                          | Despite their wealth and their high<br>rank, they were taken along on the<br>journey (Inkishafi 44)                                                                 |
| (149) | Zituko zi-nga-po huṭanabahi,<br>ukanabihika hukunabihi.<br>Uṭaṭa lini ya usafihi? | Although these things happen, you fail to<br>understand them, although warned, you<br>ignored the warning. When will you cease<br>to be so arrogant? (Inkishafi 26) |

<sup>38</sup> /ja/ in Northern dialects corresponds to /kama/ in Standard Swahili.

*/nga/ as modality marker in verbal predicates*

These constructions present /nga/ as a fully grammaticalised modality marker. Astonishingly, throughout the data, there is no /ku-/ immediately following /nga/ as can be observed with /li/-constructions. Although one can confirm its general function as a concessive marker, it sometimes appears with an underlying potential meaning:

- |       |                                                                   |                                                                                                                   |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (150) | Fedha hawatwai na wa-nga-powa, ila hasanati ni malipwaye          | And they refuse silver, even if it is offered to them, good deeds alone are the penalty to be paid (Inkishafi 70) |
| (151) | Nami ni-nga-tunga, siyajui ni kutamani                            | And though I would compose, I know not how, yet 'tis my desire (Dua 1)                                            |
| (152) | Wamekwepa wamekondra zita wa-nga-pendelea                         | They had lost strength and weight, but they still longed for war (Haudaji 469)                                    |
| (153) | Haṭa Juju na Majuja ... wa-nga-i-kuza ḍaraḷa, ni ziumbe zakwe pia | Even Juju and Majuja ... although they (desire to) take a higher rank, are (only) his creatures (Fatuma 16)       |

One example is documented in subjunctive form:

- |       |                                         |                                                                |
|-------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| (154) | Mkenge a-nga-ruḍile – pasina kuṭafuṭiwa | Avoid him even if he comes back without being pursued (ZM 2-5) |
|-------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|

Another one is found as constituent of a complex predicate:

- |       |                                                            |                                                                           |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (155) | Ujinga kwao waseze – wa-nga-ya <sup>39</sup> ku-ngia mbizi | Others [who did this] remained ignorant, even though they dived (ZM 65-3) |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|

A few formations show /nga/ with following perfective verbal stem. They represent the old type of non-real conditional constructions:

<sup>39</sup> /-ya/ “to go” serves as auxiliary to express the ingressive aspect.

- |       |                                               |                                                                       |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (156) | Lau kwamba uyuwile,<br>ngia a-nga-geuzile     | If she had known, she would have<br>changed her course (Katirifu 389) |
| (157) | Ni-nga-tindangile kwa sayufu<br>na kwa sakini | I would have cut them to pieces with<br>sword and knife (Liongo 11)   |

*The compound copula /nga-wa/*

When followed by /wa/, /nga/ figures as a copula in nominal predicates. The transition from comparative to concessive notion becomes visible in the examples. While the first example (158) describes a property by comparing the subject with an outstanding entity, the comparative notion retreats in favour of a concessive interpretation in the other examples:

- |       |                                                  |                                                                                                    |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (158) | Uso wako u-nga-wa juwa                           | Thy face is like sun (Hamziya 20)                                                                  |
| (159) | Kwetu ya-nga-wa mazito                           | To us it is a great matter (Kupona 79)                                                             |
| (160) | A-nga-wa mwana adamu,<br>si kama si ma'alumu     | Though he was a man, he was not a<br>common man like us (Fatuma 45)                                |
| (161) | Nga-wa siku moja<br>hatutoi na kunitiki          | It may be that one day we shall not utter<br>(a word) nor speak (Kasida 10)                        |
| (162) | Sili, sili, wa mtama,<br>u-nga-wa na nyingi nazi | I eat not, I eat not (the uji) of Turkish<br>corn, though it have much cocoanut<br>(Aphorisms 487) |
| (163) | Ni-nga-wa na nyingi thweka,<br>nalitjenenda ...  | Although I carried many loads at that<br>time, I walked fast ... (Ngamia 112)                      |

In the data, two instances are documented with following locative referential clitics:

- |       |                                                  |                                                                                                     |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (164) | Jamaa za Waumini<br>wa-nga-wa-mo kuwanani        | Though the community of the Muslims<br>was in the fight (Herkal 512)                                |
| (165) | Nyama wot'e wa-nga-wa-ko,<br>mkuza-pezi ni p'apa | Though all the creatures be there, the<br>lifter of the (dorsal) fin is the shark<br>(Aphorism 438) |

Probably, the channel of grammaticalisation towards the modern concessive conjunction /ingawa/ was “carved out” by constructions like (166), where /nga-wa/ is followed by a verbal predicate whose subject pronoun is identical to that of the copula:

- (166)    Ya-nga-wa ya-ni- *ṭukile*<sup>40</sup> –    Even though I was annoyed about how  
           kwa sura yaliokuwa                    things turned out (ZM 38-3)

*The compound morpheme /nga-li/*

The compound /nga-li/ is rarely documented, unlike its simple form /nga/. Thus, it is absent in descriptive texts like the chronicles, or in Taylor’s Aphorisms which hand down the wisdom of the elders to younger generations. It is more often observed in discourse situations, like in Kijuma’s letters or in the old poems when dramatic events are reported in direct speech.

*/nga-li/ as copula*

We notice an extremely rare usage of /nga-li/ as copula in nominal predicates. It expresses unexpected continuous situations (similar to /ka-li/) when it occurs in simple sentences, as can be seen from the only example that is found in our data:

- (167)    kwani u-ngali kijana                    ‘for you are still a boy’ (Mikidadi 82)

Likewise, there is only one instance of /ngali/ occurring as copula in the protasis of a complex sentence, which in turn is followed by a perfective predicate in the apodosis. It expresses the supposition of a non-real situation in the past.

- (168)    ni-ngali kipungu ni-ushile<sup>41</sup>            ‘would that I were an eagle flying in the  
           katika anga                                    air’ (Liongo 10)

<sup>40</sup> < /- *ṭukia*/ KiAmu = /chukia/ in Standard.

<sup>41</sup> < /-uka/ “to fly”, “to jump”.

*/nga-li/ as modality marker of verbal predicates in complex sentences*

In the old texts, we have to differentiate between two types of complex sentences which both express non-real situations. The position of */ngali/* (either in the protasis or in the apodosis) serves as a diagnostic tool to distinguish the two types.

*/nga-li/ in protasis clauses*

When */nga-li/* occurs in the protasis clause, it indicates a non-real supposition in direct speech, thus representing a verbal form that one can call “past subjunctive”. The predicate of the apodosis is then marked by the consecutive */ka/*. This construction type is frequently documented in narrative poems:

- |       |                                                                                             |                                                                                                          |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (169) | Ni-ngali-omba Manani,<br>ka-ngia maangamizoni                                               | If I would ask the Beneficient, he may be<br>doomed (Abdurrahman 99)                                     |
| (170) | Enyi wathu wabasiri<br>m-ngali-tu-pa khabari<br>tu-ka-kaa kwa hadhari<br>pamwe na kufahamia | You prudent people, if you had only told us!<br>We sat in expectation of being informed<br>(Haudaji 485) |
| (171) | Moto ni-ngali-u-washa<br>mbele zangu u-ka-keshu                                             | Would I have lit a fire which would have lasted<br>before me the whole night (Haudaji 425)               |

However, one example (in direct speech) is found where */ngali/* of the protasis seems to express a condition rather than a non-real supposition:

- |       |                                                                      |                                                                                                           |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (172) | Ili kwamba twamtaka<br>tu-ngali ku-mu-diriku<br>tu-ka-mu-kusa hilaka | That is why we want it from him, when we<br>get him, we will mete out a punishment to<br>him (Herkal 113) |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

*/nga-li/ in apodosis clauses*

The most frequent occurrence of */ngali/* is observed in apodoses of complex sentences. It expresses the consequence of a fulfilled condition. The introductions of the protases show an astonishing variability. We very often



find /lau kwamba/ or /ili kwamba/, or even verbal predicates that are marked by the temporal clitic /po/. Only when perfective verbal stems occur within the complex sentence is the fulfilment of the condition regarded as impossible. In some examples, the infinitive prefix /ku/ is retained before the main verb:

- |       |                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                             |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (173) | Lau kwamba tuwawili,<br>u-ngali-ku-fanikiwa                                                                                             | Now that we are alone you can speak plainly<br>(Mikidadi 339)                                                                               |
| (174) | Siku ya leo thakili,<br>a-ngali-po sehe Ali,<br>tangi ya mwoto mukali,<br>u-ngali ku-zizimia                                            | Today is a difficult day, if Sheikh Ali<br>would be here, the flames of the hot fire<br>would go out (Herkal 902)                           |
| (175) | Ni-we-po hapa, nduguza,<br>mimi ni-ngali-mu-uwa                                                                                         | If I had been here, my brothers, I would<br>have killed him (Abdurrahman 229)                                                               |
| (176) | Lau kwamba niyuwile <sup>42</sup> ,<br>huku si-ngali-kelile <sup>43</sup> ,<br>illa ni-ngali esile <sup>44</sup> ,<br>uchache wa askari | If I had known (in advance), I would not<br>have stayed here, but I would have<br>brought out a small number of soldiers<br>(Katirifu 176). |

### *Negation of /nga/ and its compound forms*

There are only a few examples in the old texts. However, it appears that /nga/ behaves differently from its compound forms. Among the three instances that have been found in the data, two show the marker /to/ which is otherwise known as a regular marker negating the future tense or (rarely) the situative /ki/ in the Northern dialects. The etymology of /to/ reveals itself in example (178) as going back to the verb /-toa/ “to put out”:

- |       |                                                                        |                                                                                                                                  |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (177) | A-nga-to-weza kuzinga,<br>kwa majaraha ya phanga,<br>konḍoka akaipanga | Though he couldn't turn round because of<br>the wounds he got by the sword, he stood up<br>and settled himself (Abdurrahman 480) |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

<sup>42</sup> < /-yua/ “to know”.

<sup>43</sup> < /-kaa/ “to stay”.

<sup>44</sup> < /-eta/ KiAmu = /-leta/ in Standard.

- |       |                                                                                         |                                                                                                                               |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (178) | Alipendalo Karimu,<br>hapana shaka kutimu,<br>kiumbe mwana Adamu,<br>a-nga-toa kuridhia | What the Generous wants, must be done<br>without doubt, although the creature, the<br>man, does not accept this (Shufaka 157) |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Example (179) with the perfective verb stem /-wele/ of /-wa/ shows the indicative negation pattern that is also in use for negation of the compound forms (176, 180-184):

- |       |                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (179) | Si-nga-wele na mayuṭo –<br>walakini ni mkiwa                                                | I would not have regrets, but I feel as if I<br>am widowed (ZM 5-4)                                                                                                                        |
| (180) | Laula yakowe ha-ku-ngali<br>aridhi sama                                                     | If it had not been for you, there would not<br>have been heaven and earth (Kasida 21)                                                                                                      |
| (181) | Suthe ... haṭu-ngali-ko,<br>nambao                                                          | We were not there yet, I say so (Ngamia<br>21)                                                                                                                                             |
| (182) | Nakwamba, si bibi,<br>ha-ngali-mu-umba Adama                                                | I tell you, if my grandfather <sup>45</sup> would not<br>be, God wouldn't have created Adam<br>(Kishamia 30)                                                                               |
| (183) | Hu-ngali-ruḍi kabisa<br>ila Thumwa meniwasa<br>saa ha-i-ngali-kwisa<br>kwenu u-ngali-kwelea | You would never have returned, had the<br>Prophet not restrained me. One hour would not<br>have been over before you would have climbed<br>up to your place [of destination] (Haudaji 223) |
| (184) | Si-ngali-umbile hili yuwa,<br>wala kamari ... ila kwa<br>mahaba yao                         | I wouldn't have created this sun and this<br>moon, it is only because of love for them<br>(Kishamia 24)                                                                                    |

### **/nge/ and /ngeli/**

Only a few affirmative and negative examples occur in our data. They occur in poems which do not count as belonging to the oldest pieces of Swahili literature. By contrast, Taylor's collection of proverbs and sayings is rich in /nge/ sentences; here, /nga/ is found only with concessive

<sup>45</sup> Throughout this poem, *bibi* has the meaning 'grandfather' and is used as a eulogistic term for the prophet.

meaning, and /ngali/ never occurs. In Steere's tales, the story-teller of Sultan Darai and Sultan Majinuni seems to prefer the usage of /nge/, while the other tales contain hardly any examples of /ngali/. This evidence leads us to Heepe's (1914) conclusions in his excellent, but to a large extent unknown, analysis. He supposes that (1) /nge/ and /ngali/ may be seen as synonyms with originally complementary dialectal distribution, and (2) that the functional distinction between these forms (which is declared as normative in modern Swahili) must have been introduced by the first European grammarians Krapf and Steere.<sup>46</sup> Here are two examples quoted from Taylor:

- |                                                                    |                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (185) Mwana-mongwe ali kwao na<br>mṯanga ha-nge-lile <sup>47</sup> | Were the nobly born in his native<br>land, he had never eaten sand<br>(Aphorism 364)                 |
| (186) U-ng-enda juu kiboko, makazi<br>yako ni p'wani               | Although you go up (the country),<br>hippopotamus, your habitation is at<br>the coast (Aphorism 543) |

## Conclusion

Analysis of the old texts reveals:

1. Some particularities that are not known, or are only scarcely known, in modern Swahili;
2. The prerequisites for triggering the grammaticalisation processes of the modern past morpheme /li/;
3. The prerequisites for triggering the grammaticalisation processes of modern conjunctions like /iwapo/;
4. The starting points for forming modern conditional sentences with /nge/ or /ngali/.

However, John W. T. Allen (1971: 42) is quite right when he comments: "Many of these variations [in the poems, which differ from Standard

<sup>46</sup> Salomé (1983: 320ff), who analysed the newspaper *Uhuru* and who checked his data with speakers from Mombasa and Tanzania, came to similar conclusion as Heepe, but without knowing Heepe's study.

<sup>47</sup> > /-la/ "to eat".

Swahili] are regarded as archaic, but the great majority of them are still somewhere in use, and some of them are widespread.”

#### Ad (1)

There are three phenomena that should be stressed:

- a) The occurrence of /li/ as a copula in nominal predicates and in locative-copula constructions. However, as shown by instances that are found throughout Steere’s tales (1870), construction types like subject pronoun + li + ko were also used in former times in the south.
- b) The use of the compound copula /ka-li/;
- c) The use of the question word /hu-wa-ye/ “how”.

#### Ad (2)

The Janus-faced capacity of /li/ to function either as a copula in nominal predicates or as an auxiliary verb in complex predicates opened up the path of grammaticalisation for the modern past tense morpheme /li/. However, the differentiation between the non-marked /li/ as a general present tense and /a-li/ as a past tense was the most important precondition for that process. The differentiation between /a-li/ and /li/ has been lost in Standard Swahili. To the same extent as /wa/ replaced /li/ as auxiliary in complex predicates in modern Swahili, it has lost its dynamic inchoative meaning.

#### Ad (3)

In contrast to /li/, /wa/ was never involved in grammaticalisation processes of the modern verbal predicate. However, when used as auxiliary in complex predicates, at the same time preceded by non-referential subject pronouns, it developed into the modern conjunction /iwapo/ “although”.

#### Ad (4)

Although in the end, /nga/ developed into the pre-verbal modality morpheme /nge/, its path of grammaticalisation cannot be shown in such clear-cut steps as is possible with /li/. Perhaps the heterogeneous evidence can be explained by its originally different grammatical category, which has been called a “class-less index form” by A. E. Meeussen (1967: 115).<sup>48</sup> In

<sup>48</sup> However, as the term chosen by Meeussen indicates, it does not figure originally as a pre-verbal but as a pre-nominal morpheme: “... which can precede a nominal or a pronominal, and,

modern Swahili, /nga/ has survived in the concessive conjunction /ingawa/, and in /ngali/ with two different functions: as persistive in nominal predicates, and as a rarely used conditional marker which in its turn is on the way to being replaced by its contracted form /nge/. Schadeberg (1990: 3) describes the supposed path of grammaticalisation as follows: “We can thus imagine the changes in the meaning of this morpheme [\*nga] as follows: ‘just as > still > even if > although > if’.”<sup>49</sup>

As far as non-real conditional sentences are concerned, we have to note that in the old texts /ngali/ as conditional marker occurs only in apodosis position, and not in both protasis and apodosis as noted by Ashton (1947: 187) and many other grammarians for Standard Swahili. However, when it occurs in protasis position, it expresses past subjunctive meaning. In the narrative poems, this usage is documented in direct speech reporting dramatic events in the past.

### The sources

|             |                                             |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Abdurrahman | Abdurrahman: Dammann 1940                   |
| Anzarun     | Das Geheimnis der Geheimnisse: Dammann 1940 |
| Aphorism    | Taylor 1891                                 |
| Ayubu       | Utendi wa Ayubu: Allen 1971                 |
| Dua         | Dua ya kuombea vua: Hichens 1939            |
| Du‘a        | Bittgebet: Dammann 1940                     |
| Esha        | Mwana Esha: Dammann 1940                    |
| Fatuma      | Fatuma: Dammann 1940                        |
| Hamziya     | Knappert 1968                               |
| Haudaji     | Vierke 2011                                 |
| Herkal      | Chuo cha Herkal: Meinhof 1911/12            |
| Herkal-Kn   | Chuo cha Herkal: Knappert 1958              |
| Inkishafi   | Dittemer 2006                               |
| Kasida      | Kasida Ayi wangi wangi: Knappert 1969       |

although they occur in no other position, are not clearly prefixes, since they can have the same relation to more than one word without being repeated with each” (1967: 115).

<sup>49</sup> Wir können uns also den Bedeutungswandel dieses Morphems [\*nga] wie folgt vorstellen: “so wie > noch > selbst wenn > obwohl > wenn” (1990: 3).

|                |                                             |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Katirifu       | Utenzi wa Katirifu: Knappert 1968/69        |
| Kijuma         | Miehe & Vierke 2010                         |
| Kishamia       | Kishamia: Dammann 1940                      |
| Kiyama         | Utendi wa Qiyama: Allen 1971                |
| Kupona         | Utendi wa Mwana Kupona: Allen 1971          |
| Lamu Chronicle | Hichens 1938                                |
| Liongo         | Mashairi ya Liongo: Meinhof 1924/25         |
| Liyongo        | Liyongo songs: Miehe et al. 2004            |
| Masahibu       | Utendi wa Masahibu: Allen 1971              |
| Mi'iraji       | Die Himmelfahrt des Muhammed: Dammann 1940  |
| Mikidadi       | Utendi wa Mikidadi na Mayasa: Allen 1971    |
| Miqdad         | The story of Miqdad and Mayasa: Werner 1932 |
| Ngamia         | Kamel und Gazelle: Dammann 1940             |
| Pate Chronicle | Tolmacheva 1993                             |
| Shufaka        | Shufaka: Büttner 1894                       |
| Steere         | Swahili Tales 1870                          |
| ZM             | Zahidi Mngumi unpubl. mss                   |

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MAUMBO YA USHARTI KATIKA MAWASILIANO YA KISWAHILI:  
UTOKEAJI NA MFUATANO WAKE KATIKA TUNGO ZA KISWAHILI

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Mawasiliano ni muhimu sana katika jamii yoyote ile. Viumbe huwasiliana kwa njia mbalimbali kwa lengo la kuelewana. Mawasiliano yoyote yale, lazima yahusishe mambo yafuatayo: mtuma ujumbe, ujumbe wenyewe, njia za kupeleka na kurudisha ujumbe, anayepokea ujumbe na mrejesho. Viumbe huweza kuwasiliana kwa njia nyingi na kila mojawapo hutegemea muktadha na dhima ya mawasiliano. Baadhi ya njia hizo ni pamoja na matumizi ya sauti, mavazi, ishara, alama na vitendo vya mwili. Lugha ni njia kuu ya mawasiliano ya binadamu katika jamii nyingi duniani. Mawasiliano kwa njia ya lugha hutegemea sana miundo na mpangilio wa sauti, silabi na maneno katika tungo.<sup>1</sup>

Watumiaji wa lugha hawawasiliani kwa neno moja moja bali kwa kutumia tungo. Pamoja na kuwa jamii nyingi hutumia lugha, kila lugha ina mfumo wa sauti zinazotumika katika lugha yao ili kufanikisha mawasiliano. Aidha, lugha pia huwa na kanuni za miundo, mifuatano na matumizi ya mfumo sauti kiasi kwamba kanuni hizi zisipozingatiwa husababisha kukwama kwa mawasiliano. Mpangilio wa maneno katika tungo huweza kuifanya tungo hiyo ikawa sahili, changamano au ambatano. Aidha vipashio pia vinavyotumika ndani ya tungo huweza kuifanya tungo moja kuwa na hadhi tofauti na tungo nyingine. Mathalan, tungo ya usharti hutofautiana na tungo nyingine kutokana na kuwapo kwa vipashio au mofimu za usharti. Jinsi tungo zilivyoundwa huweza kufanikisha au kukwamisha mawasiliano. Kinachomsaidia mzungumzaji kuelewa kuwa mawasiliano yamefanikiwa ni ujumbe uliokusudiwa

<sup>1</sup> Tungo ni mpangilio wa maneno unaodokeza taarifa fulani ambayo yaweza kuwa kamili au isiwe kamili.

kumfikia mlengwa. Vinginevyo mzungumzaji ambaye ni mgeni wa Kiswahili anaweza kukwama kutokana na kushindwa kutumia ipasavyo vipashio vya tungo au kushindwa kujua jinsi tungo hizo zinavyoundwa.

### **Usharti katika Lugha ya Kiswahili**

Katika lugha ya Kiswahili yapo maumbo mbalimbali yanayosababisha usharti katika tungo na aya, hata kifungu cha habari katika mfumo wa mawasiliano (taz. Kapinga 1983; Nkwera 1985). Maumbo hayo ni kama vile *-ki-*, *endapo*, *ikiwa*, *endapo*, *iwapo*, *-nge-*, *-ngeli-*, na *-ngali-*, kama kwa kutaja baadhi. Maumbo haya yanatumika sana katika lugha ya Kiswahili kwa kuamua ni umbo gani mtu atumie. Huenda wengi wanatumia tu mazoea katika kuyatumia maumbo haya kwa kuwa yamekuwa yakitumika hivyo ili kuunda sentensi za masharti. Baadhi ya wataalamu wameweza kushughulikia vipashio/maumbo ya usharti katika sentenzi na kutoa maoni yao. Hawa ni pamoja na Polome (1967), Kapinga (1983), Kihore (1985), Wessana-Chomi (1986), Nkwera (1989) na Matei (2008).

Mathalani, Polome (1967: 117) akichambua umbo/kipashio *-ki-* cha usharti katika sentensi anasema hivi:

(*-ki-*) (kipashio) kinaonesha tendo ambalo linategemea hali fulani na kwamba kitenzi kinachobeba (*-ki-*) kinaonyesha mchakato ambao unaweka masharti katika utendekaji wa tendo lingine (*tafsiri yangu*)

Anachokieleza Polome ni kwamba kuna matendo mawili ambapo moja linategemea jingine ili liweze kufanyika. Kwa muktadha kama huu ni kwamba kitendo hakijafanyika ila huenda kikafanyika. Katika mawasiliano kama haya, mzungumzaji na msikilizaji/msomaji anakuwa ameshapata taarifa hivyo kinachobaki ni kusubiri kitendo cha kwanza kifanyike ili cha pili kifanyike. Wakati kitendo cha kwanza kinawezwa kukwamishwa au kuwezesha na mazingira, miktadha, hali na mambo mbalimbali ambayo kimsingi hayaonekani wala hayaelezwi, kitendo cha pili kinategemea tu kitendo cha kwanza kifanyike ili nacho kiweze kufanyika.

Kapinga (1983: 122) akifafanua mwenendo wa *-ki-* katika tungo anasema kuwa, *-ki-* ikitanguliwa na viingizi vya sentensi kwa mfano kama, *ikiwa* na *iwapo* huonesha kitenzi chenye hali ya masharti yanayowezekana

na yaliyodhihirika. Kapinga anaendelea kudokeza kuwa viingizi hivyo huweza vikawa katika fikara tu bila kuvitamka na kwamba *-ki-* peke yake hufanya kazi zote mbili.

Hata hivyo kutokana na maelezo ya mtaalamu huyu, mwanalugha anaweza kupata wasiwasi juu ya uwazi wa maelezo hayo. Aidha, dhana ya visentensi nayo ni tata. Je, ni sentensi zilizodogeshwa kama ilivyo mtoto (kitoto) au ni sentensi za aina gani anazozimaanisha mtaalamu huyu? Pili, mwanalugha anaweza kuhoji uhalali wa vipashio *ikiwa, kama* na *iwapo* kuitwa viingizi. Je, vinaingizwa wapi? Je, viingizi ni katagoria ya maneno ya aina gani? Hii ni kutokana na uchunguzi kupitia vitabu vya wataalamu mbalimbali kama vile Khamis na Kiango (2002), Kihore, Massamba na Msanjila (2003) Habwe na Karanja (2007), Matei (2008), Matinde (2012) na kushindwa kupata katagoria hii ya viingizi kwa ku-zingatia muktadha huu wa matumizi. Kapinga (1983) anafafanua viingizi kama maneno yanayodokeza vionjo au miguso ya moyo au akili kama vile alaa, loo, simile, oyee na mengine kama haya, ambayo hadhi yake ni tofauti kabisa na maumbo ya usharti. Fasiri hii, haiendani kabisa kihadhi na kimatumizi na maumbo hayo ambayo yanayoelezwa kuwa ni viingizi.

Wesana-Chomi (1986: 56) katika kuangazia maumbo *-nge-*, *-ngali-* na *-ki-* ana hoja mbili kuu: Kwanza anasema kuwa ni maumbo ambayo yanaweza kugawanyika zaidi kwani yameambatanishwa na njeo ya wakati uliopita *-li-*. Pili, anasema kuwa *-nge-*, *-ngali-* na *-ki-* yana dhima ya kuunganisha sentensi mbili kwenye sentensi kuu moja. Pamoja na kutoa hoja hizi, haioneshwi jinsi ya kuyatenganisha maumbo haya. Anachoeleza Wesana-Chomi ni kwamba, maumbo *-nge-* na *-ngali-* yanahusu kiendo kilichopita; yaani yanachora mstari kuanzia walipofikia wanaowasiliana na kurudi nyuma. Kwa maneno mengine ni kwamba maumbo haya yanamrudisha msikilizaji au msomaji katika kitendo ambacho hakikufanikiwa. Tunaweza kusema kuwa ni virejelezi vya vitendo ambavyo havikufanikishwa.

Matei (2008: 238) akiainisha aina mbalimbali za sentensi anasema kuwa sentensi za usharti ni aina ya sentensi za kundi la dhamira. Sentensi nyingine za kundi hili ni sentensi za tarifa, ulizi, agizi, hisishi na rai. Akifafanua sentensi za usharti Matei (keshatajwa) anasema kuwa ni sentensi ambazo huonyesha kwamba masharti fulani lazima yatimizwe ili jambo liweze kufanikiwa. Aidha sentensi hizi huonyesha

kutegemeana kwa matukio, kutokuwa na hakika na uwezekano wa jambo kwa kuonesha mifano ya sentensi zenye kipashio *-ki-* na *-nge-*. Kwa mujibu wa maelezo na mifano aliyotoa mtaalamu huyu, sentensi za masharti lazima ziwe na sifa ya kutegemeana kwa pande mbili ambazo kwa pamoja hutoa taarifa moja kuu. Aidha, jambo muhimu kulingana na maelezo ya Matei (ktj) ni kwamba sentensi ya masharti huwa ina vishazi viwili tegemezi.

Pamoja na kuwa watafiti hawa wameangazia usharti katika sentensi za Kiswahili, wameshughulikia zaidi maumbo/vipashio vya usharti *-ki-*, *-nge-* na *-ngali-*. Hata hivyo, katika mawasiliano ya Kiswahili kuna matumizi ya sentensi za masharti zenye maumbo mengine yenye hadhi kama ya *-ki-*, *-nge-*, na *-ngali-*. Maumbo hayo ni kama vile *kama*, *endapo*, *ikiwa*, nakadhalika ambayo pia yanatakiwa kutafitiwa. Aidha wataalamu wengi pamoja na kuelezea maumbo hayo ya usharti hawakuonesha kama maumbo hayo yanaweza kubadilishana nafasi kwamba umbo fulani likachukua nafasi ya umbo jingine bila tatizo. Hivyo makala hii inaendeleza tafiti zilizotangulia ili kujua kama maumbo haya yote yanaweza kubadilishana nafasi au la na kuchunguza mfuatano wake katika tungo.

### **Mbinu za Ukusanyaji na Uchambuzi wa Data**

Kama ilivyodokezwa hapo awali, data za makala hii zimetokana na kazi na wataalamu mbalimbali wa Kiswahili yaani za maktabani na kutoka uwandani (katika eneo la kazi, kwa wanataaluma wa Taasisi ya Taaluma za Kiswahili). Data za maktabani zilipatikana kutoka katika makala za majarida ya Kiswahili, tasnifu, nyaraka na vitabu vilivyoandika kuhusu tungo za usharti katika Kiswahili. Sambamba na vyanzo hivi wanataaluma wanne<sup>2</sup> walihusishwa katika kutunga na kuhakiki matumizi na mfuatano wa maumbo yaliyotafitiwa katika tungo mbalimbali. Hawa waliombwa kubainisha mifuatano sahihi na mifuatano isiyo sahihi ya maumbo ya usharti katika hizo tungo pamoja na kutoa ufafanuzi. Wanataaluma hawa walipatikana kwa bahati nasibu kwa maana kwamba aliyepatikana kwa muda ule ndiye aliyehusishwa. Baada ya kukusanya tungo kutoka kwenye vyanzo vya maktabani na kwa wanataaluma zilichambuliwa na kutolewa ufafanuzi.

<sup>2</sup> Johari Hakim, Elizeus Katikiro, Elizabeth Mahenge na Rhoda Peterson

## **Maumbo ya Usharti -ki-, kama, ikiwa, iwapo, endapo katika Mawasiliano ya Kiswahili**

Uchambuzi wa data uliangalia utokeaji wa maumbo ya usharti yaliyochunguzwa katika tungo na mfuatano wake huku yakihusishwa na njeo/wakati. Data ilitolewa na kufuatiwa na ufafanuzi au mjadala.<sup>3</sup>

### *Umbo la Usharti “-ki-”*

Data:

- (a) Ukienda Moshi utamwona kaka yangu.
- (b) Ukipanda pamba utapata faida.
- (c) Atakusaidia ukimhonga vizuri. (Wesana-Chomi 1986: 50)
- (d) Ukinisaidia nitakupa pesa. (Wesana Chomi 1986: 53)

Kwa kutumia data ya hapo juu, kipashio -ki- ni lazima kipachikwe ndani ya kitenzi. Data hii inaonesha kuwa, muundo wa kikundi kitenzi chenye (-ki-) ya usharti kina mofimu zifuatazo: kipatanishi ngeli +(-ki-) +mzizi + au shina la kitenzi kama ifuatavyo:

- (a) U + ki +enda atafurahi
- (b) A + ki + fa itasikitisha
- (c) Ni + ki +maliza nitakujulisha

Vile vile miundo mingine ambayo inaweza kuonekana ambayo ni kipatanishi ngeli + ki + yambwa + kitenzi. Tazama mifano ifuatayo hapa chini:

- (a) Ni + ki +mw + ona
- (b) U + ki + ki + pata

Ukichunguza mfano (a) hapo juu utaona kuwa “Ni” ni kipatanishi ngeli cha “mimi”, “ki” ni usharti, “mw” ni yambwa ikirejelea “myama kama vile mtu/mbuzi...” atakayeonwa na mwisho “ona” ni kitenzi.

<sup>3</sup> Zipo alama mbili ambazo zimetumika:

1. Alama \* imetumika kuonesha au kumaanisha kuwa tungo/sentensi ambayo haikubaliki katika mawasiliano rasmi.
2. Alama ? imetumika kuonesha kuwa tungo/sentensi ambayo kukubalika au kuelewana kwake kwa wazungumzaji hutegemea muktadha wa mawasiliano au tungo au sentensi ambayo haijazoeleka katika mawasiliano rasmi.

Nafasi ya Utokeaji wa *-ki-*

- (a) Akirudi Fitna nitamwambia.
- (b) Atakusaidia ukimhonga Fitna

Katika mfano wa (a) usharti upo katika kitendo cha kurudi. Katika mfano wa (b) usharti upo katika kitendo cha kuhonga. Kutokana na mifano hii miwili (a) na (b) tunaona kuwa iwapo kuna vifungu tenzi viwili au zaidi, kipashio *-ki-* kinachukua nafasi kwenye kile kitenzi kilichotakiwa kioneshe usharti.

*-Ki-* na Wakati/Njeo

Data:

- (a) Akirudi Chotoa nitamwambia maneno yako.
- (b) \* Akirudi Chotoa nilimwambia maneno yako.
- (c) ? Akirudi Chotoa ninamwambia maneno yako.
- (d) Akirudi Chotoa humwambia maneno yako.
- (e) Atakusaidia Chotoa ukimhonga vizuri.
- (f) ?Anakusaidia Chotoa ukimhonga vizuri
- (g) \*Alikusaidia Chotoa ukimhonga vizuri.
- (h) Mtoto akilia mpatie maziwa. (Data hii imetoka kwa mtafiti na kupatiwa majibu na wanataaluma walioteuliwa)

Kulingana na data inavyoonyesha *-ki-* ya masharti inatumika zaidi katika wakati ujao na pia katika hali ya mazoea na hali ya kuendelea au njeo ya wakati uliopo kama inavyoonekana katika tungo (a), (d), (e), (h) na pia katika (c), (f). Umbo la usharti *-ki-* haliwezi kutumika kwenye kishazi chenye njeo ya wakati uliopita kama inavyoonekana katika (b).

Ni vema kukumbuka kuwa si kila sentensi yenye umbo *-ki-* huonesha usharti katika mawasiliano. Tazama sentensi zifuatazo kuonesha matumizi ya *-ki-* katika kitenzi cha Kiswahili lakini ambayo hayahusiani na dhana ya usharti:

- (a) Tulimsikia akisema kama vile hatafika.
- (b) Tulimwona kama akilia vile.

Sentensi zote hizo hapo juu katika (a) na (b) hazionyeshi usharti bali zi-naonyesha kutokuwa na uhakika wa kitendo chenyewe cha ama “kufika” katika (a) au “kulia” katika (b). Dhima ya *-ki-* katika tungo hizo ni kuwa ki-

naonyesha uhusiano wa kiwakati kati ya tendo moja na jingine katika mawasiliano.

*Umbo la usharti “kama”*

Data:

- (a) *Kama* hutaki nikae hapa niambie. (Nkwera 1989: 39)
- (b) *Kama* akikataa basi mwache. (Wesana-Chomi 1986: 64&65)
- (c) *Kama* ameshiba usimpe tena chakula. (Data ya mtafiti)
- (d) *Kama* amefaulu atapata zawadi. (Data ya mtafiti)

Nafasi ya Utokeaji wa *kama*

Kwa kutumia mifano katika data ya hapo juu tunaona kuwa umbo la usharti (*kama*) linatokea mwanzoni au katikati mwa sentensi. Hata *kama* vishazi vitabadilishana nafasi, maana inabaki ni ile ile. Kishazi kinachobeba umbo la usharti (*kama*) kinahama pamoja na umbo la usharti *kama*. Kwa mfano (data kutoka uwandani):

- (a) Angeweza kuvuruga, *kama* angeachiwa huru.
- (b) *Kama* angeachiwa huru, angeweza kuvuruga.
- (c) Angeweza kuvuruga *kama* ----- (kt + *kama*)
- (d) Mtu yeyote *kama* anataka usalama ----- (kn + *kama*)
- (e) *Kama* akikataa mwache ----- (kama + kt)
- (f) *Kama* mpishi akiona nyama ----- (kama + kn)

Kutokana na data hii, umbo la usharti (*kama*) linaweza kufuata au kufuatwa na kikundi nomino au kikundi kitenzi. Pia inaonekana kuwa umbo la usharti (*kama*) linaweza kufuatana na maumbo mengine ya usharti kwenye kishazi au sentensi moja (angalia mifano ifuatayo).

- (a) *Kama* (kaka) akifika mwambie ale chakula. (Data kutoka uwandani)
- (b) *Kama* (Sifuni) akijaribu na kufaulu aendelee hatua nyingine. (Data kutoka uwandani)
- (c) *Kama* (yeye) akikuelewa na wewe ukimwelewa itakuwa vema. (Data kutoka uwandani)
- (d) *Kama* (mtoto) akililia wembe mpatie. (Data kutoka uwandani)
- (e) *Kama* ungempa Fatuma fedha angekununulia viazi. (Wesana-Chomi 1986: 64&65)



- (f) Angeweza kuvuruga *kama* angeachiwa huru. (Nkwera 1989: 39)
- (g) *Kama* ungalimpenda mumeo usingalimwacha. (Nkwera 1989: 39)
- (h) *Kama* angalimpata yule mtoto angalimpeleka shule. (Kihore 1994: 166)
- (i) *Kama* ningalimwambia angalifanya hivyo. (Kihore 1994: 166)

Kutokana na mifano ya hapo juu, umbo *kama* huweza kufuatana na maumbo mengine ya usharti kama vile *-ki-*, *-nge-* na *-ngali-* katika tungo moja. Katika utokeaji huu, umbo *kama* linaongeza msisitizo au kuweka nguvu katika usharti.

#### Uhusiano wa *kama* na Njeo/Wakati

- (a) *Kama* Shumbala atakataa basi mwache.
- (b) *Kama* Shumbala anakataa basi mwache.
- (c) *Kama* Shumbala alikataa basi mwache.
- (d) *Kama* Shumbala amekataa basi mwache.
- (e) *Kama* Shumbala hukataa basi mwache.
- (f) *Kama* Shumbala huwa anakataa basi mwache.

Kwa kutumia mifano ya tungo hapo juu (katika (a) mpaka (f)) inadhihirika wazi kuwa kwa kiasi kikubwa inaonekana *kama* hukubaliana na njeo zote na hali zote. Hakuna tungo inayoonekana kukinzana na njeo yoyote kimaana wala kimuundo.

#### *Maumbo “ikiwa, endapo, iwapo”*

Maumbo haya katika Kiswahili hayana tofauti kimaana katika kuonyesha usharti. Kwa sababu hiyo, katika makala hii tumeamua kuyaunganisha na kuyajadili kwa pamoja.

#### Data:

1. (a) *Ikiwa* nimekusuta itakuwa nimekuroga. (Nkwera 1989:71)  
 (b) *Endapo* nimekusuta nitakuwa nimekuroga.  
 (c) *Iwapo* nimekusuta nitakuwa nimekuroga.
2. (a) *Ikiwa* ni mitamu utanunua mikate miwili. (Polome 1967:155)  
 (b) *Endapo* ni mitamu utanunua mikate miwili.  
 (c) *Iwapo* ni mitamu utanunua mikate miwili.

3. (a) Malezi mazuri kamwe hayawezi kudhihirika *ikiwa* nafsi ndiyo ingefikiriwa kuwa kitu kikuu. (Nkwera 1989 :71)  
 (b) *Endapo* angekwenda kusoma *angekuwa* mmisheni.  
 (c) *Ikiwa* angekwenda kusoma *angekuwa* mmisheni.
4. (a) *Ikiwa* hali ni nzuri Tanzania inaweza kumudu. (Nkwera 1989:73)  
 (b) *Ikiwa* hali itakuwa ni nzuri Tanzania itaweza kumudu.  
 (c) *Ikiwa* hali ilikuwa ni nzuri Tanzania iliweza kumudu.  
 (d) *Ikiwa* hali imekuwa ni nzuri Tanzania imeweza kumudu.  
 (e) *Ikiwa* hali ingekuwa nzuri Tanzania ingeweza kumudu.  
 (f) *Endapo* hali inakuwa nzuri Tanzania inaweza kumudu.  
 (g) *Iwapo* hali inakuwa nzuri Tanzania inaweza kumudu.

#### Nafasi ya Utokeaji wa *endapo*, *ikiwa*, *iwapo*

Kwa kutumia mifano katika data ya hapo juu tunaona kuwa maumbo ya usharti *endapo*, *ikiwa*, *iwapo* yanatokea mwanzoni au kati katika sentensi. Pia maumbo haya hayawezi kutokea zaidi ya umbo moja katika sentensi moja sahili, yaani hayawezi kufuatana katika mpangilio kama huu ufuatao hapa chini ikiwa ni sentensi sahili:

- (a)\* *Endapo ikiwa*
- (b)\**Iwapo endapo*
- (c)\**Ikiwa iwapo*

Hata hivyo, maumbo mawili yanaweza kuonekana katika sentensi ambayo ni changamano kutokana na kuunganisha sentensi sahili au huru tofauti tofauti. Tazama mfano wa muundo huu wa sentensi hapa chini:

- (a) *Ikiwa* utafika na *endapo* utamkuta mwambie aje (*hivi ni vishazi vitatu*)

Aidha, inaonekana kuwa sentensi za aina hii hutegemea sana kiunganishi *na* ili kuweza kuandamanisha maumbo haya. Umbo *ikiwa* linaonekana kuwa na uhuru wa utokeaji kuliko maumbo mengine, tazama kwa mfano wa sentensi nyingi za data 4 hapo juu. Nkwera (1985: 72) anadokeza kuwa sentensi kama hizi zinaonyesha mwendelezo fulani. Kwa mujibu wa data yetu mwendelezo huo ni wa kukubalika katika mawasiliano.

Nafasi/Mfuatano wa Maumbo ya Usharti *ikiwa, iwapo na endapo* katika Tungo

Katika kuchunguza mfuatano wa maumbo ya usharti *ikiwa, iwapo na endapo* katika mawasiliano data ifuatayo ilitumika:

- (a) Mama *endapo* atafika ni vizuri.
- (b) Mama huyo *iwapo* anafika ni heri.
- (c) Mama *yetu ikiwa* alifika si vibaya.
- (d) *Endapo* atafika huyo dada mkaribishe.
- (e) *Ikiwa* alifika *ungempatia* ile zawadi.
- (f) *Iwapo* anacheza usimzuie.
- (g) *Endapo* paka atatokea mkamate.

Tukiangalia mifano ya hapo juu tunaona kuwa, maumbo ya *endapo, iwapo na ikiwa*, ya usharti, yanaweza kutanguliwa na kikundi nomino au kikundi kivumishi. Aidha, tunaona pia kuwa yanaweza kuwa mwanzoni mwa sentensi ambapo kwa hakika ndiyo miundo ambayo imezoeleka sana katika tungo za Kiswahili.

Kwa ujumla, kimfuatano, maumbo ya usharti *ikiwa, iwapo na endapo* yanaweza kuambatana na kitenzi, nomino na kivumishi. Aidha kwa kuchunguza data hii tunaona kuwa umbo ambalo linaweza kuchukua nafasi ya maumbo *ikiwa, iwapo, endapo* bila kuleta utata wa kimawasiliano au kusababisha kutokuelewana kwa mtoa ujumbe na mpokea ujumbe ni *kama*. Tumeona tangu awali katika sehemu zilizotangulia za makala hii, kuwa umbo *kama* linafanya kazi sawa na maumbo haya matatu ya usharti na kwamba sentensi haibadiliki kimaana.

Uhusiano wa Maumbo ya Usharti *ikiwa, endapo, iwapo na Njeo/Wakati*

- (a) \**Ikiwa* Ndishi anakuja ananikuta.
- (b) *Endapo* Ndishi anakuja atanikuta.
- (c) \**Iwapo* Ndishi anakuja alinikuta.
- (d) \**Ikiwa* Ndishi alikuja ananikuta.
- (e) \**Endapo* Ndishi alikuja atanikuta.
- (f) *Ikiwa* Ndishi alikuja alinikuta.
- (g) \**Endapo* Ndishi atakuja ananikuta.

- (h) \**Iwapo* Ndishi atakuja alinikuta.
- (a) *Ikiwa* Ndishi atakuja atanikuta.
- (b) *Ikiwa* Jeni anakuja ananikuta.
- (c) *Ikiwa* Jeni anakuja hunikuta.
- (d) *Iwapo* Jeni huja hunikuta.
- (e) *Ikiwa* Jeni huja (basi, ina maana) hunikuta.

Maumbo *ikiwa*, *endapo* na *iwapo* yanatumia njeo zote na hali zote kulingana na taarifa inayotolewa kutegemeana na baadhi ya sentensi zilivyo. Kutokana na mifano ya tungo hizi inaonekana kuwa maumbo *ikiwa*, *endapo*, *iwapo* yanaweza kutumika zaidi katika wakati uliopo, ujao, hali ya mazoea (hu). Pia maumbo haya yanakubali kutumika katika hali ya kuendelea (na) *ikiwa* kitenzi kinachofuata kipo katika amri. Uwezekano huu wa maumbo haya kuweza kutumika kwa njeo mbalimbali bila shida huwarahisishia watumiaji wa lugha kuelewana kwa bila kuwa na maswali au bila ku-kwamisha mawasiliano miongoni mwao.

## Hitimisho

Makala hii imeangazia maumbo ya usharti katika mawasiliano ya Kiswahili. Maumbo yaliyohusishwa katika makala hii ni *-ki-*, *kama*, *endapo*, *ikiwa*, na *iwapo*. Katika mawasiliano, vitenzi ndivyo hubeba taarifa mbalimbali kuhusiana na kitendo kilichokusudiwa. Makala ililenga kuangazia utokeaji na mfuatano wa maumbo haya katika tungo pamoja na kuchunguza kama maumbo haya yanaweza kubadilishana nafasi. Makala hii pia ilichunguza uhusiano wa maumbo ya usharti na wakati/njeo. Matokeo yanaonesha kuwa: Utokeaji wa maumbo haya unatofautiana. Kuna maumbo ya usharti ambayo yana uhuru wa kubadilishana nafasi zaidi kuliko maumbo mengine na mawasiliano yakafanyika vema bila wasiwasi. Mfano umbo *kama* lina uhuru zaidi wakati umbo kama vile *-ki-* halina uhuru huo. Kwa kuangalia vipashio vya usharti na wakati (njeo) au hali inaonekana kuwa sentensi za usharti zinakubaliana zaidi na (wakati) njeo ijayo (*-ta-*) kuliko wakati uliopita na kwa kiasi kidogo wakati (njeo) iliyopo. Umbo la usharti *kama* haliyatangulii maumbo mengine ya usharti kama vile *ikiwa*, *endapo*, *iwapo* isipokuwa *-ki-* peke yake. Hii inamaanisha kuwa umbo kama pamoja na kuwa na uhuru mkubwa wa utokeaji, lazima litokee baada ya maumbo *ikiwa*, *endapo* na *iwapo*. Pia imeonekana kuwa umbo la usharti kama linapotumika na

maumbo mengine ya usharti kama vile *-ki-*, *nge*, na *ngali* huongeza uzito katika masharti ya tungo husika. Kwa ujumla ili kuweza kubainisha tungo yenye usharti miongoni mwa tungo nyingine, lazima tungo yenye usharti iwe na vishazi viwili au zaidi.

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**STUDI SU SEMANTICA E LESSICOGRAFIA**

***STUDIES ON SEMANTICS AND LEXICOGRAPHY***



## I DIZIONARI SWAHILI: CONSIDERAZIONI METODOLOGICHE

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L’attenzione degli studiosi italiani verso le lingue africane, sino ad alcuni decenni or sono, è stata rivolta essenzialmente alle aree riguardanti le nostre storiche colonie, ad eccezione di alcuni missionari, quali Crazzolaro, Muratori e altri, interessati alle lingue nilotiche. Lo studio del swahili, se si esclude il dizionario del Cavicchioni, qui citato esclusivamente per dovere di completezza, e la grammatica e il dizionario di Merlo Pick, non aveva riscontrato grande interesse in Italia. Infatti, solo nel 1968 iniziò presso l’allora Istituto Universitario Orientale l’insegnamento di questa lingua, affidato alla Professoressa Elena Bertoncini Zúbková.

L’argomento scelto per il mio contributo mi ha sempre affascinato sin da quando, studente di swahili, iniziai ad addentrarmi in questo idioma. Potrebbe sembrare, a prima vista, molto distante dai miei interessi, avendo dedicato gran parte della mia carriera scientifica allo studio dei prestiti arabi e, non solo, nelle lingue africane. In effetti, la ricerca di tali prestiti mi ha spinto a leggere centinaia di dizionari, compresi numerosi vocabolari swahili, molti dei quali spesso bilingui o con un’annessa lista di termini, talvolta in inglese, francese o tedesco, se non in altre lingue.

Una particolarità che, a prima vista, colpisce l’utente di questi dizionari, riguarda l’ordine alfabetico, che non ha nessuna coerenza scientifica. In swahili, frequentemente appaiono nei lemmi simboli che non sono delle lettere, cioè apostrofi e sporadicamente degli spazi:

\* Ringrazio i curatori di questo volume in onore della Professoressa Elena Bertoncini Zúbková per l’invito a partecipare con un mio contributo. Ho ritenuto doveroso accettarlo, essendo stato nel 1968 il primo studente di swahili, quando, iscritto alla Facoltà di Giurisprudenza dell’Università Federico II, seguivo i corsi di arabo e swahili come uditor. Nel 1972, laureato, poi, anche presso l’Istituto Universitario Orientale in arabo e swahili, divenni borsista per il swahili.



-ng'aa  
 ngabu  
 ngadu (Johnson 1967: 334)  
 [...]  
 -ng'amua (Johnson 1967: 335)  
 [...]  
 ngano (ibidem)

Lo stesso fenomeno si riscontra nel dizionario di Merlo Pick, ma ciò comprensibilmente è dovuto alla forte influenza, per non dire altro, che il dizionario di Johnson ebbe sul missionario della Consolata:

-ng'aa  
 ngabu  
 ngadu (Merlo Pick 1964: 386)  
 [...]  
 -ng'amua (Merlo Pick 1964: 387)  
 [...]  
 ngano (ibidem)

Naturalmente il dizionario di Gianluigi Martini, appena pubblicato, ripete pedissequamente la tradizione appena sottolineata:

-ng'aa  
 ngabu  
 ngadu (Martini 2016: 172)  
 [...]  
 ng'amua (Martini 2016: 173)  
 [...]  
 ngano (ibidem)

Quest'assenza di un rigore metodologico e scientifico nell'elencare i vari lemmi nei dizionari swahili, dovuta a posizioni consolidate nella pubblicazione dei primi dizionari, è stata seguita anche dagli altri autori, che si sono succeduti nel tempo, indipendentemente dalla loro formazione e lingua. Infatti, nel dizionario di Ol'derogge notiamo lo stesso ordine:

-ng'aa  
 ngabu (Ol'derogge 1961: 293)

[...]  
*-ng'akia*  
*ngalawa*  
*ng'amba*  
*ngambi*  
*ng'ambo* (ibidem)

come pure in quello di Kutuzov e Juma Zidikheri, pubblicato sempre a Mosca, qualche anno dopo:

*-ng'aa*  
*-ng'akia*  
*ngama*  
*ng'ambo*  
*ngamia*  
*-ng'amua* (Kutuzov & Zidikheri 1965: 123)

A questo riguardo va notato che quest'assenza di coerenza scientifica è comune a tutti i dizionari swahili consultati, si veda al riguardo anche quelli di Höftmann, Kutuzov, Lenselaer, Ol'derogge e perfino quello pubblicato dal Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili. L'unico dizionario, che io sappia, contro corrente è quello di Georges Mertens, che indica correttamente l'ordine alfabetico:

*neva*  
*-ng'aa*  
*ng'ambo*  
*-ng'ang'ania*  
*ng'o!*  
*-ng'oa*  
*ng'ombe*  
*ngalawa* (Mertens 2006: 81)

Un altro problema, non trascurabile nella stesura di un dizionario bilingue, che si pone al compilatore, riguarda il software da utilizzare. Non credo, che io sappia, esista un valido strumento sul mercato che permetta di introdurre i dati automaticamente nelle due lingue. Personalmente, in una mia recente esperienza per la lingua hausa, ho utilizzato lo ShoeBox, creato dalla Bible Society di Dallas, che, pur essendo molto duttile e abbastanza

facile da usare, nel trasferire automaticamente i dati nell'altra lingua, l'italiano nel mio caso specifico, forniva semplicemente una lista di termini (*key words*), senza poter inserire frasi o modi d'impiego, sempre che non si creasse un altro database, partendo dall'italiano questa volta. Tutto ciò, ovviamente, avrebbe duplicato il lavoro e il tempo impiegato!

Questa prima considerazione ci fornisce lo spunto per analizzare alcuni dizionari bilingui in swahili, che ho avuto modo di consultare, o forse direi meglio leggere, alla ricerca di termini che potessero essere di origine araba.

Jan Knappert pubblicò, tra i suoi innumerevoli lavori, anche un piccolo dizionario swahili-esperanto-swahili. Come ebbi modo di rilevare nella mia recensione (Baldi 1985: 537-538), la sezione esperanto-swahili era più ricca (Knappert 1984: 19-92) di quella swahili-esperanto (Knappert 1984: 93-130). Infatti, nessuno di questi equivalenti swahili dei termini esperanto citati nella prima parte è registrato nella seconda: *abako* (Knappert 1984: 19) "mwidadi, alaya hesabu"; *miraño* (Knappert 1984: 61) "sarabu, mazigazi, mangazimbwe"; *pardono* (Knappert 1984: 69) "samaha, uradhi, ghofira". Lo stesso può dirsi per il reverso, dove troviamo: *-ao* (Knappert 1984: 93) "ilia"; *bweta* (Knappert 1984: 95) "skatolo". Nel caso, poi, di quest'ultimo termine, *skatolo*, esso è presente a pagina 82, ma è tradotto con *sanduku*, *bwati*. Sorge quindi naturale domandarsi quale sia stato il criterio ispiratore della compilazione del dizionario.

Un altro aspetto riguarda spesso l'omissione di termini comuni, che ci si aspetterebbe di trovare in un dizionario: a questo proposito basti citare la parte English-Swahili del dizionario di Jahadhmy che omette lemmi quali *Monday* o *Sunday* o i nomi dei mesi. D'altra parte il medesimo dizionario registra, al contrario, nella parte English-Swahili termini quali *good* e *pretty*, che non menziona nell'altra parte sotto *zuri*!

Più che un miglioramento mi permetterei di suggerire nuove indagini anche su altre aspetti, in particolare connessi alla struttura del swahili, lingua bantu a classi, dove termini come *Rais* "capo", classe 5/6 con plurale *maRais*, concordano in classe 1/2 (degli essere viventi). Ho visto pochi dizionari porre l'attenzione al problema e segnalare una tale particolarità, si veda ad es. il dizionario di Prins (1970; recensito in Baldi 1975) e quello di Georges Mertens (2006).

Un'altra caratteristica dei dizionari swahili è l'assenza d'ideofoni tra le voci presenti, probabilmente dovuta alla scarsa attenzione degli studiosi a questa categoria grammaticale. Senza dubbio ciò rappresenta una mancanza

notevole nella lessicografia del swahili. Come avevo già segnalato in un mio articolo (Baldi & Wamitila: 39-60), lo studio degli ideofoni nelle lingue africane, iniziato sin nel lontano 1886 con Harry Thurston Peck, aveva affascinato una moltitudine di studiosi nel tempo. In una ricerca molto veloce e superficiale, consultando la bibliografia *on line* di Jouni Filip Maho, si può constatare che per le lingue africane, già nel 1926, fu pubblicato un articolo sull'argomento per il kiKongo (Bittremieux 1926: 37-42; 758-772). D'altra parte per lo stesso swahili, qualche anno dopo, nel 1939, Florence Instone Deed pubblicò una breve nota al riguardo. I dizionari swahili bilingui hanno mostrato un apparente interesse agli ideofoni sin dalla pubblicazione del dizionario di Rechenbach, che inserisce nell'introduzione, tra le sigle adottate, una per gli ideofoni, ma poi ne cita solo un paio in tutto il lavoro.<sup>1</sup> Lo stesso dicasi, consultando il dizionario di Hildegard Höftmann, che cita la sigla *Id* – Ideophon (1989: 10), ma per quanto mi consti, non ne ho trovati, consultando il suo dizionario. Questo atteggiamento degli autori dei dizionari trova ampio riscontro nelle grammatiche swahili che sono del tutto omissive al riguardo, ad eccezione, ne va dato merito, a quella della omaggiata (Bertoncini Zúbková 2009: 295-297), che vi dedica alcune pagine all'argomento.

Queste mie brevi considerazioni su alcuni aspetti della lessicografia swahili, spero, possano alimentare il dibattito futuro e spingere qualcuno dei numerosi studenti/ricercatori italiani di swahili a interessarsi agli argomenti trattati.

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<sup>1</sup> *bomu* id. “a loud noise” (Rechenbach 1967: 35b) e *bwabwaja*, *bwata* id. “talk on fusedly / meaninglessly” (Rechenbach 1967: 41b).

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TRA VOLONTÀ E DESIDERIO. PRIME RIFLESSIONI SULL'USO DI -TAKA E  
-PENDA IN ALCUNI PASSI SELEZIONATI DA TESTI RELIGIOSI SWAHILI

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*Il kanga portava la scritta IKIWA NI MAPENZI WAKO ...*

Non ricordo quando ho comprato il *kanga*; probabilmente a Dar es Salaam intorno agli anni '90. I due teli sono rimasti in casa per tanti anni e spesso mi hanno seguito anche nei miei viaggi svolgendo le loro più diverse funzioni: pareo da spiaggia, tovaglia, asciugamano, lenzuola, sciarpa e finanche tendine da finestra. Quando li ho avuti in mano per la prima volta, guardando la scritta IKIWA NI MAPENZI WAKO, ho notato subito l'incongruenza dell'accordo grammaticale: *mapenzi* (cl. 6) e *wako* (cl. 1, 2, 3, 11, ma non cl.6). Stando alle regole dell'accordo di classe l'espressione avrebbe dovuto essere *mapenzi yako*; ho attribuito l'errore al fatto che spesso i *kanga* sono spesso prodotti in India, e dunque da persone che non conoscono il swahili (Alley Hamid Mahfoudha 1996: 109). Il significato non mi era molto chiaro e spesso mi sono chiesta cosa avrebbe potuto voler dire la donna che avesse scelto di indossare un *kanga* con quella scritta.<sup>1</sup> Davo per scontato che dovesse essere qualcosa che avesse a che fare con il desiderio, l'amore: "che sia il tuo amore, il tuo desiderio", mi sembrava una traduzione possibile; ma restavano delle perplessità. Mi capitò una volta di esprimerle con la nostra lettrice di swahili, Fatuma Tandika, che prontamente replicò alle mie osservazioni circa l'incertezza del significato: "È la frase contenuta nel Padre Nostro: 'Sia fatta la tua volontà'."

<sup>1</sup> "We may observe that the kanga allows for the communication of the unspeakable, whereby the interactants cannot be held responsible for their interaction. [...] Ambiguous signs: the role of the kanga as a medium of communication" (Beck 2001: 166).



**Da *utakalo* (ciò che vuoi, di cui senti bisogno) a *mapenzi yako* (ciò che vuoi, di cui senti piacere)**

La versione italiana del Padre Nostro contiene il versetto:

Venga il tuo regno; sia fatta la tua volontà, come in cielo così in terra. (Matteo 6,10)<sup>2</sup>

La versione swahili dello stesso versetto riporta:

*Ufalme wako ufike. Utakalo lifanyike duniani kama mbinguni.*  
(Mathayo 6,10)<sup>3</sup>

Quindi l'espressione italiana "la tua volontà" in swahili è diventata *utakalo* (lett.: quello che tu vuoi).

In italiano, alla voce dei lemmi "volontà" e "volere" troviamo:

**volontà** 1. La capacità di volere, la capacità di decidere consapevolmente il proprio comportamento in vista di un dato scopo.

**volere** 1. essere risoluto a fare, a ottenere qlcs. 2. disporre, stabilire, determinare in un certo modo (detto del destino, di Dio, di una forza superiore all'uomo).<sup>4</sup>

In swahili, come descrizione dei lemmi -taka e -penda troviamo:

**-taka** sentire il bisogno di, abbisognare, volere, desiderare, essere inclinato || Esprimere un bisogno a, chiedere, domandare, da cui deriva il nominale **matakwa** (cl.6) necessità, bisogni, cose abbisognate || L'essere voluto, l'essere desiderato o richiesto.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.laparola.net/testo.php?riferimento=Matteo+6&versioni\[\]=C.E.I.](http://www.laparola.net/testo.php?riferimento=Matteo+6&versioni[]=C.E.I.)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.biblics.com/sw/biblia/biblia-habari-njema/agano-jipya/mathayo/6>.

<sup>4</sup> *Il Grande Dizionario Garzanti della lingua italiana* (1987).

La scritta sul *kanga* dice “*mapenzi wako*”. *Mapenzi* deriva da *-pend-*, radice da cui viene la base verbale *-penda* “volere, amare, desiderare, sentire piacere di, scegliere”. Da *-penda* derivano anche i nominali:

**upendo/mapendo** (cl. 11/6) l’amare, il piacere, amore, affezione

**upenzi/mapenzi** (cl. 11/6) l’amare, il volere, il desiderare, il piacere, amore, volontà, voglia, desiderio, diletto, l’essere amato, l’essere voluto  
 || Ciò che è amato, voluto, ecc. || *Mapenzi*: amore, desiderio, inclinazione, proposta

**mpenzi** (cl. 1/2) amato, persona cara, favorita, amante, chi ama.<sup>5</sup>

È sorta così la domanda: Possibile che la lettrice si sia sbagliata a indicare quel significato? Quale potrebbe essere il collegamento tra *utakalo* ciò che tu vuoi e *mapenzi wako* il tuo desiderio, il tuo piacere?

Ovviamente non possiamo qui parlare di traduzione da una lingua all’altra, in quanto è improbabile che il testo swahili venga direttamente da un originale italiano, o viceversa. Ciò che qui si intende mettere in evidenza sono le diverse scelte avvenute nelle due lingue riguardo a termini i cui contenuti e le cui connotazioni semantiche possono avere uno spettro di significato più o meno ampio dovuto anche a riferimenti culturali diversi.

L’indagine è iniziata partendo quindi dai termini “volontà” e *mapenzi*. Una ricerca nella versione italiana della Bibbia in Intratext<sup>6</sup> circa la forma “volontà” fornisce 82 occorrenze distribuite in 28 libri diversi. Una ricerca della forma *mapenzi* nella versione swahili della Bibbia, sempre in Intratext,<sup>7</sup> ha prodotto 27 occorrenze distribuite in dieci libri diversi. Ovviamente una ricerca più approfondita richiederebbe il considerare tutte le forme flesse delle basi

<sup>5</sup> Lemmi e traduzioni sono presi da Merlo-Pick (1964). Cfr. Sacleux (1939): *-penda*: aimer, affectionner, trouve à sa convenance, préférer (une chose), vouloir bien (qqch). *Penzi* (*ma*) *penzi la moyo ni dawa*, ce qui plait à l’âme la soulage. *Mapenzi*: amour; ce qu’on aime, désire ou veut; bon plaisir, gré; désir de qqch, sa volonté, son goût. *Taka*: vouloir, désirer; demander; avoir besoin de; tendre à: être incliné à. *Matakwa*: vouloir, intention, gré, désir, demande (ce qu’on demande ou désire). *Si matakwa yangu*, c’est contre ma volonté.

<sup>6</sup> La Sacra Bibbia. Testo liberamente disponibile su Internet generalmente riferito all’edizione CEI (<http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ITA0001/>).

<sup>7</sup> The Swahili Bible - New Testament (<http://www.intratext.com/y/SWA0013.HTM>).

considerate. Ma lo scopo di questo lavoro non è tanto di fornire un risultato quanto di portare all'attenzione un elemento di riflessione sulle possibili motivazioni, e conseguenti implicazioni, dell'uso, in due lingue diverse, di termini considerabili equivalenti ma con spettri semantici ampi e tuttavia non sovrapponibili.

L'attenzione si concentra inizialmente su Matteo 26,42 e Luca 22,42, dove è riportato l'episodio di Gesù nell'Orto del Getsemani, perché in quei versetti si ritrova l'espressione riportata sul *kanga*. Qui di seguito sono riportati i versetti in questione in italiano<sup>8</sup> e swahili<sup>9</sup>.

Mt 26,39

E avanzatosi un poco, si prostrò con la faccia a terra e pregava dicendo: “Padre mio, se è possibile, passi da me questo calice! Però non come voglio io, ma come vuoi tu!”

*Baba yangu, kama inawezekana, aacha kikombe hiki cha mateso kinipite; lakini isiwe nitakavyo mimi, ila utakavyo wewe.*

Mt 26,42

Si allontanò una seconda volta e pregò dicendo: “Padre mio, se questo calice non può passare via senza che io lo beva, si compia la tua volontà.”

*Akaenda tena mara ya pili akasali: “Baba yangu, kama haiwezekani kikombe hiki kinipite bila mimi kukinywa, basi, mapenzi yako yafanyike.”*

Lc 22,42

Padre, se vuoi, allontana da me questo calice! Tuttavia non sia fatta la mia, ma la tua volontà.

*Baba, kama wapenda, ukiondoe kwangu kikombe hiki; hata hivyo, mapenzi yako yatimizwe, wala siyo yangu.*

<sup>8</sup> Bibbia.net; Bibbia CEI 2008 (<http://www.lachiesa.it/bibbia/cei2008/index.htm>).

<sup>9</sup> La Sacra Bibbia. Testo liberamente disponibile su Internet; generalmente riferito all'edizione CEI ([http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ITA0001/\\_PUE.HTM](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ITA0001/_PUE.HTM)).

Un'altra versione swahili di Lc 22,42<sup>10</sup> riporta (a parte la forma *yako* che è l'accordo in cl. 6), esattamente la scritta sul *kanga*:

Luka 22,42

*Akisema, Ee Baba, ikiwa ni mapenzi yako, uniondolee kikombe hiki; walakini si mapenzi yangu, bali yako yatendeke.*

Lo stesso episodio, riportato in Mc 14,36 produce invece:

E diceva: “Abbà, Padre! Tutto è possibile a te, allontana da me questo calice! Però non ciò che io voglio, ma ciò che vuoi tu.”

*Akasema, “Baba yangu, kwako mambo yote yanawezekana. Uniondolee kikombe hiki; lakini isiwe kama nitakavyo mimi, bali utakavyo wewe.”*

Quindi in Luca i termini italiani “vuoi” e “volontà” hanno un corrispettivo swahili con termini che derivano solo dalla radice *-pend-*; in Matteo si rinvencono termini riconducibili sia a *-taka* che a *-penda*; in Marco 14,36 si ritrovano forme riconducibili alla sola base verbale *-taka*

La base verbale *-taka* compare in forme verbali *nitakavyo* “ciò che io voglio”; *utakavyo* “ciò che tu vuoi”, mentre la radice *-pend-* compare nella costruzione della forma nominale *mapenzi* “l'amare, il volere, il desiderare”. Questa prima rapida indagine sembra confermare, a fronte dell'italiano “volere” e “volontà”, l'uso in swahili delle due basi *-taka* e *-penda*.<sup>11</sup>

Quindi, i termini italiani riconducibili a “volere” e “volontà” hanno come corrispettivo in swahili delle forme prevalentemente riconducibili alla radice *-pend-*, che, specialmente nei suoi derivati *mapenzi* e *upendo*, ha più la connotazione semantica dell'amore e del desiderio di far piacere a qualcuno, rispetto alla base verbale *-taka*, che ha più la connotazione del volere per il proprio bisogno.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.biblepage.net/sw/kuchagua-kitabu/luka-22.php?chxverse=42>.

<sup>11</sup> Da un ricerca in Intratext sulla Bibbia CEL, in italiano, emerge che la parola “volontà” ha 82 occorrenze. Tra i possibili equivalenti swahili, queste sono le forme e le rispettive occorrenze: *mapenzi* 27; *matakwa* 32, *nitakavyo* 2, *utakavyo* 3, *utakalo* 1.

Una ricerca circa le possibili ricostruzioni che hanno portato alla scelta di tali termini richiede indagini molto estese ed accurate. Richiede innanzitutto l'individuazione dei testi da mettere a confronto e conoscenze precise circa il processo di traduzione di tali testi.<sup>12</sup> Una volta individuati i testi occorre poi individuare le forme da mettere a confronto, il recupero dei contesti nei quali occorrono, ed infine un confronto tra le rispettive co-occorrenze. Solo partendo da questi dati si può procedere ad una analisi circa l'effettivo contenuto di significato dei termini in questione, analisi che può arrivare a coinvolgere anche ambiti non strettamente linguistici.

Ma una tale ricerca richiede competenze diversificate e tempi piuttosto lunghi. La scelta su come proseguire si è orientata quindi più sull'allargare ad altre lingue (zulu, hausa, ge'ez, arabo, cinese, latino) una prima verifica circa i termini utilizzati.<sup>13</sup> Qui di seguito la versione zulu dei suddetti versetti.<sup>14</sup>

#### Mathewu 6,10

*Mawufike umbuso wakho; mayenziwe intando yakho emhlabeni njengasezulwini.*

#### Mathewu 26,39

*Waqhubeka ingcosana, wawa ngobuso bakhe, wakhuleka wathi: "Baba, uma kungenzeka, akudlule kimi lesi sitsha; nokho kungabi njengokuba ngithanda mina, kodwa njengokuba uthanda wena." <sup>15</sup>*

#### Mathewu 26,42

*Wabuye waya ngokwesibili, wakhuleka wathi: "Baba, uma lesi sitsha singedlule kimi ngingasiphuzanga, mayenziwe intando yakho." <sup>16</sup>*

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Zuurmond (2001a: 32-41).

<sup>13</sup> Ringrazio, oltre R. Maisano e G. Lacerenza citati in seguito, altri vari colleghi che hanno avuto la pazienza di ascoltare le mie richieste e fornirmi le informazioni richieste: G. Batic (hausa), M. Sacchetti (cinese), A. Straface (arabo), G. Lusini e Y. Beyene (ge'ez).

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.wordpocket.com/zu/42/22.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> IBhayibheli - Zulu Bible [1959] (<http://www.wordpocket.com/zu/40/26.htm>).

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

## Marku 14,36

*Wathi: “Aba, Baba, konke kungenzeka kuwe; ake ususe kimi lesi sitsha, kepha kungabi njengokuba ngithanda mina, kodwa njengokuba uthanda wena.”*

## Luka 22,42

*Wathi: “Baba, uma uthanda, susa lesi sitsha kimi; nokho makungenziwa intando yami kodwa eyakho.”*

Il verbo zulu per “volere” è *-funa* “want, desire; search for, look for”, che non compare nei versetti considerati. In zulu la radice scelta come corrispondente a “volere” e “volontà” è *-thand-*, da cui deriva la base verbale *-thanda* “like, love, be fond of, vale, esteem, admire” e le forme nominali *intando* “will, free will” e *u(lu)thando* “liking, affection, love”.<sup>17</sup> Quindi nella versione in zulu, ancor più che in swahili, il lessema scelto rimanda più ad un atto di desiderio che non ad un atto di volizione.

Analizzando i corrispondenti swahili e zulu delle forme di “volere” e “volontà” nei versetti Mt 26,42, Mc 14,36 e Lc 22,42 si nota che in swahili viene usata la base verbale *-penda* e in zulu la base *-thanda*. Solo in Mc 14,36 il swahili usa la base *-taka*, che indica “volere”; lo zulu mantiene invece la base *-thanda* “amare, piacere”.

La ricerca dei suddetti versetti in hausa ha prodotto i seguenti risultati.

## Matiyu 6,10

*Mulkinka yă zo, A aikata nufinka a duniya kamar yadda ake yi a Sama.*

## Matiyu 26,42

*Har wa yau a komawa ta biyu, sai ya je ya yi addu" a, ya ce, “Ya Ubana, in wannan ba zai wuce ba sai na sha shi, to, a aikata nufinka.”*

<sup>17</sup> Doke et al. 1990.

Markus 14,36

*Sa'an nan ya ce, "Ya Abba, Uba, kowane abu mai yiwuwa ne a gare ka. Ka dauke mini kokon wahalar nan. Duk da haka dai ba nufina ba, sai naka."*

Lukas 22,42

*Ya ce, "Ya Uba, in dai ka yarda, ka dauke mini kokon wahalar nan. Duk da haka dai, ba nufina ba, sai naka za a bi"*

In hausa in tutti i versetti considerati<sup>18</sup> viene utilizzata la base *nufi*, un nome verbale derivante dal verbo *nùfaa* che significa: 1. dirigersi verso un luogo; 2. voler dire, intendere (es. cosa vuoi dire? cosa intendi dire?).<sup>19</sup>

Da un controllo di una versione in ge'ez<sup>20</sup> si rileva che il termine usato come corrispondente di volontà è ፈቃድ (*faqād* "wish, desire, want").<sup>21</sup> Lo stesso termine si ritrova nell'analogo versetto in amarico, ancora una volta un termine con un contenuto semantico ad ampio spettro.

Mt 6,10<sup>22</sup>

ስምህ ይቀደስ፤ መንግሥትህ ትምጣ፤ ፈቃድህ በሰማይ እንደ ሆነች እንዲሁ በምድር ትሁን፤

*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

Una verifica in arabo fa rilevare come, per la traduzione di "volontà", Mt 42,26 usi il termine *mashiya*, che è usato per riferirsi alla volontà degli uomini, mentre Mc 36,14 e Lc 42,22 usino *arada* "volere" e *irada* "il volere", termini in genere usati per riferirsi al volere di Dio.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Hausa on line – Reading the Bible in Hausa on line (<https://hausaaonline.wordpress.com/2009/11/23/reading-the-bible-in-hausa-online/>).

<sup>19</sup> Newman 2007.

<sup>20</sup> *Evangelia Sacra Domini nostri et Salvatoris Jesu Christi*, Æthiopice et Amharice, 1874. Cf. Zuurmond 2001b.

<sup>21</sup> Leslau 1987.

<sup>22</sup> Amharic and English parallel bibles (<https://www.wordproject.org/bibles/parallel/-amharic/index.htm>).

<sup>23</sup> Informazioni da parte della prof.ssa A. Straface.

Mt 42,26

(:فَمَضَى أَيْضًا ثَلَاثِيَّةً وَصَلَّى قَائِلًا: «يَا أَبَتَاهُ، إِنْ لَمْ يُعْمَكُنْ أَنْ تُعْبِرَ عَنِّي هَذِهِ الْكَأْسُ إِلَّا أَنْ أَشْرِبَهَا، فَلْتَكُنْ 42: 26 آيَة (مت مَسِيحِيَّةً)».)

Mc 36,14

(:وَقَالَ: «يَا أَبَا الْآبِ، كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مُسْتَطَاعٌ لَكَ، فَأَجِزْ عَنِّي هَذِهِ الْكَأْسَ. وَلَكِنْ لِيَكُنْ لَا مَا أُرِيدُ أَنَا، بَلْ مَا 36: 14 آيَة (مر تُرِيدُ أَنْتَ).

Lc 42,22

(:قَائِلًا: «يَا أَبَتَاهُ، إِنْ شِئْتَ أَنْ تُجِيزَ عَنِّي هَذِهِ الْكَأْسَ. وَلَكِنْ لَتَكُنْ لَا إِرَادَتِي بَلْ إِرَادَتُكَ. 42: 22 آيَة (لو

Nel considerare le scelte dei termini in una versione in cinese si rileva come, anche in questa lingua, i termini utilizzati si prestino ad una interpretazione ampia, da “desiderio” a “editto”, “ordine”.<sup>24</sup>

Mt 26,42

“我父啊！如果我非喝此杯不可，愿你的旨意成就”

Padre! Se non posso non bere questo calice, desidero che si compia il tuo ordine.

愿 desiderare, volere; 你的 tuo, tua; 旨 decreto imperiale, 旨意 ordine (la volontà di un re supremo, è di fatto un ordine); 成就 risultato, portare a termine (sia eseguito, sia reale, sia fatto).

<sup>24</sup> La traduzione dal, o in, cinese si base sul contenuto, sul tema, su ciò che si interpreta dalla lingua di partenza. Ma il risultato si basa su parole che hanno più significati e che devono essere adeguate alla cultura di arrivo. E questo è frequente. Il desiderio di Dio, Nostro signore (... venga a noi il tuo regno ... sia fatta la tua volontà come in cielo così in terra ...), re di un enorme regno che comprende tutto il creato, può essere considerato per noi un ordine! Per quanto riguarda la parola “ordine” al posto di “desiderio/volere” in Cina usano la parola che indica i decreti dell’imperatore; diversamente sarebbe una mancanza di rispetto. Inoltre ogni ideogramma può cambiare significato se abbinato ad un altro, può congiungersi in osmosi o può perfezionare il significato proprio o del secondo termine. Per la traduzione si è utilizzato il dizionario *Diccionario espanol de la lengua China*, 1980. (Comunicazione della prof. M. Sacchetti)



Lett.: desidero/tuo/ordine/eseguito, ossia: “desidero che si compia il tuo ordine” o semplicemente: “si compia il tuo ordine”.

Mc 14,36

“祂说：阿爸，父啊，你无所不能，求你撤去此杯  
然而，愿你的旨意成就，而非我的意愿”

Padre! Padre! Non vi è nulla che tu non possa, ti prego di allontanare questo calice, ma desidero che si compia il tuo ordine, non il mio desiderio.

愿意volere, desiderare, desiderio; quindi 而非我的意愿: e non ciò che desidero o e non il mio desiderio

Lc 22,42

“父啊，若你愿意，求你撤去此杯  
然而，愿你的旨意成就，而非我的意愿”

Padre! Se lo vuoi, ti prego di allontanare questo calice, ma desidero che si compia il tuo ordine, non il mio desiderio.

Da una prima verifica da un testo latino, si riscontra che i termini *voluntas* e *volo* sono chiaramente riconducibili a “volontà” e “volere”.<sup>25</sup>

Matthaeum 6,10

*Adveniat regnum tuum, fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.*

Matthaeum 42,26

*Iterum secundo abiit et oravit dicens: “Pater mi, si non potest hoc transire, nisi bibam illud, fiat voluntas tua.”*

<sup>25</sup> Nova Vulgata Bibliorum Sacrorum (<http://www.intratext.com/IXT/LAT0669/>).

## Marcum 14,36

*Et dicebat: “Abba, Pater! Omnia tibi possibilia sunt. Transfer calicem hunc a me; sed non quod ego volo, sed quod tu.”*

## Lucam 22,42

*Dicens: “Pater, si vis, transfer calicem istum a me; verumtamen non mea voluntas sed tua fiat”*

Ma quali sono i termini utilizzati nei versetti considerati in quelli che possiamo considerare come i testi originali di riferimento? Conversazioni informali con alcuni colleghi hanno fornito un primo punto di partenza. Mt 6,5-15, da dove proviene il Padre Nostro, al punto indicato usa la parola greca *thēlema*, ma ci sono varie possibilità per il suo antecedente ebraico o aramaico.<sup>26</sup> Per quel che riguarda le traduzioni dell’originale greco e le antiche traduzioni latine, in entrambe tutti i testimoni concordano su “volontà” (gr.: *thēlema*, lat.: *voluntas*). Così anche i padri della chiesa.<sup>27</sup>

### **Ipotesi sui possibili termini originali di riferimento**

Il termine *θέλημα* (*thēlema*) e il verbo *θέλω* (*thēlo*) che si trovano nei racconti del Getsemani (Mt 26,39.42: “*ouch hōs egō thelō all’hōs sy... genēthētō to thelēma sou*”; Mc 14,36: “*all’ou ti egō thelō alla ti sy*»; Lc 22,42: “*plēn mē to thelēma mou alla to son ginesthō*”) comprendono una gamma di significati che vanno dall’intenzione del fare al desiderio, dalla buona disposizione al volere liberamente.<sup>28</sup> Nella Bibbia dei Settanta (LXX) il termine traduce gli ebraici *רָצוֹן* *’āvāh* (volere) e *חָפֶזֶת* *chāfêtz* (desiderio), oltre che *רָצוֹן* *rātzôn* (volontà, ma anche benevolenza, favore, gradimento). L’espressione che si trova nei racconti della passione, infine, richiama molto da vicino la formulazione della preghiera del Signore, il “Padre nostro”, nel vangelo di Matteo (6,10) e in quello di

<sup>26</sup> Vedi la voce *thēlema* (con theta) nel *Grande Lessico del Nuovo Testamento* di Paideia (informazione da parte del prof. G. Lacerenza).

<sup>27</sup> Informazione da parte del prof. R. Maisano.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Nolli 2011. Per i testi greci ed ebraici e le relative traslitterazioni, cf. <https://www.biblehub.com>.

Luca (11,2: *genēthētō to thelēma sou*), in cui troviamo lo stesso lemma *thēlema*.

L'espressione può essere letta secondo l'accezione della volontà o del desiderio e, per determinarne il senso, può essere utile leggere sia le ricorrenze greche che quelle ebraiche nei loro contesti.

Per quanto riguarda l'ebraico, cominciamo con *'āvāh*. Le ricorrenze di *'āvāh* nell'Antico Testamento sono sempre in forma negativa e riguardano la libera volontà umana (ma anche divina, come in Dt 10,10 o 23,5) di non fare una determinata cosa, come in Gen 24,5: Abramo sta chiedendo al servo di tornare nella terra paterna per cercare una moglie per il figlio Isacco, al che lui risponde: “se essa non mi vuol seguire (*lō 'āvāh*) in questa terra?” (qui con una leggera sfumatura sul desiderio); o in Es 10,27, questa volta con una sfumatura più sulla volontà, dove qualcosa di simile accade con il Faraone, che “non volle (*lō 'āvāh*) lasciar partire [il popolo].” Come accennato, anche Dio “si rifiuta” di fare qualcosa, come in Dt 10,10: “il Signore non ha voluto (*lō 'āvāh*) distruggerti.”

Per quanto riguarda *chāfêtz*, il verbo ha un'accezione più marcata sul desiderio o la gioia che si ottiene nel fare qualcosa o nello stare con qualcuno; non a caso, il termine compare spesso nel linguaggio dell'amore.<sup>29</sup> In Gen 34,19 arriva a sostituire il verbo amare: “Il giovane non indugiò a eseguire la cosa, perché amava (*kî chāfêtz*) la figlia di Giacobbe.” Può indicare anche l'aver gusto nel fare una cosa: “egli può fare ciò che gli piace (*yapôtz*).” Il verbo può indicare anche il favore divino, come in 2Sam 15,26: “Se [il Signore] dovesse dire: ‘non ti gradisco’ (*āfaztilō*)...”, o il suo desiderio: “così sarà della parola uscita dalla mia bocca: non tornerà a me [...] senza aver operato ciò che desidero (*āfazti*)” (Is 55,11). Tre sono le ricorrenze, infine, nel Cantico dei Cantici: “non scuotete dal sonno l'amore, finché egli non lo desideri (*shettechepātz*)” (2,7; 3,5; 8,4).

Infine, il termine *rātzôn* è quello che più di tutti contiene l'accezione della volontà, anche se le sfumature “desiderio”, “volere”, nel senso di “aver piacere che si faccia una cosa”, e “volere”, nel senso di “ordine, editto”, si sovrappongono a tal punto da risultare quasi indistinguibili. Come in Sal 40,6-9: “Sacrificio e offerta non gradisci (qui è usato *chapāzta*), allora ho detto: “Ecco, io vengo. Nel rotolo del libro di me è scritto di fare la tua volontà’

<sup>29</sup> Cf. i termini “amore” e “zelo” in arabo: حَفِظَ حَفِظَ in <http://biblehub.com/hebrew/2654.htm>.

(*rezònkā*)”.<sup>30</sup> In Lv 1,3 indica il favore, quindi la buona volontà o il desiderio positivo, se così si può dire, divino: “perché [l’offerta] sia accetta al Signore in suo favore (*lir’zòñò*).” Infine, il verbo può indicare semplicemente il fare ciò che si desidera, come in Dn 8,4: “faceva quello che gli pareva (*kir’zòñò*).”

A margine di tutto il discorso appena fatto, conviene sottolineare che in ebraico i termini “editto”, “ordine”, “comandamento”, “decreto”, sono indicati rispettivamente da *qôl* “voce, proclamazione”, ma soprattutto *t’em* “decreto, comando”, *tzārā* “comandare, ordinare a qualcuno”, *mîtzwāh* “comandamento”, *chòq* “statuto”, da *chāqqaq* “scrivere su tavolette”.

Il greco *thēlema* ha simile spettro di accezioni nel Nuovo Testamento, anche perché spesso traduce i corrispettivi ebraici che abbiamo appena visto. Il Thayer (1996) così si esprime:

*θέλημα, θελήματος, τό (θέλω), a word purely Biblical and ecclesiastical (yet found in Aristotle, de plant. 1, 1, p. 815b, 21); the Sept. for יָצַו and וְצִוָּ; will, i. e., a. what one wishes or has determined shall be done: Luke 12:47; John 5:30; 1Corinthians 7:37; 1Thessalonians 5:18; 2Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 10:10; Revelation 4:11; θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ is used – of the purpose of God to bless mankind through Christ, Acts 22:14; Ephesians 1:9; Colossians 1:9; of what God wishes to be done by us, Romans 12:2; Colossians 4:12; 1Peter 4:2; and simply τόθέλημα, Romans 2:18 [...]. Plural commands, precepts: (Mark 3:35 WH. marginal reading); Acts 13:22 (Psalm 102:7; 2 Macc. 1:3); ἐσπιτόθέληματινος, followed by ἴνα, John 6:39; 1Corinthians 16:12, cf. Matthew 18:14; followed by an infinitive, 1Peter 2:15; by an accusative with an infinitive 1Thessalonians 4:3.*

È chiara, qui, l’accezione soprattutto sul desiderio: “è desiderio di Dio che ...”. Gesù lo usa quasi esclusivamente in relazione al Padre (Mt 6,10; 7,21; 12,50; 18,14; 21,31; 26,42; Mc 3,35; Lc 11,2; 12,47; 22,42; Gv 4,34; 5,30...). Così lo si trova negli scritti apostolici (At 21,14; 22,14; 2,18; 12,2; Gal 1,4; Ef 5,17...), con un’interessante eccezione: in 1Cor 16,12 San Paolo sta parlando di Apollo, dicendo che egli “non aveva desiderio (*pantō sou kēn thelēma*) di venire adesso: verrà quando ne avrà l’occasione.”

<sup>30</sup> Questo salmo è particolarmente interessante, perché il NT lo cita in Eb 10,5-7, dove *thēlema* e il verbo *thēlo* vengono usati: “Sacrificio e offerta non hai gradito (*ēthelēsas*), un corpo mi hai preparato [...]. Allora ho detto: “Ecco, io vengo; nel rotolo del libro di me è scritto, che io faccia, o Dio, la tua volontà (*thelēma*).”

## Osservazioni finali

Per individuare possibili motivazioni delle diverse scelte occorrerebbe indagare sui vari contesti e sulle varie co-occorrenze. Ma in questo lavoro, più che arrivare ad una conclusione, si è inteso porre all'attenzione come una espressione italiana indicante un atto di volizione possa trovare espressione in altre lingue attraverso una base semantica indicante un atto di desiderio.

Riconducendo comunque il discorso nell'ambito del swahili riportiamo, a conclusione di questo lavoro introduttivo, la parte iniziale di un testo swahili intitolato *Mapenzi ya Mungu*, scritto catechistico del vescovo Zachary Kakobe.

### SOMO: MAPENZI YA MUNGU (MATHAYO 15,29-39)

*Ni watu wachache sana walio na mashaka kwamba Mungu hana nguvu au uwezo wa kufanya mambo makubwa, lakini ajabu ni kwamba watu wengi sana wana mashaka juu ya mapenzi ya Mungu katika kuwaponya na kuwapa mahitaji yao mengine. Wengi utawasikia wakisema "Ni mapenzi ya Mungu niugue na ataniponya kama akipenda." Mawazo ya jinsi hii ni kizuizi kikubwa sana cha kupokea lolote kutoka kwa Mungu. Ni makusudi ya somo letu la leo, kujifunza Biblia ili tuifahamu kweli na kuyajua hasa mapenzi ya Mungu kwetu.*<sup>31</sup>

### LEZIONE: LA VOLONTÀ DI DIO (Mt 15,29-39)

Sono poche le persone che dubitano che Dio non abbia potere o capacità di fare grandi cose, ma sorprendentemente, tante persone sono preoccupate per la volontà di Dio nel curare le loro necessità. Molti li sentirai dire: "È la volontà di Dio di uccidermi e mi guarirà se vuole". Queste idee sono un grande ostacolo per ricevere qualcosa da Dio. È lo scopo del nostro studio oggi, studiare la Bibbia in modo che possiamo conoscere la verità e conoscere veramente la volontà di Dio per noi.

Ricordando come anche l'espressione swahili *Mungu akipenda* possa essere resa in italiano con "Dio volendo" o "A Dio piacendo",<sup>32</sup> abbiamo

<sup>31</sup> *Mapenzi ya Mungu Neno la Uzima kutoka kwa Askofu Zachary Kakobe* (<http://www.bishopzacharykakobe.org>; <https://davidcarol719.wordpress.com/mapenzi-ya-mungu/>).

<sup>32</sup> Ringrazio Roberto Gaudio per questa segnalazione a ulteriore sostegno delle mie osservazioni (MT).

scelto, per la versione italiana<sup>33</sup> la traduzione *mapenzi* = volontà, per ritornare su come l'ambiguità semantica possa portare a interrogarci sul significato di “conoscere veramente la ‘volontà’ di Dio per noi” ...

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<sup>33</sup> Traduzione a cura di M. Toscano



*KWA MOYO WOTE* (CON TUTTO IL CUORE):  
METAFORE DEL CUORE IN SWAHILI E ITALIANO

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Studi condotti sulle espressioni figurative contenenti termini del corpo in swahili (Kraska-Szlenk 2014; Talento 2014) e in italiano (Casadei 1996; Masella & Portner 1981; Pannain 2008; Cuturi 1981; Deignan & Potter 2004) hanno dimostrato come il corpo costituisca un dominio privilegiato per individuare universali concettuali che si manifestano in forme linguistiche diverse. In swahili, come in italiano, *moyo* (cuore) ha un ampio spettro di connotazioni metaforiche quali “coraggio, volontà, amore” (Kraska-Szlenk 2014). Anche in italiano, “dall’antichissima credenza popolare che il cuore fosse il centro della vita spirituale e affettiva dell’uomo, s’è formata ed è rimasta nel linguaggio comune una serie ricchissima di locuzioni e frasi figurate, nelle quali il cuore è inteso come la sede dei vari moti dell’animo” (Treccani 1986: 1029). L’analisi comparativa di espressioni riferite al cuore in due lingue geneticamente distinte quali lo swahili e l’italiano, ha permesso di identificare schemi cognitivi universali e al tempo stesso di riflettere sulle diverse forme linguistiche che li codificano, considerando il contesto culturale in cui le espressioni sono create ed utilizzate.

Le recenti teorie cognitive hanno dimostrato, infatti, che, nonostante le differenze culturali, lingue diverse presentano corrispondenze concettuali sistematiche. L’articolo presenta diversi esempi di espressioni metaforiche equivalenti (convergenze) e asimmetriche (divergenze) riferite al cuore (*moyo*) in swahili e in italiano, mettendo in luce alcuni aspetti linguistici e concettuali delle espressioni metaforiche. Gli esempi riportati sono stati raccolti principalmente tramite ricerca su diversi dizionari che includono esempi di modi di dire, di espressioni idiomatiche e di proverbi in swahili e in italiano. Alcuni esempi swahili provengono da interviste con



madrelingua<sup>1</sup> o dal corpus di testi in forma digitale dell'Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale".<sup>2</sup>

## **Convergenze**

Ci sono molte espressioni metaforiche<sup>3</sup> in swahili e italiano in cui i termini *moyo* e "cuore" descrivono un concetto identico o simile. Indicherò questo tipo di equivalenze linguistiche e concettuali nelle due lingue con il termine di "convergenze".<sup>4</sup>

Nella tabella 1 ho riportato alcuni esempi nelle due lingue. Nella maggior parte di casi, c'è una perfetta corrispondenza concettuale tra l'espressione metaforica swahili e quella italiana (es. *cuor di leone*) e ho dunque semplicemente riportato la traduzione nella colonna dell'italiano. In alcuni casi, invece, l'espressione è identica nelle due lingue ma il contesto d'uso o la connotazione è differente; ho dunque riportato la traduzione letterale accanto all'esempio swahili, e nella colonna dell'italiano, ho indicato un esempio dal significato simile (es. swahili: *moyo wa mti*, lett. "il cuore dell'albero"; italiano: "il cuore della città"):

<sup>1</sup> Ringrazio Frederick Maiso Bosire per i chiarimenti su alcune espressioni swahili.

<sup>2</sup> Il corpus di testi swahili è stato creato da Maddalena Toscano nel 1995 ed è accessibile all'Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale", Dipartimento di Studi sull'Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo. Il corpus consiste in un database contenente testi letterari swahili, la maggior parte appartenenti al genere di prosa contemporanea, ma anche alcune poesie e testi politici.

<sup>3</sup> Poiché lo scopo di questo studio non è quello di classificare i diversi tipi di espressioni metaforiche ma piuttosto di riflettere sulla relazione tra forme linguistiche e schemi concettuali nelle due lingue, si utilizzerà la definizione di "metafora" come processo cognitivo, includendo in questa categoria le metonimie, le espressioni idiomatiche, i modi di dire, i proverbi.

<sup>4</sup> L'uso dei termini convergenze, divergenze e asimmetrie si ispira alla classificazione di Bertuccelli Papi (2013) nel suo studio sull'uso idiomatico di 'hand' in inglese e 'mano' in italiano.

**Tab. 1**

| <b>Swahili</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Italiano<sup>5</sup></b>                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>moyo wa</p> <p><i>parte centrale</i></p> <p>“moyo wa mti” (lett. il cuore dell’albero; il centro dell’albero)</p> <p>“moyo wa kanzu” (lett. il cuore del vestito; il petto del vestito)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <p>il cuore di</p> <p><i>parte centrale</i></p> <p>“il cuore della città”</p> <p>“il cuore della notte”</p>                |
| <p>moyo wa simba</p> <p><i>persona coraggiosa</i></p> <p>“Lyongo alikuwa na moyo wa simba; hakutishika kirahisi”</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>cuor di leone</p> <p><i>persona coraggiosa</i></p> <p>“Lyongo aveva un cuor di leone; non si spaventava facilmente”</p> |
| <p>moyo mzuri (lett. bel cuore)</p> <p>moyo mwema<sup>6</sup> (lett. buon cuore)</p> <p><i>buono, generoso, caritatevole, volenteroso</i></p> <p>“...atakuwa na moyo mzuri wa kuwafundisha wanafunzi” (pol)<sup>7</sup> (...avrà buona volontà (lett. buon cuore) nell'insegnare agli studenti)</p> <p>“Alikuwa na moyo mwema usiokata tamaa, mvumilivu, mwenye huruma na ulio tayari kusamehe” (adi) (Aveva un cuore buono che non si perdeva d'animo, paziente, compassionevole e pronto a perdonare)</p> | <p>buon cuore</p> <p>“ “</p> <p><i>buono, generoso, caritatevole</i></p> <p>“Mi affido al vostro buon cuore”</p>           |

<sup>5</sup> Gli esempi e le definizioni in italiano provengono dal dizionario Treccani (1986), dai dizionari Zanichelli (2010; <http://aulalingue.scuola.zanichelli.it/benvenuti/2010/11/18/espressioni-idiomatiche-con-la-parola-cuore/>) e De Mauro (2000; <https://dizionario.internazionale.it/parola/cuore>).

<sup>6</sup> Con il significato opposto, *moyo mbaya* (lett. cuore cattivo) corrisponde all’ italiano “senza cuore”. Un’espressione con significato simile è *hana utu* (lett. non ha umanità) “senza cuore, meschino”.

<sup>7</sup> Le abbreviazioni tra parentesi indicano le fonti del corpus da cui sono stati tratti gli esempi. Una lista delle abbreviazioni con i riferimenti bibliografici corrispondenti è riportata alla fine dell'articolo.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>moyo mkuu<br/>moyo mkubwa</p> <p><i>buoni sentimenti, generosità</i></p> <p>“...yule mhadhiri mwanamme<br/>mwembamba lakini mwenye moyo<br/>mkubwa” (tata)</p> <p><i>coraggio</i></p> <p>“Alijipa moyo mkuu akafunua pazia” (adi)<br/>(Si diede grande coraggio (lett. grande cuore) e aprì la tenda)</p> | <p>cuore grande</p> <p><i>buoni sentimenti, generosità</i></p> <p>“...Quel docente è un uomo minuto ma dal cuore grande”</p>                                                                    |
| <p>moyo wa jiwe<br/>moyo mgumu<br/>moyo baridi (lett. cuore freddo)</p> <p><i>inflessibile e spietato</i></p> <p>“Hassani sio mtu wa kutegemea kwa kuwa ana moyo mgumu”</p>                                                                                                                                  | <p>cuore di pietra (o di sasso)<br/>cuore duro (o duro di cuore)<br/>cuore di ghiaccio</p> <p><i>inflessibile e spietato</i></p> <p>“Su Hassani non si può contare perchè ha il cuore duro”</p> |
| <p>moyoni</p> <p><i>nell'intimo</i></p> <p>“Moyoni alifurahi...” (duni)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>in cuor proprio</p> <p><i>nell'intimo</i></p> <p>“In cuor suo fu contento”;<br/>“gioire, piangere in cuor proprio”</p>                                                                       |
| <p>kwa moyo wote</p> <p><i>volentieri, sinceramente, intensamente</i></p> <p>“Tanzania, nakupenda kwa moyo wote”<sup>8</sup></p>                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>con tutto il cuore</p> <p><i>volentieri, sinceramente, intensamente</i></p> <p>“Tanzania ti amo con tutto il cuore”</p>                                                                      |

<sup>8</sup> From the national hymn of Tanzania

|                                                                                     |                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| moyo unapapa <sup>9</sup> (il cuore palpita)                                        | il cuore palpita;                                                                        |
| moyo unadundadunda (il cuore pulsa)                                                 | “ “                                                                                      |
| moyo unaenda kasi (il cuore va veloce)                                              | avere il batticuore                                                                      |
| moyo unaenda kishindo (il battito è accelerato)                                     | “ “                                                                                      |
| <i>ansia, agitazione, paura</i>                                                     | <i>ansia, agitazione, paura</i>                                                          |
| “Moyo ulimpapa na pumzi zilimjaa kifua tele” (ute)                                  | “Il cuore (gli/le) palpitò e il respiro gli riempì completamente i polmoni”              |
| “Moyo wangu ulianza kunidundadunda niliposikia jina lake likisomwa na mwalimu”      | “Il mio cuore iniziò a battere quando sentii il suo nome letto dall’insegnante”          |
| “...alijibu Kiligilo kwa upole huku moyo ukinwenda kasi na kuleta kigugumizi” (njo) | “...rispose Kiligilo con calma mentre il cuore gli batteva forte e lo faceva balbettare” |
| moyo unalia (lett. il cuore piange)                                                 | piangere il cuore (a qcn)                                                                |
| <i>provare dispiacere per qualcosa o qualcuno</i>                                   | <i>provare dispiacere per qualcosa o qlcu.</i>                                           |
| “Moyo wake ulikuwa unalia”                                                          | “Gli/Le piangeva il cuore”                                                               |

<sup>9</sup> Il verbo *-papa* (palpitare) ricorre sempre nel corpus con un oggetto riferito al soggetto esperienziale (es. *moyo unampapa* “il cuore gli/le palpita”); le espressioni *moyo unadundadunda* (‘il cuore pulsa’) e *moyo unaenda kishindo* (il battito è accelerato) non sono presenti nel corpus ma solo nei dizionari (Wamitila, 1999: 245). Il primo significato del verbo *-dunda* è “triturare o macinare”, mentre in senso figurato è utilizzato nel contesto della danza (*ngoma*): “battere le sol en cadence (danseur) -*dunda ngoma*, battre le tambour de qqs. coups, pour annoncer la danse et inviter les danseurs à venir. *Ngoma ya kudunda*, tambour qui ne se bat que d'un côté” (Sacleux, 1939: 175).

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>kupasuka moyo (lett. esplodere il cuore in mille pezzi)</p> <p><i>essere scioccato, sconvolto</i><sup>10</sup></p> <p>“Nilipasuka moyo niliposikia kuwa mwalimu wetu ameaga dunia”</p> <p>“Juma alipousikia mfyatuko wa risasi moyo wake ulimpasuka akashindwa kuongea kwa dakika kadha” (Quando Juma senti lo scoppio del fucile provò un tuffo al cuore (lett. il suo cuore scoppiò) e non riuscì a parlare per qualche minuto).</p> | <p>spezzare il cuore (a qualcuno)</p> <p><i>commuovere intimamente, straziare</i></p> <p>“Mi si spezzò il cuore quando sentii che il nostro maestro era morto”</p>                                                                         |
| <p>kuwa na moyo</p> <p><i>essere generoso, buono, avere coraggio</i></p> <p>“Hana moyo”<br/>(freddo, insensibile, cattivo, crudele, svogliato)</p> <p><i>avere voglia/volontà di fare qualcosa</i></p> <p>“Hana moyo wa kufanya kazi”<br/>(Non ha voglia di lavorare)</p>                                                                                                                                                                 | <p>avere cuore</p> <p><i>essere generoso, buono</i></p> <p>“Non ha cuore/É senza cuore”<br/>(freddo, insensibile, cattivo, crudele)</p> <p><i>forza nell'affrontare una situazione</i></p> <p>“Non ha cuore di comunicarle la notizia”</p> |
| <p>kukoma moyo</p> <p><i>morire</i></p> <p>“Minje amekoma moyo leo baada ya kuugua kwa muda mrefu”</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p>fermare il cuore (a qcn)</p> <p><i>morire</i></p> <p>“A Minje le si è fermato il cuore oggi dopo un lungo periodo di malattia”</p>                                                                                                      |

<sup>10</sup> Una possibile traduzione italiana di questa espressione potrebbe essere “provare un tuffo al cuore (o tuffo del sangue)”, che indica una “particolare sensazione di violenta pulsazione cardiaca, provocata da emozioni improvvise” (es. Nel vederlo davanti così all'improvviso provai un tuffo al cuore) (Treccani 1986: 1004).

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>kufungulia mtu moyo</p> <p><i>parlare apertamente con qualcuno, sinceramente</i></p> <p>“Amina amemfungulia Zubeda moyo, anaweza kumweleza lolote”</p> <p>moyo mkunjufu (lett. cuore aperto, affabile)<sup>11</sup></p> <p><i>sinceramente, sentimento positivo</i></p> <p>“Alikubali kushindwa kwa moyo mkunjufu” (Accettò di buon grado (lett. con cuore aperto/affabile) la sconfitta)</p> | <p>aprire il proprio cuore (a qcn.)<sup>12</sup></p> <p><i>parlare apertamente con qualcuno, sinceramente</i></p> <p>“Amina ha aperto il suo cuore a Zubeda, le può raccontare qualsiasi cosa”</p> |
| <p>asiyekuwepo machoni, na moyoni hayupo</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>lontano dagli occhi, lontano dal cuore</p> <p>sim. occhio non vede, cuore non duole</p>                                                                                                         |
| <p>moyo wa kupenda hausemezeki</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>al cuor non si comanda</p>                                                                                                                                                                      |

Gli esempi proposti mostrano come, oltre all’uso figurato dell’organo cuore per indicare la parte centrale di qualcosa (un oggetto, una pianta, o un concetto astratto), lo swahili e l’italiano presentano molte espressioni equivalenti nel dominio della sfera emotiva. I termini “moyo” e “cuore” sono utilizzati in sintagmi verbali sia come soggetto, là dove rappresentano metonimicamente la persona (es. *moyo unapapa* il cuore palpita), che come oggetto del verbo (es. *kuwa na moyo* “avere cuore”) là dove si sostituiscono ad una emozione o una caratteristica personale.

<sup>11</sup> *Mkunjufu*: “Ouvvert (fig.), franc et jovial, expansif, affable, cordial, courtois, d’un accueil aimable, qui plaît par son ouverture et son expansion, sympathique. *Mtu mk. Uso mk. Moyo mk.*” L’aggettivo deriva dal verbo *kunjua* (forma verbale con estensione contraria, dal verbo *-kunja*): “Déplier, déployer, déplier, défaire les plis, dérider (Sacleux 1939:451). Un’espressione dal significato simile in italiano è la locuzione avverbiale “a cuore aperto” (sinceramente), utilizzata anche in ambito medico (es. “operare/operazione a cuore aperto”).

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. in italiano “allargare il cuore” (confortare, consolare: una notizia che allarga il cuore, parole che allargano il cuore a, di qcn.) (De Mauro 2016); anche “parlare col cuore” o “col cuore in mano”: “sinceramente” (Treccani 1986: 1029).

Sebbene molto simili, alcune espressioni emozionali presentano delle differenze sintattiche. Al verbo swahili intransitivo corrisponde in italiano una struttura di-transitiva, con l'oggetto indiretto riferito al soggetto dell'esperienza emozionale e il termine "cuore" come oggetto diretto. Ad esempio, l'espressione swahili *nili-pasuka moyo*, con il verbo in forma stativa *-pasuka* (essere rotto; rompersi in mille pezzi, esplodere), coniugato in prima persona e seguito dal termine *moyo* con funzione di elemento esplicativo del verbo, ha come corrispettivo italiano l'espressione "mi ha spezzato il cuore" oppure in forma riflessiva "mi si è spezzato il cuore." Allo stesso modo, anche un'espressione swahili del tipo *moyo wake unalia* è resa in italiano come "gli/le piange il cuore," con un oggetto indiretto riferito alla terza persona.

Come per il verbo intransitivo *-papa* (palpitare) anche *-pasuka* (esplodere in mille pezzi) è utilizzato con l'oggetto riferito al soggetto esperienziale, es. *moyo wake ulimpasuka* (gli/le esplose il cuore). L'espressione *-pasuka moyo* in swahili può significare "essere spaventati" da un evento inatteso (ad es. un forte rumore) ma può anche indicare un profondo sconvolgimento emotivo dovuto ad esempio alla notizia di una morte improvvisa di una persona cara. In italiano, l'espressione "spezzare il cuore", sebbene non lontana dal campo semantico del verbo *-pasuka*, ha un significato più intimo, in quanto, enfatizza la profonda sofferenza provata, più che la sorpresa per qualcosa di inaspettato. Un'espressione del tipo \* "Quando Juma sentì lo scoppio del fucile, gli si spezzò il cuore" non sarebbe infatti accettabile in italiano; mentre una possibile espressione adatta a questo contesto, potrebbe essere, ad esempio, "sentì un tuffo al cuore" o "gli balzò il cuore in gola".

Inoltre, gran parte delle espressioni metaforiche è riconducibile alla classica metonimia dell'ORGANO PER LA FACOLTA', per esempio il CUORE PER GLI AFFETTI / L' AFFETTIVITA'<sup>13</sup> (Casadei 1996: 243), (es. *kupa moyo*, lett. "dare cuore", significa dare coraggio).

Il cuore può, inoltre, rappresentare metonimicamente sentimenti positivi quali la sincerità, come nelle espressioni *-fungulia mtu moyo* "aprire il proprio cuore" o *moyo mkunjufu*, simile all'italiano "a cuore aperto".

Per la descrizione dei tratti caratteriali, è molto produttivo l'uso dell'ausiliare "avere" seguito dal termine cuore e da un attributo, (es. *kuwa na moyo mzuri/mwema* "avere buon cuore"; *kuwa na moyo mgumu* "avere il cuore duro"). In particolare, ci sono diverse espressioni per riferirsi ad una

<sup>13</sup> L'uso delle lettere maiuscole indica uno schema metaforico concettuale secondo il modello cognitivo proposto da Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

persona insensibile e spietata: *moyo mgumu*, *moyo wa jiwe*, *moyo baridi*. Le espressioni swahili *moyo mgumu* o *moyo wa jiwe* hanno un significato simile all'italiano “avere un cuore duro” o “avere un cuore di pietra”, ovvero, indicano una persona senza scrupoli e spietata. Un'espressione swahili dal significato opposto è *mtu mwenye huruma* (persona compassionevole, empatica).

Tuttavia, l'espressione *moyo mgumu* in swahili in alcuni casi sembra assumere una connotazione positiva che potrebbe essere resa in italiano come “forza d'animo” come in questo esempio:

*Dr. Jumanne aliwaonea huruma, akawatupia jicho la mwisho kama kuwatakia heri, baraka, maisha mema na moyo mgumu.* (pepe)

(Dr. Martedì provò compassione per loro, gli lanciò un'ultima occhiata come per augurarli buona fortuna, benedizione, una vita felice e forza d'animo; lett. cuore duro).

L'espressione *moyo baridi* è utilizzata, in particolare, in riferimento alla sfera amorosa, per indicare una persona che non prova più sentimenti verso qualcuno o una persona incapace di esprimere entusiasmo.

In swahili, come in italiano, l'espressione *kuwa na moyo* “avere cuore”, si riferisce non solo alla bontà e generosità della persona, ma anche al concetto di coraggio nell'affrontare qualcosa, o voglia/volontà di fare qualcosa (es. *hana moyo wa kufanya kazi* “non ha voglia di lavorare”).

Un'espressione italiana simile come “non avere cuore di fare qualcosa”, si potrebbe esplicitare come “non avere forza d'animo nell'affrontare una determinata situazione”, dunque, con un significato che indica uno stato emotivo passeggero, al contrario del swahili dove può essere usato per descrivere la mancanza di volontà/voglia come tratto caratteriale che coinvolge anche la sfera mentale.

Anche l'espressione *moyo mkubwa* (o *moyo mkuu*) “cuore grande”, che in italiano indica grande generosità o bontà d'animo, in swahili può anche riferirsi ad una persona estremamente coraggiosa.

La volontà e il coraggio associati al cuore, in italiano si esprimono piuttosto con radici verbali derivate dalla stessa parola, ad es. “rincorarsi, scoraggiarsi, incoraggiare” (Deignan & Potter 2004: 1249). L'italiano presenta molte forme verbali simili derivate dalla parola cuore, come ad esempio “rincuorare” e “accorarsi”. Il cuore si è esteso anche a significati



legati alla sfera mentale come “ricordare” e “ricordarsi” (simile a rammentare e rammentarsi) o “scordare” e “scordarsi” (simile a dimenticare e dimenticarsi), (Masella & Portner 2015: 212).<sup>14</sup> Tuttavia, a differenza dello swahili dove *kujua kwa moyo* (simile all’inglese “to learn by heart”), indica l’attività di memorizzazione, in italiano questa espressione non è associata al cuore, infatti “si impara a memoria.”

Inoltre, è interessante notare come molte espressioni apparentemente identiche non abbiano lo stesso uso nelle due lingue. Le espressioni riportate nella tabella 2 mostrano alcuni esempi di metafore del cuore aventi la stessa forma linguistica ma significato e uso differente in swahili e italiano. Ho indicato in corsivo una spiegazione del significato che l’espressione può avere nelle due lingue. Ho poi indicato un esempio d’uso differente in swahili e in italiano, riportando accanto ad ogni esempio swahili la traduzione letterale corrispondente:

**Tab. 2**

| <b>Swahili</b>                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Italiano</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| moyo mzito<br><br><i>crudele. senza pietà</i><br><br>“Sikujua kuwa Herman ana moyo mzito kiasi cha kumwua mtu” (Non sapevo che Herman avesse il cuore così duro (lett. così pesante) da uccidere un uomo) | cuore pesante<br><br><i>essere amareggiati, addolorati, oppressi da un dispiacere, oppure da un rimorso, una delusione, un rimpianto o simili.</i><br><br>“avere il cuore pesante” o “sentirsi il cuore di piombo” |
| moyo mwepesi (lett. cuore leggero) <sup>15</sup><br><br><i>essere estremamente sensibile</i>                                                                                                              | a cuor leggero<br><br><i>fare qualcosa senza aver meditato a sufficienza, senza preoccuparsi troppo</i>                                                                                                            |

<sup>14</sup> A differenza dell’italiano, in cui esistono molte forme verbali derivate dalla parola ‘cuore’ (*moyo*), in swahili il termine *moyo* è presente in molte espressioni idiomatiche, e.g. *kutia moyo* (lett. mettere cuore) “incoraggiare”; *kuvunja moyo* (lett. rompere il cuore) “scoraggiare”; *kupa/kujipa moyo* (lett. dare/darsi cuore) “farsi coraggio”.

<sup>15</sup> Più simile al significato swahili è l’espressione italiana “cuore debole” o “debole di cuore”.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>“Kama una moyo mwepesi usisome stori hii, wengi wamelia sana”<br/>(Se hai il cuore debole (lett. cuore leggero) non leggere questa storia, molti hanno pianto tanto)</p>                                                                                                                                  | <p>“Non è una decisione da prendersi a cuor leggero”</p>                                                                                                                |
| <p>kuvunjika moyo (lett. rompersi il cuore)<sup>16</sup><br/>kuvunja moyo (lett. rompere il cuore)</p> <p><i>scoraggiare</i></p> <p>“Yule kijana alitaka kumwoa msichana wa Kikikuyu lakini akavunjwa moyo na mamake”<br/>(Quel ragazzo voleva sposare una ragazza Kikuyu ma fu scoraggiato dalla madre)</p> | <p>spezzare il cuore (a qualcuno)</p> <p><i>far soffrire qualcuno; commuovere intimamente, straziare</i><sup>17</sup></p> <p>“Quel ragazzo le ha spezzato il cuore”</p> |
| <p>kufa moyo (lett. morire il cuore)</p> <p><i>scoraggiarsi; perdere la speranza</i></p> <p>“Mke wa Omari alikufa moyo baada ya kukaa miezi minne bila ya kusikia habari za mumewe” (La moglie di Omar perse le speranze dopo essere rimasta quattro mesi senza avere notizie del marito)</p>                | <p>la morte nel cuore</p> <p><i>essere molto addolorato</i></p> <p>“Aveva la morte nel cuore”</p>                                                                       |
| <p>kupa moyo/ kujipa moyo (lett. dare cuore / darsi cuore)</p> <p><i>dare coraggio/ farsi coraggio</i></p> <p>“Nilipolemewa na kazi yangu, Deo alinipa moyo wa kuendelea”<br/>(Quando mi fu tolto il lavoro, Deo mi diede il coraggio [lett. mi diede il cuore] di continuare)</p>                           | <p>dare il cuore</p> <p><i>dedicare a qcn. tutto il proprio affetto, innamorarsene</i></p> <p>“Gli ho dato il mio cuore”</p>                                            |

<sup>16</sup> Altre espressioni comuni con significato simile sono *kukata tamaa* (lett. tagliare il desiderio) e *kuvunja moyo* (lett. rompere il cuore); *kufa moyo* (lett. morire il cuore).

<sup>17</sup> Anche “sentirsi schiantare il cuore”; “strappare il cuore”, (essere afferrato da un’acuta sofferenza, da un sentimento di profonda pena). Un’espressione italiana di significato simile è anche “sentirsi stringere il cuore”: dispiacersi per qualcuno o qualcosa, provare dolore emotivo, es. “Mi si stringe il cuore se penso a quanto ha sofferto quel ragazzo.”

|                                                                                                                                                                              |                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| kutoa (mtu) moyoni (lett. togliere qcn. dal cuore) <sup>18</sup>                                                                                                             | uscire dal cuore                              |
| <i>smettere di amare</i>                                                                                                                                                     | <i>essere profondamente sincero e sentito</i> |
| “Kassim amemtoa Zawadi moyoni baada ya kuigundua tabia yake”<br>(Kassim ha smesso di amare Zawadi (lett. ha tolto Zawadi dal cuore) dopo aver scoperto il suo comportamento) | “Parole che escono dal cuore”                 |

La maggior parte delle metafore proposte sopra, tutte attinenti alla sfera emotiva, presentano una forma linguistica molto simile (se non identica) nelle due lingue. Sebbene lo schema concettuale di riferimento sia quello dell’“embodiment” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), che considera il corpo (in questo caso l’organo cuore) come contenitore delle emozioni, una stessa metafora assume diverso significato in base al contesto d’uso. Per esempio, l’espressione idiomatrica swahili *kupa moyo* (lett. “dare il cuore”) potrebbe risultare fuorviante se tradotta letteralmente in italiano, in quanto in swahili il cuore sta ad indicare metonimicamente il coraggio, a differenza dell’espressione italiana, dove rappresenta l’affetto, l’amore e la generosità.

L’uso degli aggettivi *mzito* “pesante” e *mwepesi* “leggero” riferiti al cuore assume una connotazione differente in swahili e italiano. Mentre in swahili *kuwa na moyo mzito/mwepesi* si riferisce ad una caratteristica permanente della persona, ovvero “avere un cuore duro” o al contrario essere estremamente sensibile, o suscettibile, in italiano “avere il cuore pesante” o “leggero” è piuttosto legato ad uno stato emotivo passeggero provocato da qualcosa. In particolare si può “avere il cuore pesante” se si prova dispiacere per qualcosa o al contrario, si può prendere una decisione “a cuor leggero”, cioè senza preoccuparsi troppo.

### Divergenze e asimmetrie

In molti casi, uno stesso concetto è espresso nelle due lingue in forme diverse, anche se comunque riferite al cuore (*moyo*). Ho definito gli esempi riportati in Tab. 3 come casi di “divergenze”: lo stesso significato è indicato

<sup>18</sup> Cfr. italiano colloquiale: “Mi è caduto dal cuore” (detto di persone)

in corsivo e le espressioni differenti sono riportate rispettivamente nella colonna dello swahili e dell'italiano; l'esempio swahili è sempre accompagnato da una traduzione letterale.

**Tab. 3**

| <b>Swahili</b>                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Italiano</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| kubwaga moyo (lett. gettare il cuore) <sup>19</sup><br><br><i>sentirsi sollevato, rassegnarsi</i><br><br>“Kufanikiwa kwa mtoto wake kupata kazi kumembwaga moyo”                                  | mettersi il cuore (o l'anima) in pace<br><br><i>sentirsi sollevato, rassegnarsi</i><br><br>“Da quando il figlio è riuscito a trovare lavoro si è messo il cuore in pace”                                                                                              |
| kuingia moyoni (lett. entrare nel cuore)<br><br><i>amare qcn.</i><br><br>“Tangu nimwone Fatuma ameniingia moyoni” (Da quando ho visto Fatuma me ne sono innamorato (lett. mi è entrata nel cuore) | avere nel cuore (qcn.)<br><br><i>amare qcn.</i><br><br>“Non voglio avere nessuno nel mio cuore”<br><br>avere a cuore (qcn.)<br><br><i>interessarsi di qcs. o di qcn., occuparsene con attenzione; averlo caro</i><br><br>“Ha finto di avere a cuore i miei interessi” |
| kushiriki moyo (lett. collaborare con il cuore)<br><br><i>assecondare i desideri</i><br><br>“Wakristo wanahimizwa wasishiriki moyo katika ulimwengu huu”                                          | seguire il cuore<br><br><i>assecondare i desideri</i><br><br>“I cristiani sono incoraggiati a non seguire il cuore a questo mondo”                                                                                                                                    |

Un caso particolare di metonimia è costituito dall'EFFETTO FISIOLOGICO DI UN' EMOZIONE PER L'EMOZIONE, in cui il verificarsi di un'emozione è

<sup>19</sup> Cfr. *Moyo wanielea* (lett. il cuore mi galleggia, si solleva) (Sacleux 1939:582).

espresso via una sensazione o uno stato fisiologico concomitante o che si suppone ne sia l'effetto (Casadei 1996:239). Lo stato emotivo di calma, è espresso in swahili dalla radice verbale *-bwaga* (versare), che richiama lo schema concettuale swahili dei verbi indicanti il movimento di liquidi, associati alla descrizione di emozioni (Olejarnik, 2005:191). Un'espressione italiana che richiama lo schema del movimento all'interno del corpo è "avere/sentirsi il cuore in gola", con il significato opposto di "essere agitato, emozionato". Più statica è invece l'espressione italiana "mettersi il cuore in pace", con un verbo in forma riflessiva che descrive la raggiunta rassegnazione come il risultato di un atto intimo e personale, più simile all'espressione swahili *-tuliza moyo* (lett. "calmare il cuore"). Lo schema concettuale del movimento in swahili si ritrova anche nell'espressione *kuingia moyoni*, con il verbo *-ingia* (entrare), per indicare l'innamoramento verso qualcuno, che in italiano corrisponde a "avere nel cuore qualcuno".

In alcuni casi, invece, l'uso del termine swahili *moyo* non corrisponde in italiano all'uso del corrispondente "cuore" (o viceversa) ma si riferisce a un altro termine del corpo o a un dominio diverso. Gli esempi elencati in Tab. 4 sono casi particolari di divergenze che ho indicato come "asimmetrie":

**Tab. 4**

| Swahili                                                                                                                                                     | Italiano                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| kupiga moyo konde (lett. prendere a pugni il cuore)<br><br><i>farsi coraggio</i><br><br>"Baba yangu alinishauri kuupiga moyo konde niyamalize masomo yangu" | prendere il coraggio a due mani<br><br><i>farsi coraggio</i><br><br>"Mio padre mi consigliò di prendere il coraggio a due mani e finire i miei studi" |
| moyo (wake) mweusi<br><br><i>persona malvagia</i><br><br>"Mwepuke yule mwanamke ana moyo mweusi"                                                            | anima nera<br><br><i>persona malvagia</i><br><br>"Evita quella donna, ha un'anima nera"                                                               |
| moyo safi (lett. cuore pulito)<br>moyo mweupe (lett. cuore bianco)<br>moyo wazi (lett. cuore aperto)                                                        | col cuore in mano                                                                                                                                     |

| <i>con sincerità e fiducia</i>                                                                                                            | <i>con sincerità e fiducia</i>                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <p>“Ana moyo safi, usio na kinyongo na mtu”<br/>(uka)<br/>(Ha l’animo nobile (lett. il cuore pulito),<br/>non prova odio per nessuno)</p> | <p>“Voglio solo parlare col cuore in mano”</p> |

Nell’espressione idiomatica swahili *kupiga moyo konde*, che significa letteralmente “prendere a pugni il cuore”, *moyo* (cuore) metonimicamente rappresenta il coraggio, come nell’espressione italiana (“prendere il coraggio a due mani”), dove le “mani” corrispondono ai “pugni” (*konde*). L’immagine di prendere a pugni il cuore suggerisce l’idea di essere risoluti, forti, non lasciarsi andare alle emozioni.

Il concetto di cuore sincero, espresso in swahili dall’uso degli aggettivi *mweupe* (bianco), *safi* (pulito), *wazi* (aperto) si esprime in italiano con l’immagine metaforica “col cuore in mano” che si avvicina al concetto di chiarezza e fiducia verso l’altro. Non a caso anche in swahili, mentre il cuore, organo interno, è legato alle emozioni più intime e viscerali, le mani costituiscono una parte del corpo che può fisicamente metterci in contatto con altri individui e dunque diventare un veicolo di sentimenti, come nelle espressioni *mkono wa pongozi* (congratulazioni) o *mkono wa rambirambi* (condoglianze) (Talento 2014: 269-270).

Inoltre i termini *moyo* (cuore) e *roho* (anima) sono spesso intercambiabili, es. *roho mbaya/moyo mbaya*; *moyo mweusi/roho nyeusi*; *moyo safi/roho safi*; in italiano, piuttosto che espressioni del tipo \*cuore cattivo o \*cuore nero, di una persona cattiva, malvagia si dice che ha “un animo cattivo” o che è “senza cuore,” mentre di una persona buona si dice che ha “l’animo nobile”, è “di buon cuore”, o “ha il cuore d’oro”.

## Conclusioni

Le espressioni figurate contenenti i termini *moyo* e “cuore” sono molto produttive in swahili e italiano, soprattutto per quanto riguarda il concetto di “cuore” inteso come locus delle emozioni. Nelle due lingue sono stati individuati esempi di metafore convergenti, vale a dire, equivalenti dal punto di vista linguistico e concettuale, (es. *moyo wa simba* “cuor di leone” o *moyo mzuri* di buon cuore). Alcune espressioni apparentemente convergenti hanno significato e uso molto diversi nelle due lingue, poiché, in alcuni casi, in

swahili si riferiscono a caratteristiche della persona, mentre in italiano indicano uno stato emotivo passeggero, (es. *moyo mwepesi/mzito* “a cuor leggero”/“avere il cuore pesante”). Infine, altre metafore, definite divergenti, appaiono simili concettualmente ma diverse nell’espressione linguistica (es. *kubwaga moyo*, lett. “versare il cuore”, in italiano mettersi il cuore [o l’anima] in pace). Un caso particolare di divergenza riguarda le espressioni asimmetriche, dove lo stesso concetto è espresso con un altro termine del corpo, ad esempio le mani (es. *kupiga moyo konde* “prendere il coraggio a due mani”).

Questo studio ha dimostrato il ruolo cruciale che riveste il cuore nella codifica del corpo e delle espressioni metaforiche emozionali e come lo swahili e l’italiano concettualizzino questa parte del corpo in maniera molto simile, sebbene con alcune differenze. Lo swahili, ad esempio, presenta molte espressioni della sfera emotiva con verbi riferiti al movimento dei liquidi, là dove l’italiano tende a usare espressioni più “statiche”, esaltando la dimensione intima della persona (es. *kuingia moyoni* “avere nel cuore”). In italiano esistono forme verbali derivate dal lessema “cuore”, che corrispondono ad espressioni idiomatiche swahili quali *kupa moyo* “incoraggiare”; *kuvunja moyo* “scoraggiare”, mentre alcuni sintagmi verbali o espressioni attributive swahili, si esprimono in italiano con locuzioni avverbiali (*kufa moyo* “con la morte nel cuore”; *kuwa na moyo wazi* “a cuore aperto”). Inoltre, in swahili è frequente l’uso di verbi intransitivi seguiti dal termine cuore con funzione di elemento esplicativo del verbo (range element), (*kufa moyo*, lett. “morire il cuore”; *kupasuka moyo*, lett. “spezzare il cuore”); in italiano, queste espressioni sono rese invece con verbi ditransitivi, dove il soggetto della esperienza emozionale è espresso con il caso dativo (oggetto indiretto) (es. “mi si è spezzato il cuore” o “mi ha spezzato il cuore”).

Lo swahili presenta alcune connotazioni di significato di *moyo* che si avvicinano alla sfera mentale più che a quella emotiva, e che non sono presenti in italiano, come il concetto di volontà nel compiere un’azione, (es. *kuwa na moyo wa kufanya kazi* “avere la volontà di fare un lavoro”) e il concetto di memoria (*kujua kwa moyo* “imparare a memoria”).

Questo studio preliminare ha permesso di individuare diversi punti di confronto tra le due lingue, che potranno essere approfonditi con future ricerche su altri termini del corpo, in modo da analizzare i processi cognitivi e i filtri culturali che sono alla base delle espressioni metaforiche.

**Testi del corpus swahili NaLiSwa - Abbreviazioni**

- adi Robert Shaaban, 1952. *Adili na nduguze*, Macmillan Education Limited, London & New York.
- aki Marzio Ciro (comp.), 1992. 'Mohammed akili nyingi'.
- dsm Mtobwa R. Ben, 1994. *Dar-es-Salaam usiku*, Heko Publishers, DSM.
- dum Mohammed Said Ahmed, 1980. *Dunia mti mkavu*, Longman, Nairobi.
- duni Kezilahabi Euphrase, 1975. *Dunia uwanja wa fujo*, E.A.L.B., DSM/Nairobi.
- gam Kezilahabi Euphrase, 1979. *Gamba la nyoka*, E.A.P.H., DSM.
- hat Muhando Penina, 1972. *Hatia*, EALB, Nairobi.
- hata Mohamed Suleiman Mohamed, 1970. 'Hata sumu huwa tamu', in: *Mapenzi ni kikohozi*, Longman, Nairobi.
- kar Mohammed Suleiman Mohammed, 1970. 'Karudi', in: *Mapenzi ni kikohozi*, Longman, Nairobi.
- kiche Mohammed Suleiman Mohammed, 1978. 'Viumbe hivi', 'Kijiana yule', 'Pwagu', 'Mji', 'Uhuru wa siku moja', in: *Kicheko cha ushindi*, Shungwaya Publ., Nairobi.
- kicho Kezilahabi Euphrase, 1974. *Kichomi*, Heinemann, Nairobi
- kima Kezilahabi Euphrase, 1974. *Kichwamaji*, E.A.P.H., DSM.
- kima Kezilahabi Euphrase, 1974. *Kichwamaji*, E.A.P.H., DSM.
- kisa Steere, E. 1870. 'Kisa cha Hassibu'. In *Swahili tales: as told by natives of Zanzibar*, ed. Edward Steere, Bell & Daldy, London.
- kisiki Marzio Ciro (comp.), 1992. 'Kisiki kya mkunazi'.
- kiu Mohammed Suleiman Mohammed, 1972. *Kiu*, E.A.P.H., DSM.
- kun Mulokozi Mugyabuso, Kahigi K.K., 1979. *Kunga za ushairi na diwani yetu*, DSM. T.P.H.
- maahi Baalawi, Suleiman O. S. 1961. *Hadithi za Bibi Maahira*. Evans Brothers Ltd., London.
- mat Kibao A. Salim, 1975. *Matatu ya Thamani*, Heinemann, Nairobi.
- mate Mohamed Suleiman Mohamed, 1970. 'Mateso', in: *Mapenzi ni kikohozi*, Longman, Nairobi.
- mji Mohammed Suleiman Mohammed, 1978. 'Mji', in: *Kicheko cha ushindi*, Shungwaya Publ., Nairobi.



- mzi      Kezilahabi, Euphrase, 1991. *Mzingile*, D.U.P., DSM.
- nago     Kezilahabi, Euphrase, 1990. *Nagona*, D.U.P., DSM.
- njo      Mung'ong'o C. G., 1980. *Njozi iliyopotea*, T.P.H., DSM.
- nyo      Mohammed Suleiman Mohammed, 1976. *Nyota ya Rehema*, O.U.P., Nairobi.
- pepe     Yahya, 1973. *Pepeta*, L.U.P., London
- pol      Bunge la Tanzania, Majadiliano ya Bunge Mkutano wa pili. Kikao cha Kwanza - Tarehe 30 Januari, 1996. Kikao cha Pili - Tarehe 31 Januari, 1996 Kikao cha Nane - Tarehe 8 Februari, 1996
- rashi    Marzio Ciro (comp.), 1992. 'Rashidi'.
- ros      Kezilahabi Euphrase, 1971. *Rosa Mistika*, Nairobi. E.A.L.B.
- san      Marzio Ciro (comp.), 1992. 'Kigano cha nuru sanaa'.
- sok      Chachage Seithy L., 2002. *Makuadi wa soko huria*, E & D Limited, DSM.
- tata      Said Ahmed Mohamed, 1993. *Tata za Asumini*, Longman , Nairobi.
- tip      Tippu Tip, 1972. *Maisha ya Hamed bin Muhammed el Murjebi*, E.A.L.B., Nairobi.
- tum      Mohammed Said Ahmed, 1985. 'Tumba iliyovia', in: *Si shetani si wazimu*, Zanzibar Publ., Zanzibar.
- twe      Macha, Freddy, 1984. *Twenzetu Ulaya*. Tanzania: GAP
- uhu      Mohammed Suleiman Mohammed, 1978. 'Uhuru wa siku moja', in: *Kicheko cha ushindi*, Shungwaya Publ., Nairobi.
- ute      Mohammed Said Ahmed, 1980. *Utengano*, Longman, Nairobi.
- uwa      Rais Benjamin W. Mkapu, 2003. *Uwazi na Ukweli*, Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, DSM.
- viu      Mohammed Suleiman Mohammed, 1978. 'Viumbe hivi', in: *Kicheko cha ushindi*. Shungwaya Publ. Nairobi.
- wiv      Mohamed Suleiman Mohamed, 'Wivu Mwovu, Pesa moto' (in: *Pavumapo Palilie*, Longman, 1972), Longman, Nairobi, 1972

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**CONTRIBUTI CREATIVI**

***CREATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS***



## MASHAIRI YA ABDILATIF ABDALLA

*Nayanwa!*

Nanwa ‘kiyakokomoka, yaseze kunipaliya  
Na kuyamiza nataka, japo kwa kugugumiya  
Koo innikauka, sina ndiya; sina ndiya!

Nanwa japo ‘tatapika, tapishi likinijiya  
Roho yanipapatika, kiu ‘menivunda viya  
Koo innikauka, sina ndiya; sina ndiya!

Nanwa yangawa na taka, siyaonei udhiya  
Lau ni kukirihika, mato nitayafumbiya  
Koo innikauka, sina ndiya; sina ndiya!

Nanwa niliyoyateka, maji nilojitekeya  
Wala siyanwi kwa shaka, na wasiwasi kutiya  
Koo innikauka, sina ndiya; sina ndiya!

Nanwa hadi kunondoka, kiu ilonizidiya  
Hwenda ikanikatika, kiu ikanepukiya  
Koo innikauka, sina ndiya; sina ndiya!

Nanwa mi sitayashika, maji haya hayamwaya  
Kisha haja hasumbuka, hapita kiyazengeya  
Koo innikauka, sina ndiya; sina ndiya!

*Miba ya Waridi*

Nalilifuma waridi, uwa jema la haiba  
Moyo ukakosa budi, kwa kulemewa na huba  
Ukawa hawishi hodi, na kutaka mkuruba

Haonywa nitahadhari, na ya lawaridi miba  
Hambwa itanihasiri, na kunikusa msiba  
Hajitiya ujasiri, na mwingi mno ujuba!

Lawaridi halitunda, likawa changu kikuba  
Halinweshwezeya nyonda, nisilikhini rutuba  
Kumbe naja uma chanda, nisaze kuomba toba!

Likanitiya jaraha, na maumivu si haba!  
Ikadhofu yangu swiha, ingawa hila hishiba  
Nikawa kumahamaha, madhila yakanikaba

Miba ya hilo waridi, ndiyo iliyonitibu  
Mishono iso idadi, ikaligubika gubu  
Jaraha likaburudi, zikanyweya zangu tabu

*Ungapomoka!*

Na mti uangukapo, ungapomoka, pomoko kuu  
Taharuki lingawapo, na shabuka, mbasi kwa nduu  
Hakwambwi kwa majitapo, kufurahika, ni ubuzyuu  
Kwani miziye i papo, itatipuka, yenende juu  
Na yaliyopo yawepo, pasi kwondoka, na mti huu



*Na Nyota Huota Ndoto*

Kama jua kuchomoza, baridi ikawa joto  
Au mwezi kuangaza, nyota zikaota ndoto  
Palipokuwa na giza, na mengi yalo mazito  
Pakaangaza mwangaza, kuliani na kushoto  
Twaapisha twaapiza?

POESIA D'ENRICO D'ANGELO

*a Elena*

Questo giorno come questa pagina  
svolta che non sa se terminare a ieri  
o essere per l'indomani, che estrema  
ritenta la luce proprio ove intimo  
tremore è l'ultimo pensoso sguardo;  
e, tenera in sé di segni e di sogni,  
in noi così resta incontro del tempo  
con il tempo, quando ci leggeremo.

## MASHAIRI YA KULIKOYELA KAHIGI

*Donda Ndugu*

Ndugu, nilipokuwa kijana barubaru -  
Asiyeogopa kazi za misuli -  
Nikiwa na siha na nguvu za mwili  
Nilipata kidonda bila kujua.  
Nilistukia jeraha limeota mguuni –  
Lilianza kama upele mdogo  
Ukavimba hadi ukapasuka.  
Jeraha wazi – nikalifunika tambara bovu  
Kabla ya kumwona mganga.  
Baadaye adui nilimtambua,  
Aliyesababisha upele.  
Bali sikuwa na la kufanya  
Isipokuwa kuanza kutafuta dawa.

Mganga kwa furaha 'kanipokea.  
Akatwanga magome na majani  
Ya mti nisiujua  
Akachanganya na kupaka mguuni  
Na kufunga kwa kamba pana ya porini.

Baada ya siku tatu nikawa hoi – kwa homa;  
Nikapiga kite, kuulilia uhai.

Nikabadilishiwa dawa.  
Nikafanyiwa fusho asilia –  
Likasaidia homa kuondoa.

Lakini kidonda hakikuacha kutoneshwa  
Au kuchubuliwa –  
Na polepole kikatanuka:  
Kikawa donda. Donda ndugu.  
Likatoa damu na usaha  
Pasi kukoma  
Likachonyota na kuachama  
Na kusababisha homa

Na kichwa kuwanga  
Nikatapatapa –  
Nikafuata dawa karibu na mbali  
Miti shamba nikaimaliza,  
Hospitali zote nikazimaliza,  
Hadi nikaombewa kanisani.

Lakini donda likazidi  
Kuchubuka upya na kuongezeka.  
Hakuna dawa wala ahueni.  
Mzee wangu mmoja, kwa huruma, akanambia:

*Donda ndugu kamwe haliponi  
Utaishi nalo hadi kaburini.*

Nilipohuzunika, akaniuliza:

*Bora ni donda ndugu la mguuni  
Au donda ndugu la machoni?  
Au donda ndugu la moyoni?*

Sikuwa na jibu.

Sasa ni mtu mzima. Nina siri sirini.  
Bado natembea na donda mguuni:  
Limefungwa bendeji za kisasa  
Zinazofanana kabisa  
Na ngozi iliyozunguka.  
Halionekani kwa macho;  
Ni aibu – ni siri yangu;  
Daktari wangu anajua –  
Sasa amezoea.

Lakini maswali ya mzee bado yanitesa.

Naomba majibu.

1975

*Kupanda Mlima*

Nimetamani kupanda mlima –  
Mlima mrefu kuliko milima mingi.  
Toka nikiwa kijana wa miaka ishirini,  
Nilitamani raha ya kufika kileleni;  
Niliania nifike juu kabisa  
Nione na kufahamu  
yaliyo karibu na mbali.  
Wakati huo sikuupanda  
Kwa sababu mbalimbali.

Sasa, baada ya miongo kadhaa,  
natamani tena  
mlima huo  
kuupanda.

Niupandeje?  
Naambiwa njia iliyonyoka  
Ni hatari;  
Nishike njia ipi?  
Mzee ananishauri nishike  
Njia pinde  
kukwepa miteremko mikali.  
Nami nimekubali  
na kuamua kupanda mlima huo  
mapema iwezekanavyo.  
Na nikishapanda  
Na kufika juu kileleni  
Na kushuhudia yaonekanayo toka kileleni  
Ya karibu na ughaibuni –  
Na mengi mengine –  
Nitateremka nikiimba  
Kwa shangwe na vigelegele  
Nikiwa nimejaa furaha ya ushindi;  
nikiwashukuru  
Walionisaidia  
Nikihamasisha pia  
Wenye hamu wapande –  
Mashahidi tuongezeke.

Januari, 1982

SHAIRI LA USTADH MAU (MAHMOUD AHMED ABDULKADIR)

*Shukurani za Milele*

|                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Nimeishika kalamu   | yamoyoni kuandika     |
| Kuhusu wetu mwalimu | bi Elena msifika      |
| Lugha hii mekHUDumu | nyaka ngia nyaka toka |
| Atudai bila shaka   | deni isiyo lipika     |

|                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Prof Elena maarufu   | duniyani hutajika  |
| Nimsomi mwangalifu   | mno mzomakinika    |
| Mefanya kazi nadhifu | zamaana kwa hakika |
| Atudai bila shaka    | deni isiyo lipika  |

|                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Amewasomesha wengi  | watu waloilimika   |
| Wanafunzi nimagengi | sisahali kuwangika |
| Niwatu wakila rangi | kwake walo faidika |
| Atudai bila shaka   | deni isiyo lipika  |

|                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Lugha meisahilisha   | kwa ambae aitaka    |
| Hodari kuifundisha   | nakutunga kadhalika |
| Ndipo nasi twamvisha | taji lakunawirika   |
| Atudai bila shaka    | deni isiyo lipika   |

|                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Kwetu tulioko mbali | sifa zake zimefika    |
| Nasisi twamkubali   | nimsomi hana rika     |
| Tuna deni waswahili | kweli kweli sidhihaka |
| Atudai bila shaka   | deni isiyo lipika     |

|                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Kushukuru niwajibu  | sisi tunao khusika  |
| Nakubwa yetu sababu | nilugha meitumika   |
| Hatuneni taratibu   | nikama jimbi kuwika |
| Atudai bila shaka   | deni isiyo lipika   |

|                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Kauli yangu tammati   | kikomoni nimefika  |
| Kwa hizi chache baiti | tumependa kutamka  |
| Kushukuru hatuwati    | kula yuwa likitoka |
| Atudai bila shaka     | deni isiyo lipika  |



BAADHI YA METHALI NA MISEMO YA KISWAHILI:  
HADITHI, PICHA, MAANA NA MIFANO YA MATUMIZI YAO

ABEDI SAIDI TANDIKA

Hapa tumechagua mifano minne ya methali na maelezo yake kutoka mswada wa kitabu cha Marehemu Mzee Abedi Saidi Tandika “Baadhi ya methali na misemo ya Kiswahili: hadithi, picha, maana na mifano ya matumizi yao.” Mwandishi alitunga kitabu hicho kwa ajili ya ufundishaji wa Kiswahili kwa waitaliano haswa wanachuo wa Chuo Kikuu cha Napoli “L’Orientale”. Kwa bahati mbaya Marehemu Abedi hakuwahi kuchapisha mswada huo. Tafsiri za Kitaliano zimetolewa na Alessia Lombardo.

*Qui di seguito presentiamo quattro esempi di proverbi swahili accompagnati da racconti e modi d’uso tratti dal manoscritto di Abedi Saidi Tandika, primo lettore di swahili presso la nostra università, dal titolo “Alcuni proverbi e detti swahili: racconti, significato ed esempi d’uso”. L’autore, che purtroppo non è riuscito a pubblicare il suo manoscritto, l’aveva preparato per la didattica della lingua swahili, da utilizzare con gli studenti dell’Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”. Le traduzioni in italiano sono ad opera di Alessia Lombardo.*

**Aliye juu, mngoje chini (Colui che sta su, aspettalo giù)**

a) Hadithi

Nyani na mbwa walikuwa marafiki wakuu. Siku moja walikaribishwa katika ngoma kuu ya kutafuta wachumba. Mbwa alimnyoa nywele nyani vizuri sana na akampa kioo ajitazame. Nyani akafurahi alivyopendeza. Akamuahidi kumnyoa nywele mbwa bila ya kioo, ila ataona matokeo ya kazi yake nzuri katika ngoma, kwani atagombaniwa na wachumba. Ikawa ni kinyume chake. Nyani hakumnyoa nywele vizuri mbwa. Nyani hakutaka



mbwa aonekane kuwa ni mzuri kama yeye mbele ya wachumba kama walivyosema wahenga *kikulacho ki nguoni mwako*.

Mbwa agagundua kuwa amenyolewa vibra na nyani ili achukize na asinate wachumba. Urafiki wao ukavunjika. Ili kujiokoa katika ugomvi na mbwa, nyani alikimbilia kuishi juu ya miti. Mbwa alimwambia wewe pita juu na mimi chini, kumbuka uko juu mimi nakungoja chini, siku moja utashuka tu.

b) Picha

Kwa kawaida watu hawatokei juu ili kufika juu, hutokea chini ili kufika juu. Mwishowe ukiwasubiri watarudi tena chini walikotokea.

c) Maana

Cheo, pesa na utajiri hupita na kuisha na muhusika huirudia hali yake aliyoianzia, ambayo ni ya chini.

d) Mfano wa matumizi

Maongezi katika ofisi moja ya serikali ya Tanzania:

*Karani mdogo*, “Mbona siku hizi mkurugenzi wetu bwana Chombo anatudharau sana sisi tuliyemchagua kuwa mkurugenzi wetu?”

*Karani wa kati*, “Hata mimi sijui sababu yake ya kubadilika vile, lakini usijali kwani *aliye juu tumngoje chini*. Tusimueleze sasa anaweza kutufukuza kazi, tsubiri, uchguzi wa mwakani asipopita kuwa mkurugenzi tutamueleza bayana.”

**Dua la kuku halimpati mwewe** (*La preghiera di un pollo non può colpire il falco*)

a) Hadithi

Hapo zamani za kale, mtoto wa Mfalme Mwewe, jina lake Raisi bin Mwewe, alikuwa mgonjwa sana, kila mganga alishindwa kumponyesha. Mwewe wazee wakakutana na kuamua kumjaribu mganga wao wa zamani sana, mzee Buibui. Mganga mzee Buibui aliamka asubuhi sana kutoka nyumbani kwake kwenda kumtibu Raisi bin Mwewe. Kwa bahati mbaya njiani akakutana na adui yake mkubwa, kuku mwenye vifaranga. Mzee Buibui alitetemeka na kuogopa sana. Alijaribu kwa kila ujanja aujuao utotoni mwake, kujificha katika majani, lakini wapi. Alijaribu sasa kujifanya kuwa mdogo sana. Alijikunja sana. Yote yakawa ni kazi ya bure. Vifaranga

vikamuona na kumuita kwa furaha kuku mlezi mama yao. Kawa pigo moja la mdomo mkali wa mama kuku, mganga Buibui akafa.

Siku ya pili yake, Raisi bin Mwewe akafariki dunia kwa kukosa matibabu. Mfalme Mwewe akajulishwa na ndugu zake mzee Buibui, kuwa, “mganga Buibui aliuliwa na kuku mwenye vifaranga alipokuwa anakuja kumtibu marehemu Raisi bin Mwewe.”

Mfalme Mwewe kwa uchungu mkubwa, akaapa kuwa, kutoka siku ile, vifaranga vya kuku vitakuwa ni adui zake wakubwa na kwamba vitakuwa ni chakula chake, ili kukilipiza kisasi cha kuuliwa mganga wake ambaye angemponyesha marehemu mwanawe, Raisi bin Mwewe.

Ndiyo maana hadi leo, mwewe akikiona kifaranga cha kuku, hukikamata na kukila. Lakini kila kifaranga kinachokamatwa na mwewe hulia, “siye mimi, siye mimi, siye miiiiiimi jamani”, lakini wapi. Hivyo, kila kuku duniani humba kwa Mungu kila siku, kuwa mwewe wote duniani walaaniwe na wafe mara moja, lakini dua lake hili halimpati mwewe, kwa vileyeye kuku ni mkoseaji wa kwanza.

b) Maana

Mwanzo mbaya, huishia vibaya. Ubaya hulipwa na mabaya, si na mema.

c) Mfano wa Matumizi

Tuseme umefanya makosa kwa raiki yako, labda ulichukua kitu chake anachokithamini, bila ya idhini yake. Rafiki yako amekukasirikia sana na kuvunja urafiki wenu. Wewe sasa kwa kutoupenda uamuzi wake huo, unamchukia na ungefurahi kumuona rafiki yako huyo wa zamani anapata matatizo makubwa kwa sababu ya kitu chake ambacho wewe hukithamini. Kama yeye amesikia kuwa unamuomba apate matatizo, na kweli hapati matatizo yoyote, sasa anaweza kukuambia, “Unahangakika bure rafiki yangu wa zamani, Waswahili wanasema, dua la kuku halimpati mwewe.”

**Mtaka yote, hukosa yote / karamu mbili zilimshinda mzee fisi** (*Chi vuole tutto, perde tutto/La vecchia iena non riuscì a reggere due ricevimenti*)

a) Hadithi

Mzee Fisi alialikwa katika karamu mbili kwa siku moja na kwa saa ile ile. Mwaliko wa kwanza ulitoka kusini ya nyumba yake, kwa kina ndege, ambao walikuwa wanaagana kwa safari zao za kila mwaka za uhamaji

kutoka bara la Afrika za kwenda katika mabara ya Ulaya na bara Hindi. Mwaliko wa pili ulitoka kaskazini ya nyumbani kwake, kwa kina ngedere, waliokuwa wanaukaribisha msimu mpya wa embe dodo na ndizi za kisukari.

Nyumba ya mzee fisi ilikuwa katikati ya karamu hizi mbili. Usiku kucha aliota kama mtoto mdogo juu ya karamu hizi mbili za kila mwaka mara moja. Usiku wa siku ile, kama kila mwaka, aliuona kuwa ni mrefu sana. Asubuhi sana laikwenda katika karamu ya ndege. Pale aliwakuta ndege wanatayarisha majiko. Hakukaa. Akaenda katika karamu ya kina ngedere. Pale akawakuta ngedere wanaanza kupika. Hakukaa. Kwa haraka kidogo akarudi katika karamu ya kina ndege. Alipokuwa anapita nyumbani kwake, mke wake aliyekuwa anaijua sana namna ya kufikiri ya mumewe, alimwita na kumuambia, “*mshika (mambo) mawili (kwa wakati mmoja) moja humponyoka.*” Mzee fisi akamjibu asiyeyajaribu mambo hayo ana hakika ya kutopata hata moja ya hayo mawili. Akaondoka mbio kwenda katika karamu ya kina ndege. Pale ndege walikuwa wanaimba nyimbo zao za kuagana na walianza kukaa katika meza kuandaa chakula. Ajabu mzee Fisi hakukaa. Sasa kwa mbio za kasi alikimbilia katika karamu ya kina ngedere. Alipokuwa anapita nyumbani kwake, mke wake alimpigiakelele tena kwa kumwambia, “*haraka haraka haina baraka*”. Mzee fisi alimjibu mke wake kwa haraka “*ngoja ngoja yaumiza matumbo*”. Waswahili pia wanasema, *chelewa chelewa utamkuta mtoto si wako*. Akatoweka kwa kasi kwenda katika karamu ya kina ngedere. Pale ngedere walikuwa wanaagana. Karamu yao ilikuwa imekwisha. Hakukaa. Sasa ulimi nje alikimbia kwa kasi ya ajabu kurudi katika karamu ya ndege. Pale ndege walikuwa tayari juu hewani kwa safari zao. Hawapo. Fisi alirudi nyumbani kwake bila ya kula chochote, amechoka sana na ana njaa sana. “*Mtaka yote hukosa yote*”, mke wake alimwambia huku anamcheka.

b) Maana

Tamaa ikitumika vibra, humkosesha mtu kila kitu. Uchaguzi thabiti na uamuzi kamili ni muhimu.

c) Mfano wa matumizi

tuseme umemchumbia au umechumbiwa na mtu ambaye ni mapacha, Kurwa na Doto. Wewe umechumbiwa au umemchumbia Doto kabla ya kukutana na Kurwa. Ulipokutana na Kurwa mara moja ulitaka mara ilei

le sasa kuwa awe mchumba wako. Mwishowe wote wanakukataa kwa sababu ya tabia yako mbaya ya kukosa mapenzi ya kweli na hivyo umewakosa wote. Rafiki yako anakuambia, “Waswahili husema, *mtaka yote hukosa yote.*”

**Vita vya nzige, ni furaha ya kunguru** (*La guerra delle cavallette è una gioia per il corvo*)

a) Hadithi

Kwa kunguru, nzige ni chakula adimu na kitamu sana lakini ni vigumu sana kukipata chakula hicho. Hivyo ili kujipunnguzia taabu ya kuwapata nzige, kunguru wakalazimika siku moja kubuni mbinu ya kuwakamata kwa urahisi. Kunguru wakaenda kwa nzige wa jangwani na kuwaambia kuwa nzige wa nyikani wana nia ya ya kuwaua ili kuwanyang’anya sehemu kubwa ya ya jangwa, kwa viota vyao vya mayai. Halafu kunguru wakaenda kwa nzige wa nyikani na kuwaambia kuwa nzige wa jangwani wanataka kufanya vita ili kuwanyang’anya sehemu kubwa ya nyika kwa chakula chao. Vita kati ya nzige wa nyikani na wa jangwani ilipotangazwa rasmi, kunguru wakajitolea kazi ya kuwa wahudumu wa kwanza katika uwanja wa vita. Vita ilikuwa kali sana. Kunguru waliwachukua nzige majeruhi, kuwapeleka katika hospitali zao hewa. Katika hospitali hewa za kunguru, kila nzige majeruhi aliliwa kwa pupa na kwa haraka ya kustusha na kunguru waliokuwa wakitokwa mate kwa uroho. Macho ya kunguru wote sasa yalikuwa mekundu kwa furaha yao ya kikatili. Baadaye kunguru hawakusubiri tena hadi nzige waumie. Nzige kabla ya kuinua panga zao ili kupigana, walikamatwa na kunguru, kwani sasa walikuwa ni sawa na watu *walioonja asali huchonga mzinga*. Wakaanza kuwakamata wazima wazima na kuwala bila ya haya wala huruma. Nzige walipogunduakuwa wanaliwa wangali hai, sasa walijua kuwa, kumbe *umoja ni nguvu na utengano ni udhaifu*, lakini walikuwa wamekwisha kufa wengi kwa kuliwa na kunguru waroho, kuliko kwa vita yao ya wenyewe kwa wenyewe.

Vita vya nzige vikabadilika mara moja sasa kuwa ni karamu kubwa sana isiyosahaulika ya kunguru waroho.

b) Maana

Msikubali kugombanishwa hasa na adui yenu.

## c) Mifano ya matumizi

Ni wazi kuwa kama mapolisi watagombana hiyo bila shaka itakuwa ni hali ya furaha kwa wahalifu kwani kama Waswahili wanavyosema *vita vya nzige ni furaha ya kunguru*.

Mfano mwingine.

Vita vya ma kabila au vya wenyewe kwa wenyewe katika Afrika vimewasaidia sana wakoloni kulitawala bara hilo kiurahisi kwani kama Waswahili wanavyosema *vita vya nzige ni furaha ya kunguru*.

HADITHI YA FAROUK TOPAN:  
ALIYENYIMWA MAISHA

*Kwa kumtuza  
Bi Elena Bertoncini  
Na kumkumbuka  
SKN*

Latifa hakujua la kufanya. Bibi yake – mzaa mamaake – alimtaka asiipuuze posa iliyoletwa na familia ya Sefu bin Ali wa Shangani hapo Unguja. Ni familia mashuhuri inayojulikana na inayojiweza. Tena si ndogo. Na wote wa familia hiyo wanakaa jumba moja: ndugu wanne wanaume, kila mmoja ameshaoa isipokuwa Sefu; na wanawake watatu, wawili kati yao wamerudi nyumbani baada ya kupewa talaka. Lakini usukani wa jumba ulishikwa imara mikononi mwa Bi Ubwa, bibi ambaye siku hizi ni nadra kucheka, bibi asiyetaka mambo ya kiupuuzi. Tokea asubuhi hadi jioni aliangalia kila kitu. Hutoa amri kuhusu vyakula vitakavyonunuliwa marikiti na kupikwa, namna ya upishi wa vyakula hivyo, nguo zitakazofuliwa na kupigwa pasi, fanicha itakayosafishwa, matasa na vitu vya shaba vitakavyosuguliwa kwa dawa maalumu hadi ving'are kama vioo. Watoto wake na wakwe zake walimheshimu, lakini pia walimuogopa. Wote walitii amri. Na ndivyo Bi Ubwa alivyotaka.

Bi Ubwa ana umri wa miaka 62. Amekuwa mjane kwa miaka kumi na minne sasa tangu baba wa akina Sefu alipofariki Kenya katika gari la abiria lililokuwa njiani kutoka Mombasa kuelekea Nairobi. Bi Ubwa alijazwa huzuni, akisikika kusema mara kwa mara katika siku zake za eda, “Laiti ningekuwa pamoja naye garini!” Huzuni iliyomtafuna maini Bi Ubwa pia ilijizamisha kichwani mwake. Ikambadili hulka pole pole, hata alipotoka eda, alionekana kama mtu aliyepoteza ucheshi na utamu wa dunia.

Siku moja likamjia wazo – wazo la kindoto – kwamba Sefu atakapooa na kupata mtoto mwanamme atamwita Umar, jina la marehemu mumewe

mpenzi. Kila siku Bi Ubwa akaliwaza wazo hilo na vile atakavyomlea Umar, kipenzi chake. Itakuwa kama mumewe amerudi nyumbani mle! Na kama akina Bibi wengi wafanyavyo, atamwita mjukuu wake “mume wangu”. Wazo lilimpendeza kwa kumletea faraja kidogo moyoni mwake. Tena likajisambaza akilini mwake na, baada ya muda, likajivika sura ya ukweli. Ikawa Bi Ubwa anamtarajia mwanamke ye yote yule atakayeolewa na Sefu atazaa mtoto wa kiume. Akaona basi ni muhimu kwake yeye Sefu asichelewa kuoa. Akawaagiza shoga zake wamtafutie mwanamwari atakayemfaa Sefu, naye akamwita mtoto wake mpenzi kumnasihi afunge ndoa. Sefu akaikubali shauri ya mamaake (au tuseme amri yake) bila ya kuipinga.

\*

Baada ya kuaga nyumbani, Latifa alitoka peke yake akatembea kwa miguu mpaka Forodhani. Anapenda kuja hapa, hasa baada ya bustani kutengenezwa upya hivi karibuni. Inapendeza, tena imekuwa nadhifu zaidi. Alinunua muhogo wa kuchoma uliotiwa chumvi na kunyunyuziwa pilipili. Akakaa peke yake juu ya benchi lililokabili bahari. Alipunga upepo na kuyafikiri yaliyomjia nyumbani. Akawaza vile wanawake walivyopiga hatua ya kimaendeleo Zanzibar tangu Mapinduzi. Leo anawaona wanawake wameshika madaraka mbali mbali na kufanya kazi kama madaktari, mawakili, mawaziri serikalini na pia katika sekta tofauti za biashara, muziki, michezo, ushoni, na kazi nyingi nyenginezo. Fursa za kujiendeleza walizonazo leo si haba, fursa ambazo akina mama na mabibi zao pengine hawakuwa nazo. Basi kwa nini – Latifa akajiuliza – watoto wa kike bado wanaozwa, au tuseme “wanauzwa”, bila ya idhini zao? Kweli, wanaulizwa kama kweli wanataka kuolewa na fulani, lakini kuulizwa huko si kuulizwa kikweli. Ni kuondoshwa njiani tu, ili wazee waseme ati wamewauliza binti zao! Mamaake anamtaka aolewe na huyo Sefu, lakini anasikia kwamba kwenye jumba hilo, huyo Bi Ubwa ndiye anayeamua kila kitu. Alitakalo hufanyika! Anatawala humo kama chui jike! Basi – Latifa akajiuliza tena – kwa nini ajitumbukize ndani ya shimo la moto? Hapana, atakataa kuolewa na Sefu.

\*

Harusi ilishangiliwa kwa shani iliyokusudiwa kuutikisa mji. Iliendelea kama vile “fungate” ya zamani, yaani kwa muda wa siku saba, kila siku

ikiwa na ngoma au sherehe yake. Sherehe zilianza kwa kufanywa karamu na kuwepo siku ya kupakwa hina: ikafuatiliwa na kufungwa akdi, tena kusomwa Maulidi ya wanawake, kupigwa taarabu za vikundi viwili (moja kwenye ukumbi wa Taasisi, au SUZA kama ijulikanavyo siku hizi, na ya pili ukumbi wa shule ya Haile Selassie). Sherehe kuu ya zote ilifanywa kwenye hoteli ya Fisherman's Walk, nje ya mji. Hiyo ndiyo siku ya Bwana na Bi Arusi kuja kuonyeshwa pamoja. Bi Ubwa alitaka ichezwe ngoma ya Lelemama la zamani, lakini akaona kumbe wanawake wa Unguja wa kisasa hawalijui wala hawalipatii kama wazee wao! Wala hakutaka lichezwe Bomu la kisasa. Yeye mwenyewe alijipamba kwa kuvaa mtandio wa rangi ya buluu uliomkaa vizuri kichwani. Ni mara yake ya kwanza kuvaa mtandio usio mweusi tangu kukaa eda. Alivaa kanzu ya rangi ya kimanjano hafifu iliyoshonwa hususan kwa ajili ya usiku huu. Alikuwa amechanua, akicheka na kufurahia maisha. Watu wengi waliopo hapo hawakuwahi kumwona Bi Ubwa akicheka na kuwa mcheshi hivyo! Na Sefu na Latifa walipoingia ukumbini, Bi Ubwa alikuwa wa kwanza kuwapigia vigelegele.

Latifa alionekana amenawiri na kujaa furaha tele. Lile wazo la kumfikiria Bi Ubwa kama kizee kilichokosa imani lilififia kabisa! Tena tangu siku aliyopelekwa na mamaake kumwamkia kwa mara ya kwanza hadi leo, Bi Ubwa amemwangalia Latifa kwa mapenzi tu. Akaona ama kweli amemkosa bibi huyu. Basi baada ya kwenda kuonana na Bi Ubwa pale mara ya kwanza tu, na kumwona alivyo mcheshi na mchangamfu, Latifa akaikubali posa.

\*

Miezi mitatu ikapita. Siku moja, walipokuwa wanakula chakula cha usiku, Bi Ubwa akamwuliza Latifa, “Kuna kitu humo?”

Latifa akajibu, “Hapana, birika tupu. Chai imekwisha. Nikakufanyie nyengine?”

Bi Ubwa akacheka. Walikuwa wamebaki wao wawili tu pale mezani. “Hapana, siuluzi chai mie. Nauliza kama wewe una kitu, unabeba kitu?”

Latifa akafahamu. “Bado, Bibi”, akaona haya kuyaendeleza mazungumzo.

Ukapita mwezi wa nne, ukaja wa tano, ukaingia wa sita. Bado Latifa hakubeba kitu. Ucheshi wa Bi Ubwa ukawa unapungua kila mwezi upitao. Akawaamrisha Sefu na Latifa waende kwa daktari wa uzazi ili Latifa



atazamwe kama ana kasoro ya kuweza kushika mimba. Daktari (mwanamke) akamwondoshea shaka Latifa kwa kumuarifu kwamba hana ulakini wo wote kuhusu uzazi. Na ndivyo ilivyothibitika miezi mitatu baadaye. Tena walikuwa wanakunywa chai usiku. Bi Ubwa siku hizi alikuwa hasemi sana na Latifa, na akimsemeza huwa hana mengi ya kusema, na wala hayasemi kwa ucheshi. Na ikiwa Latifa anaendelea kukaa mezani akizungumza na akina wifu wenzake, yeye Bi Ubwa huondoka mapema.

“Bibi, naomba tuzungumze”, Latifa alimwambia Bi Ubwa ambaye alikuwa anaondoka mezani.

“Basi njoo chumbani.”

Latifa akamfuata Bi Ubwa chumbani mwake. Hii ni mara ya kwanza kuingia humo baada ya kiasi cha miezi miwili. Baada ya kukaa juu ya zulia, Latifa akamwambia Bi Ubwa kwamba yeye ni mja mzito, tena wa wiki nne hivi. Maneno machache haya yalimtia Bi Ubwa furaha ya kujaa moyo na kumiminika. Akatabasamu, tena akamkumbatia Latifa, mama mtarajiwa wa “mume” wake.

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Bi Ubwa alimtunza na hata kumdekeza Latifa hiyo miezi iliyofuata. Na hapo wakati ulipowadia, yeye mwenyewe akafuatana na Sefu na wanawake wawili wa nyumbani kumpeleka hospitali. Walimleta magharibi lakini Latifa alianza kuhema na kupata maumivu kuanzia kiasi cha saa tatu na nusu usiku. Yalifululiza hadi saa za alfajiri. Bi Ubwa aliruhusiwa kukaa naye kumpa moyo na kumhimiza ajitahidi kujipa nguvu za kuzaa. Uchungu wa kuzaa ulipomjia kwa kasi, Latifa alipiga kelele na mayowe yaliyosikika nje. Machozi yalimtiririka. Wakati wote huo, Bi Ubwa alikuwa akimpepea na kumpoza. Kiasi cha saa kumi na moja na nusu alfajiri, Latifa akajifungua na mkunga akampokea mtoto. Akakikata kitovu, akampangusa, akampa Bi Ubwa amkamate, huku akisema, “Kuna mwengine.”

Bi Ubwa alishangaa. “Anazaa pacha?” akauliza.

“Ndio” mkunga akajibu huku akimtoa na kumpokea mtoto wa pili.

“Huyu mwanamke” akasema Bi Ubwa. “Na huyo je?”

“Na huyu pia mwanamke. Wataleta baraka, insha’llah.”

Bi Ubwa hakujibu kitu. Aliwapokeza mtoto wale wanawake wa nyumbani ambao waliingia chumbani waliposikia kelele na kilio cha Latifa pale uchungu ulipomvamia. Bi Ubwa akatoka chumbani bila ya kumsemeza Latifa.

\*

Bi Ubwa aliendelea kutozungumza sana na Latifa hata baada ya Latifa kurudi nyumbani na watoto wake pacha. Kinyume na mamaake, Sefu aliwapenda sana watoto wake na pia ikaanza kumwingia hisia ya kumpenda mke wake kwa mapenzi ya dhati. Pale mwanzo, Sefu alioa tu kumridhisha mamaake, na pia yeye kutaka kuwa mume wa msichana aliye mwanamwari wa haiba. Ni chanzo cha kujivunia barazani kwenye gumzo la hao wanaojifikiria ni akina dume. Mawazo kama haya yakafifitia Latifa aliposhika mimba na yakatoweka kabisa alipoyasikia mayowe ya uchungu wa Latifa kutoka chumba cha uzazi. Fikra hizo za kujigamba sasa anaziona ni za kitoto. Sasa anamjali na kumpenda Latifa kama mama wa watoto wake. Alisikitika sana moyoni kwamba mama yake, Bi Ubwa, anawapuuza wajukuu wake. Na hasemi sana na Latifa. Sefu akajiuliza: kwa nini mamaake amebadilika hivi?

Siku moja, Bi Ubwa aliwauliza wanawe mezani, “Sefu yupo wapi?” Alisema kwamba hakumuona mtoto wake tangu juzi, wala naye hakuja kumwamkia kama desturi yake. Waliopo mezani walisema (ati) hawajui alipo. Ikambidi aende kumwuliza Latifa ambaye alikuwa msalani akiwakogesha wanawe.

“Amekwenda Nairobi, Bibi. Atarudi kesho.”

Moyo wa Bi Ubwa ukagutuka pale alipolisikia neno “Nairobi”. Huko ndipo mumewe alipopata ajali, na maiti yake ililetwa kutoka huko! Na sasa kipenzi cha moyo wake amekwenda huko huko! Na kwa nini Sefu hakumwambia habari ya safari yake? Na kwa nini hakuja kumuaga? Angekuja kwake, angalau angeweza kumkataza kusafiri kwenda Nairobi. Kipenzi cha moyo wake kusudi kutomjali kukamtia hamaki, tena uchungu. Mara akajaribu kuiondoa fikra hiyo, lakini hakufaulu. Na licha ya kutoweka, fikra hiyo ikazaa nyengine iliyozidi nguvu. Akahisi kwamba Sefu *mwenyewe* hakukusudia kumdharau mamaake. Kusudi hiyo ilitokana na fitina iliyolingizwa kichwani mwake na tena ikamwingia moyoni mwake. Na huyo mtiaji fitina anamfahamu sawa sawa! Maluuni na fisadi mkubwa! Basi leo atamtambua Bi Ubwa ni nani! Atajua hawezi kumchezea Bi Ubwa bila ya kujuta!

Akarudi msalani kwa kishindo, hamaki imemkolea kichwani. Alimkuta Latifa anawapangusa maji watoto.

“We Latifa!” Bi Ubwa akasema kwa ukali.

“Naam, Bibi” Latifa akaitikia kwa heshima. Alihisi Bi Ubwa ameghadhibika. Hakujua kwa sababu gani.

“Umemwambia nini Sefu? Umemwambia asije kwangu? Kwangu mimi mamaake?”

Labda sauti ya ukali ya Bi Ubwa iliwatisha watoto, kwani mmoja wao akaanza kulia na pacha mwenzake akamfuata. Latifa akambeba yule wa kwanza kumbembebeza kwa kuimba “Howa, mtoto, howa...”. Vile kutokujibiwa kulizidisha hamaki na uchungu wa Bi Ubwa.

“Unanipuza, ndio?”

“Aa, sikupuuzi, Bibi. Lakini naona unawatisha watoto. Labda tuzungumze baadaye”, Latifa akasema huku ameukaribia mlango, tayari kutoka kwenda kumlaza mtoto wake chumbani kwake. Mtoto alikuwa bado analia.

Bi Ubwa alishangaa kumsikia Latifa akimjibu hivyo baada ya kumpuuzi na kuanza kumbembebeza mtoto wake. Sefu anamdekeza hata sasa adabu zimemtoka. Haheshimu watu! Na sasa anataka kumwacha msalani na mtoto wake ati kumgeuza yayaake! Hapana, hatampa nafasi ya kumdhaliisha hivyo. Bi Ubwa akatimka kwa kishindo.

Nyumba kubwa zilizojengwa zamani Unguja zilikuwa na vizingiti virefu vya kuzuia maji ya msalani yasitambae ukumbini au sebuleni. Latifa alikuwa keshanza kutoka msalani alipopigwa kumbo na Bi Ubwa katika vurumai zake za kutaka kuwa wa kwanza kutoka humo. Latifa akajikwaa kizingitini, akayumba, akaanguka. Ili kumnusuru mtoto wake, Latifa aliinyayua mikono yake akambeba mwanawe kijuujuu akistahili kubwatika uso, kifua, tumbo na magoti. Mtoto akanusurika lakini yeye akachunika vibaya kipajini, kidevuni na magotini. Ilimtoka damu na maumivu makali yalimbana kwenye kifua na tumbo.

\*

Sefu alibahatika kuweza kukodi ghorofa yenye vyumba vitatu kwenye jumba kubwa Hamamni, si mbali na Msikiti Gofu. Nyumba za kukodi hazikuwa rahisi kuzipata mjini. Hii ni kwa sababu majumba makubwa mengi mjini, aghalabu kila mtaa, yaligeuzwa kuwa hoteli za kuwakaribisha watalii. Hivyo ilimbidi Sefu ahangaike huku na huku kutafuta nyumba, Lakini hakujali kusumbuka kwani ari ya kutoka na mkewe kwenye jumba la Bi Ubwa ilimwingia kwa kasi moyoni baada ya kurudi kutoka Nairobi. Alishtuka kumkuta Latifa amelazwa kitandani na maumivu kwenye kifua na mbavu. Baada ya kusikiliza yaliyotokea, aliamua kuhama na mkewe. Yeye mwenyewe alikwenda kumpasha habari mama yake. Bi Ubwa kwanza

alikasirika, tena akasikitika, na mwishowe machozi yakamlenga pale Sefu alipomuaga na kutoka chumbani.

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Walipokuwa wamelala kitandani usiku mmoja, Latifa alimnong'oneza mumewe kwamba yeye ni mja mzito. Sefu akamkumbatia mkewe kwa furaha, huku akiomba dua moyoni huyo awe mtoto mwanamme.

Uja uzito huu haukuwa mgumu kama ule wa kwanza. Ulimhangaisha, lakini si sana. Pia aliona nafuu Bi Ubwa kutokuwepo hapo kumsimamia afanye hili na lile, hivi na vile. Hata safari hii pia, Bi Ubwa alitaka ama Latifa aende kukaa Shangani au yeye aje Hamamni kuja kumtunza mkwewe mpaka utakapowadia wakati wake. Sefu akamkatalia yote mawili akimwambia Latifa anakwenda kukaa na mamaake mpaka atakapojifungua. Na ilikuwa alipokuwapo kwa mamaake yalipomjia maumivu tumboni. Alikuwa sasa ameshaingia mwezi wa nane. Latifa akayapuza maumivu. Yalipozidi siku ya pili na kumshika kwa nguvu, Sefu akamchukua hospitali.

Nesi alipomwona tu, akasema hayo ni maumivu ya uzazi.

“Aa, dada. Huu si uzazi. Si maumivu ya kuzaa haya”, Latifa alikana.

Nesi akaona bora amwite daktari. Naye daktari hakuja hapo hapo, bali baada ya kiasi cha saa. Akamkubalia nesi kwamba wakati wa kuzaa umewadia lakini mtoto hatotoka kama kawaida. Lazima Latifa apasuliwe, lakini si sasa. Kwanza wampe Latifa mwenyewe fursa ya kuweza kujifungua. Daktari na nesi wakazungumza faragha kidogo tena daktari akaondoka.

Nesi akamhimiza Latifa ajitahidi kujiwezesha kuzaa. Akamfanya Latifa apumue hata mwisho nguvu zikamwishia. Latifa alilia machozi kwa maumivu, ikawa kama anataka kuzirai. Nesi akampiga sindano ya kumpa nafuu kwa kumlaza usingizi. Pole pole Latifa akafunga macho. Saa nzima ikapita. Nesi alimwacha Latifa alale. Baada ya nusu saa, nesi akarudi kumwamsha. Akamkuta Latifa katulia, hapumui.

Nesi akamwita daktari kuja kumpasua kumtoa mtoto. Wakampasua, wakamtoa mtoto. Mtoto mwanamme. Hakulia. Alikuwa amefariki tumboni.

Wakamwita Sefu. Alilia kwa sauti. Wakamweka kitini. Akakaa ameduwaa. Hakujua la kufanya.



## MASHAIRI YA KITHAKA WA MBERIA

### *Calabria*

Ukinisaili kama nimewahi kusalimiana na Calabria  
Nitakujibu, “Sikusalimiana tu, nilikaa, nilijivinjari!”  
Ukiwa mmoja wa wasiotosheka kulenga swali moja  
Ukiwa mwenye kinywa kitemacho maswali rasharasha  
Ukiuliza, “Ni lipi lililokugusa moyo kwa vidole laini?”  
Sitanena, “Mvinyo!”; kinywa hakitatamka, “Pizza!”  
Uso wangu utawaa kama anayekumbuka siku ya arusi  
Kwa tabasamu zinazometameta kama nyota angani  
Nitasema, “Zulia la kijani kibichi – miti yenye furaha  
Magari yanayovuka mabonde kwa daraja zinazoelea  
Vyombo vinavyopiga mbizi ndani ya lindi la vilima  
Vikipigiwa makofi na taa kwenye ukuta pande na juu!”  
Hayo ndiyo, kwa shangwe, yalibusu macho ya mgeni  
Kwa mkono imara, yakanipiga kumbukumbu mhuri.

*Zulia la Kijani Kibichi*

Ubavuni mwa barabara ya kwendea Italia Ndogo  
 Kito cha msitu asilia kinastawi kwa fahari ya kijani  
 Kwa kijani kibichi kikipamba tambarare na bonde;  
 Katika ushirikiano wa kukamilishana kwenye utuvu  
 Kutoka mwinuko wa kuengea mandhari ya Nyari  
 Sura tatu zinajitangaza kila moja ikijipigia debe;  
 Hii ngome imara dhidi ya mtabangiko wa maumbile  
 Inakithi vyema haja za mimea, wanyama na binadamu  
 Ni chaguo azizi la ndege na wadudu kujengea makazi;  
 Takribani familia mia mbili zenye sifa ya mabawa  
 Huishi humu si kwa kero bali kwa bashasha isiyokoma  
 Zikipamba tanzu kwa viota, nyimbo na machachari;  
 Vipepeo si wageni katika msitu, wanauita makwao  
 Ndio hulisha macho karamu murwa ya rangirangi  
 Katika utulivu unaotangaza urembo wa maumbile;  
 Watalii watuao Mombasa, Malindi, Kilifi na Watamu  
 Baada ya kukinai maisha ya fukwe na mijengo ya miji  
 Huja kupumua hewa iliyochujwa kwa kichungi adimu;  
 Makundi ya wakazi wathaminio faraja bila kelele  
 Huja kwa magari yakibeba aila, wenza au marafiki  
 Hukaribishwa na ndege kwa nyimbo zenye mighani;  
 Watakao kuadhimisha siku za vidole kutunikiwa pete  
 Walengao kuimarisha mshikamano ali wa nyoyo  
 Huitika mwito wa sumaku nyerezi ya kijani kibichi;  
 Walengao kuelea katika wingu sisimzi la fungate  
 Huja nyoyo zao zikidunda kwa hamu iliyohalalishwa  
 Hupokelewa kwa mikono miwili teketeke ya maumbile;  
 Wapenzi wa ndege, wakibeba darubini kwa shauku  
 Huja kufurahia aila adimu za wenye manyoya  
 Wakarudi makwao nyoyo zikinang'ana kwa furaha;  
 Wenye ujasiri wa kuwa msituni baada ya jua kughura  
 Hupanda ulingoni kwenye tanzu zisizotisha maisha  
 Wakisubiri macho yakutane na ndovu chini ya nyota;

Mchana, wapenzi wa ndege hupanda lingo tanzuni  
Hutulia kama maji ya mtungi, hudadisi kwa macho  
Hunasa ulimbwende wa mabawa na kuridhisha hisia;  
Wengine, bado wakiwa katika lingo za kuimarisha ziara  
Hukutanisha macho na metometo pendezi za nyota  
Katika mtagusano baina wanamandari na mbingu



*Vyeo*

|                                                                |                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| kwa asiye na hekima,                                           | kutajika, ni kinywaji,    |
| ni mvinyo wa zabibu,                                           | huleweshwa chakari        |
| humtoa duniani,                                                | humtua ughaibuni, hadhaa  |
| humteka, hujiona                                               | mwenza wa nyota,          |
| mienendo ya jana,                                              | njia za unyenyekevu,      |
| huonekana kitambara,                                           | hutupwa kwenye jalala,    |
| hujipamba kwa mikogo                                           | hutembea kwa mikiki,      |
| hujitambulisha kimiondokoni,                                   | huwa sawa na kibibi,      |
| huwa na uchechu                                                | hushindana na embe bichi, |
| kwa marafiki wa jana,                                          |                           |
| kutangamana                                                    |                           |
| huwa ni mwiko,                                                 |                           |
| milio ya simu                                                  |                           |
| hupigiwa vidoko,                                               |                           |
| nambari za jana                                                |                           |
| huwa mahame                                                    |                           |
| nambari mpya, kwa wateule,                                     |                           |
| hubaki siri kwa akina yahe,                                    |                           |
| hukutanapo nao kisdafa, huwadondoka ufidhuli                   |                           |
| hayo huwa ndiyo, hadi ikaukapo chemchemi ya bahati nasibu      |                           |
| aliyekuwa juu akaporomoka, akawa mtembezi katika tope la ukiwa |                           |

**UN RITRATTO**

***A PORTRAIT***



## CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S SWAHILISTS: ELENA BERTONCINI ZÚBKOVÁ

ALENA RETTOVÁ  
(SOAS, University of London)

“We produce Swahilists for export.” Such was the resigned sigh of Professor Luboš Kropáček, our Swahili teacher and an Africanist and Orientalist polyhistor, upon hearing I became Lecturer in Swahili Literature and Culture at SOAS, London. This was at a time when African Studies in Prague had been denied further accreditation and was about to end. Professor Kropáček used the feminine form of the word “Swahilist” in Czech and, of course, he was referring to his two university colleagues, Elena Zúbková and Magdalena Slavíková, who had left the socialist Czechoslovakia and became known in Swahili Studies under their married names as Elena Bertoncini and Magdalena Hauner. Elena Bertoncini established the study of Swahili in Naples, Italy, and became the founder of literary criticism focusing on modern Swahili literature. Magdalena Hauner became Professor of Swahili and African Linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and helped create one of the best centres of African Studies in the United States, where an unprecedented plurality of African languages and Afrophone literatures are taught and researched. My paper traces the career of Elena Bertoncini and assesses the impact of her innovative work on the discipline of the present-day – and the future – Swahili Studies.

### **Elena Bertoncini Zúbková**

Elena was born in Bratislava in 1939. She enrolled for a degree in Arabic first in Bratislava, then in Prague, where she graduated in 1961 with a degree in Arabic

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(supervised by Karel Petráček, 1926–1987) and French. At the Charles University in Prague she joined a newly opened extra-curricular course of Swahili, taught by Professor Karel F. Růžička (1914–1972). Upon getting her university degree she started her postgraduate studies (the so-called *aspirantura*) in the newly opened African Studies, a programme she completed in 1964 and was awarded the equivalent of a doctorate. The curriculum of African Studies included history (taught by Professor Ivan Hrbek, 1923–1993), literature (taught by Vladimír Klíma, born 1936), and language (Bertoncini 2014, see also Kolmaš et al. 2001, Záhořík 2006, Zima 2013). All students studied two languages, Swahili and Hausa, but they chose one in which they specialized. The first cohort included such prominent Czech and Slovak Africanists as Magdalena Slavíková, married Hauner (born 1944), Petr Zima (born 1934), a linguist and expert in Hausa, and Viera Pawliková-Vilhanová (born 1944), a historian based in Bratislava. The Africanist students were sometimes taught by Swahili speakers from Tanganyika and Zanzibar who were students at the Prague college for students from countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the University of the 17th November. This institution imitated the Peoples' Friendship University of Patrice Lumumba in Moscow and the Herder Institute at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig; it was established in 1961 and closed in 1974.

Elena taught Swahili to African Studies students until 1967. She also taught a Swahili course for workers in 1964. She visited West Africa in 1962, but it wasn't until 1974, a decade into her professional career, that she had an opportunity to visit East Africa.

In early 1968 Elena married Claudio Bertoncini and moved to Pisa, Italy. In the same year she was accepted to the department of African Studies in Naples, headed by Professor Ricci, and started teaching there while travelling between Pisa and Naples – a weekly commute of 1000 kms. This would become her professional life until her retirement in 2009. Additionally, Elena taught Swahili literature at INALCO for ten years (1989–1999) and was invited to teach intensive courses at a number of European universities (Frankfurt am Main, Cologne, Leiden, Hamburg, and Helsinki).

When I came to the Bayreuth *Swahili Colloquium* for the first time in 1999, I was told, by a German Africanist and Paleoamericanist from Hamburg, Guido Korzonnek, that “if you want to study Swahili literature, go to Naples.” Over the years I got to understand the meaning of this advice, especially when I visited the Neapolitan Orientale in person in March 2007 within the framework of Erasmus teacher mobility.

Elena founded the Swahili Studies in Naples, designed the curriculum and wrote textbooks for it – language manuals, but also histories, readers, and vocabularies of Swahili drama, the novel and both modern and classical poetry. She also wrote a historical grammar of Swahili and an overview of Swahili dialects. Most of these remained unpublished and were photocopied by the students. Having already produced textbooks of Swahili in Czech (1966) and in Italian (1977), in 1987 Elena published in Italian an innovative course of Swahili, *Kiswahili kwa Furaha*. This textbook is based exclusively on contemporary literature; the grammar is derived from Swahili novels, short stories, and poems, as are the exercises and texts for practice. The second volume of the course includes a historical overview of drama with an anthology of texts.

English speakers can get an impression of Elena's paedagogical qualities in *Vamps and Victims: Women in Modern Swahili Literature* (1996) – an anthology of the Swahili novel and short story, which includes notes on stylistic features and a vocabulary of all the words a reader is likely to need to look up beyond the most basic level of language competence. The book has the capacity to skyrocket the level of Swahili competence of its readers from beginners' to upper intermediate or advanced. Imagine having the same sort of resources for drama, old and modern Swahili poetry, complete with anthology, vocabulary, stylistic analysis, and historical background: this is the scope of the teaching materials that Elena prepared for her Italian students.

Elena's innovative approach to Swahili texts revolutionarized the study of Swahili literature, which was until then studied from a predominantly philological angle, with classical Swahili poetry, its editions and linguistic features at the centre. As Elena says, "I tried (...) to analyze Swahili literature through European means, that is, as universal literature (...); for example the stylistic features of Kezilahabi's poetry" (Bertoncini 2014, translated from Slovak by AR). This effort shaped her monumental *Outline of Swahili Literature: Prose Fiction and Drama*, which was first published in 1989 and then re-edited in 2009, this time under collaboration of Mikhail Gromov, Said Khamis and Kyallo Wamitila (cf. Rettová 2009). The work maps the development of Swahili prose and drama from the pre-colonial times to the present day (roughly up to 2007). It has three main sections, pre-colonial and colonial literature, prose fiction since the independence, and drama since the independence; each of these is subdivided into three parts focusing on Kenya, Tanzanian mainland and Zanzibar. The book also includes two ap-

pendices: a list of authors and a list of novels, short story collections and plays. The book is unique among expositions of literatures in African languages in its scope and depth.

Elena has continued developing and updating her expertise in Swahili literature throughout her career, as the regular participants of the *Swahili Colloquium* in Bayreuth well know. She would invariably be the one who presented the newest productions in Swahili prose fiction, drama, or poetry.

In addition to the emphasis on a stylistic analysis on Swahili literature, Elena's work also lays foundations for a comparative study of Afrophone literatures. In 1993 Elena published an article comparing the Swahili and Shona novel and a year later an article on the Shona novel and one on Charles Mungoshi (1993, 1994a, 1994b). This type of comparative studies strongly resonates with a group of researchers who are, presently, charting new comparative literary grounds in their work, such as Rémi Armand Tchokothe, of Bayreuth, Sara Marzagora, from SOAS, or Clarissa Vierke, Professor in Literatures in African Languages at the Bayreuth University.

Elena educated several generations of Swahilists and Africanists across Europe. Already before their professional careers, each of Elena's students made a significant contribution to Swahili studies in the form of a translation of a novel, which was a prerequisite to being awarded a degree in Swahili; sadly most of these translations have remained unpublished (cf. Aiello Traore 2005). Many of Elena's students have also joined the Swahilist community that meets in Bayreuth during the annual *Swahili Colloquium*. I will list just a few names here. Maddalena Toscano continued working as a linguist at Orientale as did Sergio Baldi, who shifted focus from Swahili to Hausa. Graziella Acquaviva teaches Swahili in Naples and in Torino. Flavia Aiello Traore teaches at the University of Calabria. Irene Brunotti is a lector of Swahili at the University of Leipzig. Serena Talento is a Junior Fellow at BIGSAS, University of Bayreuth. At INALCO Elena also taught Lutz Diegner, who currently teaches Swahili at the Humboldt University in Berlin.

### **Observations, speculations, generalizations**

In conclusion I would like to add my personal observations and speculations about the specificity of the African studies in the former Czechoslovakia and, to an extent, in the two "daughter states" of Czechoslovakia, the contemporary Czech and Slovak Republics. In these countries, African and Swahili studies are

quite different from traditions in other countries. In the UK it is not rare to find people who remember the times when the sun did not set over the Commonwealth, and if you enter the building of the School of Oriental and African Studies, history breathes from every corner. Many of SOAS's students have parents who were born in Africa and often they themselves lived in an African country for long periods in their lives. Others have fallen in love with Africa during one of their many trips there or they wish to learn Swahili to go on a safari in Kenya or a vacation in Zanzibar. In sum, they have vital links to Africa which you would not find in Czechoslovakia or the Czech or Slovak Republic. Slovak historian David Dobrovoda maintains in his thesis about the political relations between Africa and the former Czechoslovakia that the latter's role in these relations was derived precisely from the country's past unburdened by colonial history (Dobrovoda 2016). This also applies to the domain of Czechoslovak African Studies.

Obviously, the Czechoslovak territory is not in East Africa, so the importance of Swahili does not reflect the need to study a language of everyday communication. Czechoslovakia also never was a colonial power, so the interest in Swahili cannot be explained by a link to a former colony. Czech and Slovak Swahilists are unlikely to have relatives living in Nairobi or Dar es Salaam. Also the motivation of tourism was nonexistent in the former Czechoslovakia, and this situation is only slowly changing nowadays. Many Czech or Slovak Africanists got their African Studies degrees long before they first travelled to East Africa, and some of them had several years of professional careers in the discipline before a field trip. Swahili was less of a choice motivated by family history or tourism, and more of a random given – it was simply one of the African languages that were on offer, usually from two or three and, often, the only one that was taught well and that had at least some variety of accessible teaching materials. But maybe it is precisely this lack of “rootedness” in Africa that pushes Czech and Slovak Africanists into creative improvisation, makes them into pathfinders and accounts for the originality of their work.

An aspect which characterizes Czech and Slovak Africanists is multilingualism. I remember how in 1999, on coming to the Bayreuth *Swahili Colloquium*, I was overwhelmed by the many languages that were spoken among the participants: Swahili, English, German, French, Russian, Italian, Czech and Slovak... It was a profound linguistic shock to someone who, although an admirer of languages, had up to then lived in a strictly monolingual environment. In this Babel of intertwining conversations I noticed that



there was one person who participated in all these discussions, no matter what the language medium was: Elena Bertoncini. When people spoke English, she spoke English; when they spoke Swahili, she responded in Swahili; when in German or French, she spoke German or French. And of course she spoke Italian to her students and Slovak and Czech with me. She would also have responded if the discussions were in Arabic, Persian or Shona! Elena's publication list includes publications (including translations) in English, French, German, Italian, Slovak, and Czech.

Multilingualism is, of course, not unique to Africanists from the former Czechoslovakia. Yet, it is a striking feature if we look at Africanists from other countries. In the UK it is not rare to find people who study an African language and apart from that language they only speak English. Or, for that matter, non-linguist Africanists who only speak English – something sheerly unthinkable to Africanists from small European countries like the Czech or the Slovak Republic. The fact of the matter is that it costs Czechs and Slovaks considerable effort to gain access to materials in and on African languages and, as a consequence, learning an African language is the “cherry on the top” of a lifelong practice of language learning: you simply have to pick up Russian or German to read about Zulu or Wolof. This particular feature may foster a sensitivity to Africa's multilingualism, an approach that motivates Czechoslovak Swahilists towards comparative literature and linguistics (see also Slavíková Hauner 1975).

Another prominent feature of the work of Czechoslovak Afrikanists is the firm factographic grounding of their work. The inspired stylistic analysis of Swahili novels, short stories, plays, and poetry that Elena's work is, is based on a wealth of encyclopaedic information, acquired through a painstaking collection of empirical data and their careful assembling according to relevant criteria. Again, factographic thoroughness is not a unique prerogative of Czech and Slovak researchers but it is a feature that does characterize Czechoslovak African Studies and that can perhaps be attributed to an academic culture. The difference between academic cultures lies in how much value is given to the transmission of facts as opposed to the author's creativity and the recipients' inspiration to build an opinion. In the British tradition, for example, facts are a necessary prerequisite in research and teaching, but they are instrumental to the intellectual construction presented by the researcher or teacher. This attitude reflects the confidence that the students or readers will establish the relevant facts in their own independent

study if necessary. Facts, then, should not be what the encounter between teacher/author and student/reader is about. Obviously, this presupposes sufficient and uncensored access to reference materials. This was neither expected nor always possible in the setting of the Czechoslovak academia, where the teacher would often be the only channel through which information was accessible. For this reason, establishing and communicating facts was often the main purpose of both research and paedagogic activity.

In my introduction I touched on the issue of gender, talking specifically about female Swahilists. This factor should therefore be considered here, too. Is it in any way relevant that the most prominent Czechoslovak Swahilists are women? I believe it is, although we must be wary of gender stereotypes. Many female scholars combine great pragmatism and sobriety with idealism, carefully shielded against the world with which it can clash. This accounts for these scholars' resilience and efficiency, as well as their willingness to share their scholarly passions and open their disciplines to others. Elena's production of paedagogical resources is unprecedented. An element that is directly related to the characteristics I mentioned is an emphasis on pastoral care for the students. I see one manifestation of Elena's attentiveness to her students in her initiative to bring students to the Bayreuth *Swahili Colloquium*. Almost every year before her retirement, Elena came to Bayreuth accompanied by a group of students, some of whom presented papers while others only listened in the audience. The experience of a conference is a true landmark in the academic development of students of Swahili, and conversely, the presence of these "budding scholars" in Bayreuth contributes to the close, nearly familial atmosphere that the participants so like about the annual gatherings.

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