

# كيسواحل

Kiswahili<sup>1</sup>

Mtungaji: Ustadh Mau (Mahmoud Ahmad Abdulkadir), 2003

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
bismi llāhi arraḥmani arraḥīmi  
bismillahi arrahmani arrahimi

كُنَيْمًا نِ مَكْوَكُ ١      تَانِيَامًا حَتَّ لِنِ

kunyamā ni mek'ūka  
tānyāmā ḥaṭa lini  
kunyamaa nimechoka \* t'anyamaa hata lini 1a/b

*I am weary of staying silent. For how much longer am I to remain dumb?*

وَنَنْغُ هُنَيْپُوكُ      كُوَانُ نَ تَمَانِ  
wanangu huniepūka  
kuwaona na tamāni  
wanangu huniepuka \* kuwaona natamani 1c/d

*My own children avoid me, though I long to see them.*

وَالْوَبَاكِ كُنِشِكَا      سَوْنُغُ نِ وَ وَندَانِ  
wālūbāki kunishika  
siwangu ni wa wendāni  
walobaki kunishika \* si wangu ni wa wendani 1e/f

*And those who remain to embrace me are not my own, but are the offspring of others.*

مِمِ نِ مَوْتَنْدَانِ      مَبُونُ هُنَيْجَ زِتِ  
mimi ni mewatendāni  
mbūna hunipija zita  
mimi nimewatendani \* mbona hunipija zita 1g/h

*What have I done to you? Why do you wage war on me?*

وَنَانُغُ مِمِ وَ دَمُ ٢      وَانَ وَ أُسْوَا حِلِنِ  
wanāngu mimi wa damu  
wāna wa uswāḥilini  
wanangu mimi wa damu \* wana wa Uswahilini 2a/b

*My own flesh and blood, the children of Swahiland,*

<sup>1</sup>Adbulkadir, MA and PJL Frankl (2013): 'Kiswahili': a poem by Mahmoud Ahmad Abdulkadir. *Swahili Forum*, 20.

أَصِلْ هَوْنَ هَامُ  
 yā kuniyuwa ni nāni  
 asili hawana hamu \* ya kuniyuwa ni nani 2c/d  
 are uninterested in knowing who I am,

وَمَنْتِي قَوْمُ  
 na wana wa majirani  
 wamenatiya qaumu  
 wamenatiya kaumu \* na wana wa majirani 2e/f  
 and have left me to other peoples, and to the children of neighbours.

كُوسَ لَنْغَ كُوسَ غَانِ  
 mbūna hunipija ziṭa  
 kūsa langu kūsa gāni  
 kosa langu kosa gani \* mbona hunipija zita 2g/h  
 What kind of fault is my fault? [O my children] why do you continue waging war on me?

٣ مِم مَامِنْ سِتَاسَ  
 wala sina punguwani  
 mimi māmenu siṭāsa  
 mimi mamenu sit'asa \* wala sina punguwani 3a/b  
 I am your mother and am not yet infertile, nor has my ability to reproduce diminished.

نِ مَزَا وَ مَمْبَاسَ  
 na kungine zisiwani  
 ni mezā wa mambāsa  
 nimezaa wa Mambasa \* na kungine zisiwani 3c/d  
 I have given birth to children in Mambasa, and in the other islands [of the Swahili],

نِ زِيُونْغُوزِ وَ دِنِ  
 na ziyūngūzi waḍini  
 nize wana siyāsa  
 nizee wanasiyasa \* na ziongozi wa dini 3e/f  
 to politicians and to religious leaders,

مَافُنْدِ وَ كُلَ فَنِ  
 na māshujā wa ziṭa  
 māfundī wa kula fani  
 mafundi wa kila fani \* na mashujaa wa zita 3g/h  
 to craftsmen in every field, and to war heroes.

٤ نَدِيمَ مَامَاكَ مُيَاكَ  
 پِي مَوْنُغْ عَثْمَانِ  
 ndimi māmāke muyāka  
 piya mwengo 'athumāni  
 ndimi mamake Muyaka<sup>2</sup> \* pia Mwengo Athumani<sup>3</sup> 4a/b  
*I am the mother of Bwana Muyaka, and of Mwengo Athmani also,*

نَ زَهْدٍ كَذَلِكَ  
 نَ وَنُغْ وَآكَ وَنَدَانِ  
 na zahidi kadhalika  
 na wengi wāke wendāni  
 na Zahidi<sup>4</sup> kadhalika \* na wengi wake wendani 4c/d  
*and of Zahidi too, and many of his contemporaries,*

عَالِي كُوتِ نَ مَتَاكَ  
 وَتِ مَبَوَا مُوَيَ قَرِنِ  
 'ālī kūṭi na maṭāka  
 wote mbwā mūya qarini  
 Ali Koti<sup>5</sup> na Mataka<sup>6</sup> \* wote mbwa moyā karini 4e/f  
*Ali Koti and Mataka, all from just one century,*

وَلِتُوكَ مَاتُومْبُونِ  
 وَكَوَا كَمَ نِيُوتَ  
 waliṭūka māṭūmbūni  
 wa kawā kama nīūṭa  
 walitoka matumboni \* wakawaa kama nyota 4g/h  
*they emerged from my womb, and shone like stars.*

٥ اِنْكِشَافِ نَغْلِي  
 اُكْسُومَ نَ كِدَانِ  
 inkishāfi ngaliya  
 ukisōme na kidani  
 Inkishafi<sup>7</sup> angaliya \* ukisome na kidani 5a/b  
*Look at Inkishafi. Read it attentively*

نَدِيُؤُ تَاكَأِيُو كُولِي  
 نِ كَوَامْبِيَاوْ مَوْنَدَانِ  
 ndipuu tākāpuu kweleya  
 ni kwāmbiyao mwendāni  
 ndipo takapo kweleya \* nikwambiyao mwendani 5c/d  
*and then you will understand, my dear friend,*

<sup>2</sup>Bwana Muyaka was the outstanding Swahili poet of 19th century Mombasa. After his death many of his verses were recalled by Mu'allim Sikujua Abdallah al-Batawi (died 1890) and transcribed with annotations by W.E. Taylor (1856-1927). After Taylor's death his papers were acquired by the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London.

<sup>3</sup>Mwengo Athmani: this 18th century poet from Pate composed the *Utendi wa Tambuka* (*The Epic of Heraklios*).

<sup>4</sup>Zahidi: see El-Maawy (2008).

<sup>5</sup>Ali Koti of Pate: see Chiraghdin (1987: 31-7).

<sup>6</sup>Bwana Mataka's full name is Muhammad bin Shee Mataka al-Famau (1825-1868). He was ruler of Siyu, as was his father. His mother was Mwana Kupona, famous for the poem of advice written to her daughter. Bwana Mataka died in Mombasa's fort while imprisoned by the Busa'idi.

<sup>7</sup>The *Inkishafi*, according to W.E. Taylor Stigand (1915: 96-105) is "a great, if not the greatest, religious classic of [the Swahili-speaking peoples]". The poem, concerned with the decay of Pate (formerly a flourishing town in northern Swahililand), may remind some readers of Thomas Gray's *Elegy written in an English churchyard* (London 1751).

نَ هَزِفِ أَصْلَانِ  
na hazifi aṣilāni

نِ تُونُغُ زِمَسَلِي  
ni tūngo zimesaliya \* na hazifi asilani 5e/f

*what I am telling you. These verses are of enduring worth and will never die.*

نِ وَنَانُغُ وَالْوَيْتِ  
ni wanāngu wālūpita

وَالْوَزْتُغُ نِ نِيَانِ  
wālūzitunga ni nyāni  
walozitunga ni nyani \* ni wanangu walopita 5g/h

*Who were those who composed them? They were my children who have passed on.*

نَ پِي كِرَاغُ دِنِ  
na piya kīrāgu ḍini

نَ مَالِنُغُ وَ مَقِيتَ ٦  
na mālenga wa mvita  
na Malenga<sup>8</sup> wa Mvita \* na pia Chiraghdini<sup>9</sup> 6a/b

*And the Bard of Mambasa, and Chiraghdin too,*

هَاوَكُكِرِ أُدُنِ  
hāwakukiri uduni

نِيَايُو وَلِزِفُوتَ  
nyāyuu ūlizifuwata  
nyayo ulizifuata \* hawakukiri uduni 6c/d

*they followed in my footsteps, they did not submit to lower standards.*

لَكِنِ هُفَلِيَانِ  
lakini hufaliyāni

نَابَهَانِ هُتَتَ  
nnābahāni huteta  
Nabahani<sup>10</sup> huteta \* lakini hufaliyani 6e/f  
al-Nabhany reproves, but to what effect?

إِنْغَا أَمَيْكِتَ  
ingā ameikita

نَدِي يُوْكَ أُوْنْدَانِ  
ndiye pweke uwandāni  
ndiye pweke uwandani \* ingawa ameikita 6g/h

*He remains alone in the field, yet he stays strong.*

<sup>8</sup>The Bard of Mambasa refers to Ustadh Ahmad Nassir Juma Bhalo, see Chiraghdin (1971).

<sup>9</sup>Shihabdin Chiraghdin (1934-1976). See the biography by his daughter Latifa Chiraghdin which came out in 2012.

<sup>10</sup>In an unpublished commendation from 12 June 1974 J.W.T. Allen writes about Ahmad Sheikh Nabhany: “I am privileged to have a wide circle of friends and acquaintances among Swahili scholars of Swahili. I have some knowledge of their rating of themselves and I can name perhaps half a dozen (still living) who are always referred to as the most learned. To me they are walking dictionaries and mines of information and Ahmed is unquestionably one of them. He comes of a family of scholars whose discipline is as tough as any degree course in the world. They have no time for false scholarship or dilettantism. That this profound learning is almost wholly disregarded by those who have been highly educated in the western tradition affects almost everything written today in or about Swahili. When I want to know some word or something about Swahili, I do not go to professors, but to one of the *bingwa* known to me. One of these could give a much greater detail of assessment, but of course his opinion would not carry the weight of one who can put some totally irrelevant letters after his name”. For a biography see Said (2012).

سِيَاكُومَ أَكِنُغُونِ

siyākūma ukingūni

bado kuzaa naweza \* siyakoma ukingoni 7a/b

*I am still able to give birth. I have not yet reached the limit,*

مُمَيْتَوُ فُونِ

mumeitowa fuwoni

lakini mumenipuuza \* mumeitoa fuoni 7c/d

*but you have all despised me. You have left me high and dry,*

كُنِيَانْغِي كَانُونِ

kunipāngiya kānūni

wangine meitokeza \* kunipangia kanuni 7e/f

*now others have come forward to regulate me,*

نِيْنِي مُلِيُونُوتَ

nyinyi mulipūniwata

musamiyati kubuni<sup>11</sup> \* nyinyi muliponiwata 7g/h

*compiling standardized dictionaries.*

هَلِي كِسِكِيْتَا ٨

kʷangaliya jaridani

huliya kisikitika

huliya kisikitika \* changaliya jaridani 8a/b

*I weep and lament when I look at the learned journals,*

سَوَانْغِي نِي وَغْنِ

siwanāngu ni wageni

وَنْغِي وَنَاءُ أَنْدِيَا

wengi wanau andika

wengi wanaoandika \* si wanangu ni wageni 8c/d

*for many of those who contribute are not my children, they are strangers [to me].*

<sup>11</sup>For almost a century the principal publisher of standardized Swahili dictionaries has been the Oxford University Press (OUP). Clearly OUP has to be profitable, and profitable is what, over the years, their dictionaries of standardized Swahili have been. However, if one considers excellence in research and scholarship not one of the OUP's standardized Swahili lexicons can begin to compare with the Oxford English Dictionary ('more than 600,000 words over a thousand years'). Fortunately for Swahili and for Swahili studies there exists the monumental *Dictionary swahili-français* (Paris, 1939), compiled by Charles Sacleux. Sacleux's chef d'oeuvre ('unprecedented in historical depth, dialectological detail and philological knowledge') can now be accessed electronically, courtesy of *Swahili Forum* (<http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~afrika/swafo/index.php/sacleux>). Heartfelt thanks are due to Thilo Schadeberg and Ridder Samson.

وَيْكَ تُنْغِ نِ نْيَانِ

wapeka tūngo ni nyāni

idhaani kadhalika \* wapeka t'ungo ni nyani 8e/f

*It is much the same with the media. Who are the ones who send in their compositions?*

لَيْكَ كُو مَبُو مَمْتِ

lik'a kuwa mbwā mvita

wengi hawatūk pwani \* licha kuwa mbwa Mvita 8g/h

*Many do not come from the coast, although they may have a Mambasa address.*

إِذَاعَانِ كَذَلِكْ

idhā'āni kadhalika

وَنْغِ هَاوْتُوكِ پَوَانِ

wengi hāwatūk pwān

زِسُومَشَوَاءُ شُلَنِ

zisūmeshwao shuleni

angalia na zitabu \* zisomeshwao shuleni 9a/b

*Look at the textbooks which are studied at our schools.*

سِ سُوْدِ وَلِ سِ شَانِ

si sūdī wala si shāni

hazandikwi na Rajabu \* si Sudi wala si Shani 9c/d

*They are written neither by Rajabu, nor by Sudi nor by Shani.*

أَشِشِيُو سُكَانِ

ashishiyeo sukāni

Njoroge<sup>12</sup> ndiye katibu \* ashishiyeo sukani 9e/f

*The author is Njoroge, he is the helmsman.*

نَجُورُغِ نَدِي كَتِبْ

njūroge ndiye kaṭibu

نَاءُ نِيُومَ هُفُوتَ

nao nyūma hufuwaṭa

Charo<sup>13</sup> na wake wendani \* nao nyuma hufuata 9g/h

*Charo and his colleagues follow.*

هُوَلِكُوا كُونْغَمَانِ ١٠

كَنْدَ هُرْدِ نَدِيَانِ

kēnda hurudī ndiyāni

hualikwa kongamano \* chenda hurudi ndiani 10a/b

*When I am invited to conferences, I turn back before I arrive.*

huwalikwā kūngamāno

<sup>12</sup>njoroge: a name representing those who have their origins in the East African interior (the bara).

<sup>13</sup>charo: a name representing those who have their origins in the coastal hinterland (the nyika).

كُوْنِيْنِي سِوَانُ

kuwa nyinyi siwaoni

huona utungu mnuu \* kuwa nyinyi siwaoni 10c/d

*I feel exceedingly bitter that I do not see you all there.*

لَكِنْ نَتْنَدُ نَنْ

lakini nitende nni

na huziuma zitani<sup>14</sup> \* lakini nitende nini 10e/f

*I bite my fingers in frustration, but what can I do?*

مَاْمِنْ مُمْنَوَتَ

māmenu mumeniwata

wanāngu mumeikhini \* mamenu mumeniwata 10g/h

*My children, you have missed your opportunity. You have abandoned your own mother.*

هُوْنِ اَتْنَعُ مَنُو

huwona utungu mnuu

نَ هُزَامَ زِتَانِ

na huziuma zitāni

وَنَانَعُ مُمَيْخِنِ

wanāngu mumeikhini

كَتَغَلِي مِتَحَانِ

kʼangaliya mitihāni

na huliya kwa matozi \* changaliya mitihani 11a/b

*And I shed tears when I look at the results of the school exams.*

نَ وَ كِسُومُ زَوْنِ

na wa kisumu ziwani

wanafundi wa Kibwezi \* na wa Kisumu<sup>15</sup> ziwani<sup>16</sup> 11c/d

*Students from Kibwezi, and from Kisumu by the lake,*

وَلِيُوكُو كِلَلِنِ

waliyūkuu kileleni

ndiwo wanao barizi \* waliyoko kileleni 11e/f

*they are the ones who are ahead, who are at the top;*

مُكُو تِنِ هُكُوكُوتَ

mukuu tini hukūkūta

mulūtūka kwetu pwani \* muko tini hukokota<sup>17</sup> 11g/h

*and you, students from the coast, you lag far behind.*

مُلُوتُوكَ كُوتَ پَوَانِ

mulūtūka kwetu pwāni

<sup>14</sup>These words echo the words of the *Inkishafi*: “wakauma zanda na kuiyuta”. Readers unfamiliar with this Swahili gesture of regret could consult Eastman and Omar (1985).

<sup>15</sup>Kibwezi and Kisumu are places in the East African interior.

<sup>16</sup>The lake is Lake Nyanza, also known as Lake Victoria.

<sup>17</sup>Over the years young people on Lamu Island (and indeed elsewhere in northern Swahililand) have received a raw deal in their primary and secondary education. They have ‘lagged far behind’ their counterparts from the interior, and so Mother Swahili grieves for her marginalised children.

۱۲ وَفَانِيَاءُ أَتَفَتِ      وَ أَزْمِلِ كُونِ  
wafānyao utāfiti      wa uzamili ḳuwoni  
wafanyao utafiti \* wa uzamili chuwoni 12a/b  
*Amongst those who are researching for degrees at the universities,*

وَسَوَاهِلِ نِ كَاتِ      أَوْ هَوَپَاتِكَانِ  
waswāhili ni kātiti      aw hawapātikāni  
Waswahili ni katiti \* au hawapatikani 12c/d  
*Swahili students are few or non-existent.*

نِ نِيَانِ نِ مَلَيْتِ      مُونِي مَأكُوسَ نِ نِيَانِ  
ni nyāni ni mlaiti      mwenye mākūsa ni nyāni  
ni nyani ni mlaiti \* mwenye makosa ni nyani 12e/f  
*Who is to be blamed? Whose fault is it?*

مِمِ هَامُنِثَمِنِ      مَعْنِ هَامُكُپَاتِ  
mimi hāmunithamini      mgine hāmukupāta  
mimi hamunithamini \* mgine hamukupata 12g/h  
*You esteem me not at all, yet you have not replaced me by another.*

۱۳ كِوَسِكِي هُنِينِ      هُنَانُشُونُغَ مُوِيُونِ  
kiwasikiya hunīna      huniongūnga mūyūni  
kiwasikiya hunena \* huniungonga moyoni 13a/b  
*When I hear those who are not mother-tongue speakers speaking, I feel sick at heart.*

صَرْفَ هَكُنَ تَنْ      نَحُوْ نِ تَتَمَانِ  
ṣarfa hakuna tena      naḥau na itamāni  
sarufi hakuna tena \* nahau naitamani 13c/d  
*Inflection is no longer employed, while grammatical [Swahili] is what I desire!*

نَ حَتَ لَدَ هَيَانِ      كَمَ مَشَپُوْ كَانَوَانِ  
na ḥaṭa ladha hayāna      kama mashāpuu kānwāni  
na hata ladha hayana \* kama mashapu kanwani 13e/f  
*Even [their speech] is wanting in flavour, like a plug of tobacco in one's mouth.*

سِئَلُوْ هُنَانِ      هُئِمْبَ أَوْ هُتَتِ  
sielewi hunenāni      huimba aw huteta  
sielewi hunenani \* huimba au huteta 13g/h  
*I do not understand what they are saying. Are they singing? Are they complaining?*



أَيُّ تَن دُنْيَانِ ١٤ لَوْ مُيَاكَ تَارُدِ  
ay tena duniyāni law muyāka tārudi

lau Muyaka tarudi \* ae tena duniyani 14a/b

*Were Bwana Muyaka to return, were he to come back to the world,*

مَوَانَانْغُ إِتْمَبِدِ ١٤ كُونَدَ مَحَكَمَانِ  
mwānāngu itambidi kwenenda mahakamāni

mwanangu itambidi \* kwenenda mahakamani 14c/d

*it would be necessary, my child, for him to go to a court of law,*

أَتَّ نَ مَشْهَدِ ١٤ وَنِيَوَاءُ يَقِينِ  
aete na mashahidi waniyuwao yaqīni

aete na mashahidi \* waniyuwao yakini 14e/f

*and he would need to call witnesses who know me well,*

نِيُوتَ مُونَدَ غَرَزِنِ ١٤ كُؤَا حَتِي كُؤَا پَاتَ  
nyūte mwende gerezani kwā ḥatiya kuwapāta

nyote mwende gerezani \* kwa hatiya kuwapata 14g/h

*and all of you would go to prison for the offence which you have committed against me.*

وَاللَّهِ هَمُنَ غَيْرَ ١٥ وَلَ هَامُونِ إِمَانِ  
wallāhi hamuna gēra wālā hāmūna imāni

wallahahi hamuna ghera \* wala hamuna imani 15a/b

*Truly you have neither zeal nor self-confidence.*

هَمُنَ لَكُؤَكِرَ ١٥ كُؤَا هَمُنِثَمِنِ  
hamuna la kuwa hamunithamini

hamuna lakuwakera \* kuwa hamunithamini 15c/d

*It irritates you not at all that you do not esteem me.*

مِمِ نِ كَامَ مِپِيرِ ١٥ هُتَزَوَ أُونْدَانِ  
mimi ni kāmā mpiwiri hutezewa uwandāni

mimi ni kama mpwira \* hutezewa uwandani 15e/f

*I am just like a ball in the play-ground,*

هِيْجُؤَا تَكْنَدِيَانِ ١٥ نَ كُلَ مُونِي كُپِتَ  
hipijwā teke na kula mwenye kupita

hipijwa tekendiani \* na kila mwenye kupita 15g/h

*I am given a kick by anyone who passes by in the street.*

۱۶ حَتَّ كُونِي أَشْعِرِ وَاسُو وَنَعْ وَمَبُونِ

wāsuu wangu wamebūni hata kwenye usha'iri  
hata kwenye ushairi \* waso wangu wamebuni 16a/b

*Even in the field of Swahili prosody, those who are not mine have invented*

زِلِزْ حُرْ بِحَارِ كُؤَا كُؤَلَزْ وَغْنِ  
zilizo huru bahāri kwā kuwoleza wageni  
zilizo huru bahari \* kwa kuoleza wageni 16c/d

*free verse, imitating foreigners.*

مِم هَايُو سِيَاكِرِ سِ مَاشَعِرِ كِفَنِ  
mimi hāyuu siyākiri si māsha'iri kifani  
mimi hayo siyakiri \* si mashairi kifani 16e/f

*For myself, I cannot accept that. That is not Swahili poetry.*

هَائُو نُوتْ نِ كُؤَا نَنْ هُزْ نِ مَبْنُ زَا زَتْ  
hāyuu yūt ni kwā nn hzo n mbnu zā zṭa  
hayo yote ni kwa nini \* hizo ni mbinu za zita 16g/h

*What is the point of it all? These are preparations for war.*

۱۷ هَمْبُو مُونِيُو سِنَ هِنِ نِ عَجَابُ غَانِ

hambiwa mwenyewe sina hini ni 'ajābu gāni  
hambiwa mwenyewe sina \* hini ni ajabu gani 17a/b

*I am told that I belong to nobody in particular. How extraordinary!*

هُوَاءِ كَاكُوسَ شِنَ كَاوْ نِ تَانْدُ يَانْغَانِ  
huwae kākūsa shina kāwa na tāndu yāngāni  
huwae kakosa shina \* kawa na tandu yangani 17c/d

*How can I be rootless below ground and yet have branches above?*

نَيَانِ أَلُونِپَ نِنِ أَلُونَانْدِكِ نِ نَيَانِ  
nyāni alūnipa ina alūnāndika ni nyāni  
nyani alonipa ina \* alonandika ni nyani 17e/f

*Who gave me my name? And who are they who wrote me down?*

كِيُو سِ أُسْوَا حِلِنِ نِ وِپِ نَالِپُوپَاتِ  
kiwa si uswāhilini ni wapi nālīpūpāṭa  
kiwa si Uswahilini \* ni wapi nalipopata 17g/h

*If I do not hail from Swahiland, then whence do I come?*

سِدَلِيلِ أَصْلَانِ ١٨ كُو وَنْغِ هُنِنَنْ

si aṣilāni

kuwa wengi huninena

kuwa wengi huninena \* sidalili asilani 18a/b

*That many speak me, [Swahili], is not of itself proof of origins,*

كِنْغِرَزَا هَامُونِ يَاكُو مُونِيُو سِنَ

kingereza hāmuwoni

yākuwa mwenyewe sina

yakuwa mwenyewe sina \* Kingereza hamuoni 18c/d

*or that I have no owner. What of the English language?*

پَمْبَ زَتِ دُنْيَانِ هُنِنَوَا نَ وَنْغِ سَانِ

pembe zote dunyāni

hunenwā na wengi sāna

hunenwa na wengi sana \* pembe zote duniani 18e/f

*It is spoken by very many, in all corners of the world,*

مِزِي هَايُكَاثَا كِنَ نَ كَوَا سِنَانِ

miziye haikukāṭa

kina na kwao sināni

kina na kwao shinani \* miziye haikukata 18g/h

*yet the language remains firmly established in its homeland, its roots have not been severed.*

30/7/03