

كيسواجل

kiswāhili¹

Mtungaji: Ustadh Mau (Mahmoud Ahmad Abdulkadir), 2003

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
bismi llāhi arraḥmani arraḥīmi
bismillahi arrahmani arrahimi

كُنَيْمًا نِ مَكْوَكْ ١
tānyāmā ḥata lini kunyamā ni mek'ūka 1b/a
kunyamaa nimechoka * t'anyamaa hata lini 1
I am weary of staying silent. For how much longer am I to remain dumb?

وَنَنْغُ هُنَيْپُوكْ
kuwaona na ṭamāni wanangu huniepuka 1d/c
wanangu huniepuka * kuwaona natamani 1
My own children avoid me, though I long to see them.

سَوْنُغُ نِ وَ وَندَانِ
siwangu ni wa wendāni wālūbāki kunishika 1f/e
walobaki kunishika * siwangu ni wa wendani 1
And those who remain to embrace me are not my own, but are the offspring of others.

مِمِ نِ مَوْتَنْدَانِ
mbūna hunipija zita mimi ni mewatendāni 1h/g
mimi nimewatendani * mbona wanipija zita 1
What have I done to you? Why do you wage war on me?

وَانِ وَ أُسْوَاڠِلِنِ ٢
wāna wa uswāḥilini wanāngu mimi wa damu 2b/a
wanangu mimi wa damu * wana wa Uswahilini 2
My own flesh and blood, the children of Swahiland,

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

¹From Abdulkadir and Frankl (2013).

نَ وَنَ وَ مَجِرَنَ	وَمَنْتِي قَوْمُ	
na wana wa majirani	wamenatiya qaumu	2f/e
	wamenatia kaumu * na wana wa majirani	2
and have left me to other peoples, and to the children of neighbours.		
مَبُونُ هُنِيَجَ زِتَ	كُوسَ لَنْغُ كُوسَ غَانِ	
mbūna hunipija ziṭa	kūsa langu kūsa gāni	2h/g
	kosa langu kosa gani * mbona hunipija zita	2
What kind of fault is my fault? [O my children] why do you continue waging war on me?		

وَلَ سِنَ پُنْغُونِ	مِم مَامُنُ سِتَاسَ	۳
wala sina punguwani	mimi māmenu sitāsa	3b/a
	mimi mamenu sit'asa * wala sina punguwani	3
I am your mother and am not yet infertile, nor has my ability to reproduce diminished.		
نَ كُنْغِنَ زِسُونِ	نِ مَزَا وَ مَمْبَاسَ	
na kungine zisiwani	ni mezā wa mambāsa	3d/c
	nimezaa wa Mambasa * na kungine zisiwani	3
I have given birth to children in Mambasa, and in the other islands [of the Swahili],		
نَ زِيُونْغُوزِ وَدِنِ	نِزَ وَنَ سِيَّاسَ	
na ziyūngūzi waḍini	nize wana siyāsa	3f/e
	nizee wanasiasa * na ziongozi wa dini	3
to politicians and to religious leaders,		
نَ مَاشُجَا وَ زِتَ	مَافُنْدِ وَ كُلَ فَنِ	
na māshujā wa ziṭa	māfundī wa kula fani	3h/g
	mafundi wa kula fani * na mashujaa wa zita	3
to craftsmen in every field, and to war heroes.		

پِي مَوْنُغَ عَثْمَانِ	نَدِمِ مَامَاكِ مُيَاكِ	۴
piya mwengo 'athmāni	ndimi māmāke muyāka	4b/a
	ndimi mamake Muyaka ² * pia Mwengo Athumani ³	4
I am the mother of Bwana Muyaka, and of Mwengo Athmani also,		

²Bwana 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.

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

نَ وَنْغِ وَاكِ وَنْدَانِ	نَ زَهْدِ كَذَلِكْ	
na wengi wāke wendāni	na zahidi kadhalika	4d/c
na Zahidi ⁴ kadhalika * na wengi wake wendani		4
and of Zahidi too, and many of his contemporaries,		
وَتِ مَبَوَا مُوَيِّ قَرِنِ	عَالِي كُوتِ نَ مَتَاكَ	
wote mbwā mūya qarini	'ālī kūti na maṭāka	4f/e
Ali Koti ⁵ na Mataka ⁶ * wote mbwa moya karini		4
Ali Koti and Mataka, all from just one century,		
وَ كَوَا كَمَ نِيُوتَ	وَلِتُوكَ مَا تُؤْمَبُونِ	
wa kawā kama nīūta	waliṭūka māṭūmbūni	4h/g
walitoka mtumboni * wakawaa kama nyota		4
they emerged from my womb, and shone like stars.		

أُكِسُومَ نَ كِدَانِ	هَ اِنْكِشَافِ نَغَلِي	
ukisōme na kidāni	inkishāfi ngaliya	5b/a
Inkishafi ⁷ angalia * ukisome na kidani		5
Look at Inkishafi. Read it attentively		
نِ كَوَامِبِيَاءَ مُونْدَانِ	نَدِيُؤُ تَاكَأِيُ كُولِي	
ni kwāmbiyao mwendāni	ndipuu ṭākāpuu kweleya	5d/c
ndipo takapo kwelea * nikwambiyao mwendani		5
and then you will understand, my dear friend,		
نَ هَزِفِ أَصْلَانِ	نِ تُونْغُ زِمَسَلِي	
na hazifi aṣilāni	ni ṭūngo zimesaliya	5f/e
ni t'ungo zimesalia * na hazifi asilani		5
what I am telling you. These verses are of enduring worth and will never die.		
نِ وَنَانْغُ وَالُؤِيتَ	وَالُؤِزُتْنِغَ نِ نِيَانِ	
ni wanāngu wālūpita	wālūzitunga ni nyāni	5h/g
walozitunga ni nyani * ni wanangu walopita		5
Who were those who composed them? They were my children who have passed on.		

⁴Zahidi: see El-Maawy (1973).

⁵Ali Koti of Pate: see S. Chiraghdin (1987, pp.31-7).

⁶Bwana 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.

⁷The *Inkishafi*, according to W.E. Taylor (Stigand 1915, pp96-105), 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).

٦ نَ مَا لَنْغَ وَ مَثَتَ نَ بِي كِرَاغُ دِنَ
na mālena wa mviṭa 6b/a
na Malenga⁸ wa Mvita * na pia Chiraghdini⁹ 6

And the Bard of Mambasa, and Chiraghdin too,

نَيَاوُ وَلِزِفُوتَ هَاوُكُكِرِ اُدُنِ
nyāyuu ūlizifuwata 6d/c
nyayo walizifuata * hawakukiri uduni 6

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

نَنَابَهَانِ هُتَتَ لَكِنِ هُفَلِيَانِ
nnābahāni huteta 6f/e
Nabahani¹⁰ huteta * lakini hufaliyani 6

al-Nabhany reproves, but to what effect?

نَدِي يُوْكَ اُوْنَدَانِ اِنْغَا اَمِيْكِتَ
ndiye pweke uwandāni 6h/g
ndiye pweke uwandani * ingawa ameikita 6

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

٧ بَادُ كُزَا نَ وَزَ سِيَاكُومَ اُكِنْعُونِ
bādo kuzā na weza 7b/a
bado kuzaa naweza * siyakoma ukingoni 7

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

لَكِنِ مُمْنِيْوَزَ مُمَيْتَوُ فُونِ
lakini mumenipūza 7d/c
lakini mumenipuza * mumeitowa fuoni 7

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

⁸The Bard of Mambasa refers to Ustadh Ahmad Nassir Juma Bhalo, see S. Chiraghdin (1971).

⁹Shihabdin Chiraghdin (1934-1976). See the biography by his daughter – L. Chiraghdin (2012).

¹⁰In 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).

كُنِيَانْغِي كَانُون

kunipāngiya kânūni

wangine meitokeza * kunipangia kanuni

now others have come forward to regulate me,

نِيْنِي مُلِيُونَوَت

nyinyi mulipūniwata

musamiati kubuni¹¹ * nyinyi muliponiwata

compiling standardized dictionaries.

وَنَغْنِ مِيْتُوَكَز

wangine meitūkeza 7f/e

7

مُسَمِيَاتِ كُبُون

musamiyāti kubūni 7h/g

7

كَتَغَلِي جَرْدَن

kʼangaliya jaridani

hulia kisikitika * changaliya jaridani

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

سَوَنَانْغُ نِ وَغْنِ

siwanāngu ni wageni

wengi wanaoandika * si wanangu ni wageni

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

هَلِي كِسِكِيَتِك

huliya kisikitika 8b/a

8

وَنَغْ وَنَاءُ اَنَدِك

wengi wanau andika 8d/c

8

وَيْكُ تَنْغُ نِ نِيَانِ

wapeka tūngo ni nyāni

idhaani kadhalika * wapeka t'ungo ni nyani

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

اِذَاْعَانِ كَذَلِك

idhā'āni kadhalika 8f/e

8

لِكْ كُو مَبُوَا مَمْت

likʼa kuwa mbwā mvita

wengi hawatoki p'wani * licha kuwa mbwa Mvita

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

وَنَغْ هَاوَتُوَك پَوَان

wengi hāwatūk pwān 8h/g

8

زِسُوْمَشْوَاءُ شُلْنِ

zisūmeshwao shuleni

angalia na zitabu * zisumeshwao shuleni

Look at the textbooks which are studied at our schools.

اَنْغَلِي نَ زِتَابُ

angaliya na zitābu 9b/a

9

¹¹For 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 *Dictionnaire swahili-français*, compiled by Charles Sacleux (Sacleux 1939). Sacleux's chef d'oeuvre ('unprecedented in historical depth, dialectological detail and philological knowledge') can now be accessed electronically, courtesy of Swahili Forum (uni-leipzig.de/~afrika/swafo/index.php/sacleux). Heartfelt thanks are due to Thilo Schadeberg and Ridder Samsom.

سِ سُوْدِ وَلَ سِ شَانِ	هَازَانْدِكُوْنَ رَجَبُ	
si sūḍi wala si shāni	hāzāṇḍikwī na rajabu	9d/c
	hazandikwi na Rajabu * si Sudi wala si Shani	9
	They are written neither by Rajabu, nor by Sudi nor by Shani.	
أَشِشِيُوْ سُكَانِ	نَجُوْرُوْغِ نَدِيْ كَتِبُ	
ashishiyeo sukāni	njūroge ndiye kaṭibu	9f/e
	njoroge ¹² ndiye katibu * ashishiyeo sukani	9
	The author is Njoroge, he is the helmsman.	
نَاءُ نِيُوْمَ هُفُوْتَا	كَأَرْ نَ وَآكَ وَنْدَانِ	
nao nyūma hufuwaṭa	k'āro na wāke wendāni	9h/g
	Charo ¹³ na wake wendani * nao nyuma hufuata	9
	Charo and his colleagues follow.	

كَتَدَ هُرُدِ نَدِيَانِ	هُوَلِكُوَا كُونْعَمَانُ	١٠
k'enda huruḍi ndiyāni	huwalikwā kūngamāno	10b/a
	hualikwa kongamano * chenda hurudi ndiani	10
	When I am invited to conferences, I turn back before I arrive.	
كُوْ نِيْنِيْ سِوَانِ	هُوْنُ أَتْنُغْ مَنُوْ	
kuwa nyinyi siwaoni	huwona utungu mnuu	10d/c
	huona utungu mno * kuwa nyinyi siwaoni	10
	I feel exceedingly bitter that I do not see you all there.	
لَكِنْ نِتَنْدِ نِنِ	نَ هُزَامُ زِتَانِ	
lakini niṭende nni	na huziuma ziṭāni	10f/e
	na huziuma zitano ¹⁴ * lakini nitende nini	10
	I bite my fingers in frustration, but what can I do?	
مَامَنْ مُمْنُوْتَا	وَنَانُغْ مُمِيْخِنِ	
māmenu mumeniwaṭa	wanāngu mumeikhini	10h/g
	wanangu mumeihini * mamenu mumeniwata	10
	My children, you have missed your opportunity. You have abandoned your own mother.	

كَتَغَلِيْ مِتَحَانِ	نَ هُلِيْ كُوَا مَاتُوْزِ	١١
k'angaliya miṭihāni	na huliya kwā māṭūzi	11b/a
	na hulia kwa matozi * changaliya mitihani	11
	And I shed tears when I look at the results of the school exams.	

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

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

¹⁴These 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).

نَ وَ كِسُومُ زَوْنِ

na wa kisūmu ziwani

wanafundi wa Kibwezi * na wa Kisumu¹⁵ ziwani¹⁶

Students from Kibwezi, and from Kisumu by the lake,

وَلِيُوكُو كِلَلِنِ

waliyūkuu kileleni

ndiwo wanao barizi * waliyukuu kileleni

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

مُكُو تِنِ هُكُو كُوتَ

mukuu t̄ini hukūkūta

mulotoka kwetu p'wani * muko t'ini hukokota¹⁷

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

وَنَفُنْدِ وَ كِبُوزِ

wanafundi wa kibwezi

11d/c

11

نَدُو وَ نَاءُ بَارِزِ

ndiwo wanao bārizi

11f/e

11

مُلُوتُوكَ كُوتَ پُوانِ

mulūtūka kwetu pwāni

11h/g

11

وَ اَزْمِلِ كُؤُنِ

wa uzamili k̄uwoni

wafanyao utafiti * wa uzamili chuwoni

Amongst those who are researching for degrees at the universities,

اَوْ هَوَپَاتِكَانِ

aw hawapātikāni

Waswahili ni katiti * au hawapatikani

Swahili students are few or non-existent.

۱۲ وَفَانِيَاءُ اُتَفِتِ

wafānyao utafiti

12b/a

12

وَسَوَاهِلِ نِ كَاتِتِ

waswāhili ni kātiti

12d/c

12

مُونِي مَاكُوسَ نِ نِيَانِ

mwenye mākūsa ni nyāni

ni nyani ni mlaiti * mwenye makosa ni nyani

12f/e

12

Who is to be blamed? Whose fault is it?

مَعْنِ هَامُكُپَاتِ

mgine hāmukupāta

mimi hamunithamini * mgine hamukupata

12h/g

12

مِمِ هَامُنِثَمِينِ

mimi hāmunithamini

You esteem me not at all, yet you have not replaced me by another.

¹⁵Kibwezi and Kisumu are places in the East African interior.

¹⁶The lake is Lake Nyanza, also known as Lake Victoria.

¹⁷Over 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.

هِنَانُشُونُغَ مُيُونُ	كِوَسِكِي هُنِينْ	١٣
huniongūnga mūyūni	kiwasikiya hunīna	13b/a
kiwasikiya hunena * huniungonga moyoni		13
When I hear those who are not mother-tongue speakers speaking, I feel sick at heart.		
نَحَوُّ نَ تَتَمَانِ	صَرَفَ هَكُنْ تَنْ	
naḥau na itamāni	ṣarfa hakuna tena	13d/c
sarufi hakuna tena * nahau naitamani		13
Inflection is no longer employed, while grammatical [Swahili] is what I desire!		
كَمْ مَشَايُو كَانَوَانِ	نَ حَتَ لَدَ هَيَانْ	
kama mashāpuu kānwāni	na ḥaṭa ladha hayāna	13f/e
na hata ladha hayana * kama mashapu kanwani		13
Even [their speech] is wanting in flavour, like a plug of tobacco in one's mouth.		
هُيْمَبَ أَوْ هُتَتَ	سِيْلُو هُنِنَانِ	
huimba aw huteta	sielewi hunenāni	13h/g
sielewi hunenani * huimba au huteta		13
I do not understand what they are saying. Are they singing? Are they complaining?		

أَيِ تَنْ دُنِيَانِ	لَو مِيَاكَ تَارُدِ	١٤
ay tena duniyāni	law muyāka tāruḍi	14b/a
lau Muyaka tarudi * ae tena duniani		14
Were Bwana Muyaka to return, were he to come back to the world,		
كُونَدَ مَحَكَمَانِ	مَوَانَانُغُ اِتْمِيدِ	
kwenenda maḥakamāni	mwānāngu itambidi	14d/c
mwānangu itambidi * kwenenda mahakamani		14
it would be necessary, my child, for him to go to a court of law,		
وَنِيَوَاءُ يَقِينِ	أَيْتَ نَ مَشَهْدِ	
waniyuwao yaqīni	aete na mashahidi	14f/e
aete na mashahidi * waniyuwao yakini		14
and he would need to call witnesses who know me well,		
كُوا حَتِي كُوپَاتَ	نِيُوتَ مُونَدَ غِرَزَنَ	
kwā ḥaṭiya kuwapāṭa	nyūte mwende gerezani	14h/g
nyote mwende gerezani * kwa hatia kuwapata		14
and all of you would go to prison for the offence which you have committed against me.		

وَلْ هَامُونِ إِمَانِ	وَاللّٰهُ هَمُنَ غَيْرِ	١٥
wala hāmūna imāni	wallāhi hamuna gēra	15b/a
wallahi hamuna ghera * wala hamuna imani		15
<i>Truly you have neither zeal nor self-confidence.</i>		
كُوْ هَمُنْثَمِنْ	هَمُنَ لَكُوْكَرَ	
kuwa hamunithamini	hamuna lakuwakera	15d/c
hamuna la kuwakera * kuwa hamunithamini		15
<i>It irritates you not at all that you do not esteem me.</i>		
هُتَزَوِ أُوْنْدَانِ	مِمِ نِ كَامِ مِوِرِ	
hutezewa uwandāni	mimi ni kama mpiwiri	15f/e
mimi ni kama mpwira * hutezewa uwandani		15
<i>I am just like a ball in the play-ground,</i>		
نَ كُلِّ مَوْنِي كُيْتِ	هِيْجُوْا تَكْنَدِيَانِ	
na kula mwenye kupita	hipijwā tekendiyāna	15h/g
hipijwa teke ndiani * na kula mwenye kupita		15
<i>I am given a kick by anyone who passes by in the street.</i>		

وَاسُوْ وَنْعُ وَمَبُونِ	حَتَّ كُونِيْ أَشْعِرِ	١٦
wāsuu wangu wamebūni	ḥaṭa kwenye usha'iri	16b/a
hata kwenye ushairi * waso wangu wamebuni		16
<i>Even in the field of Swahili prosody, those who are not mine have invented</i>		
كُوْا كُوْلَزِ وَغِنِ	زِلِزُ حُرُ بَحَارِ	
kwā kuwoleza wageni	zilizo ḥuru baḥāri	16d/c
zilizo huru bahari * kwa kuoleza wageni		16
<i>free verse, imitating foreigners.</i>		
سِ مَاشَعِرِ كِفَنِ	مِمِ هَايُوْ سِيَاكِرِ	
si māsha'iri kifani	mimi hāyuu siyākiri	16f/e
mimi hayo siyakiri * si mashairi kifani		16
<i>For myself, I cannot accept that. That is not Swahili poetry.</i>		
هَزُ نِ مَبْنُ زَا زَتِ	هَآئُوْ تُوتِ نِ كُوْا نُنِ	
hzo n mbnu zā zṭa	hāyuu yūt ni kwā nn	16h/g
hayo yote ni kwa nini * hizo ni mbinu za zita		16
<i>What is the point of it all? These are preparations for war.</i>		

هَمْبُو مُوْنِيُو سِنَ ١٧ هِنِ نِ عَجَابُ غَانِ

hambiwa mwenyewe sina 17b/a
hambiwa mwenyewe sina * hini ni ajabu gani 17

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

هُوَاءِ كَاكُوسَ شِنَ ١٧د/ك كَاو نَ تَانْدُ يَانْغَانِ
huwae kākūsa shina 17d/c
huwae kakosa shina * kawa na tandu yangani 17

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

نَيَانِ أَلُونِپَ نِنَ ١٧ف/ع أَلُونَانْدِكِ نِ نَيَانِ
nyāni alūnipa ina 17f/e
nyani alonipa ina * alonandika ni nyani 17

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

كِو سِ أَسْوَاهِلِنِ ١٧ه/غ نِ وِپَ نَالِپُوپَاتَ
kiwa si uswāhilini 17h/g
kiwa si Uswahilini * ni wapi nalipopata 17

If I do not hail from Swahililand, then whence do I come?

كُو وَنْغِ هُنِنَ ١٨ سِدَلِيلِ أَصِلَانِ

kuwa wengi huninena 18b/a
kuwa wengi huninena * si dalili asilani 18

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

يَاكُو مُوْنِيُو سِنَ ١٨د/ك كِنْغِرَزَ هَامُونِ
yākuwa mwenyewe sina 18d/c
yakuwa mwenyewe sina * Kiingereza hamuoni 18

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

هُنِنَوَا نَ وَنْغِ سَانَ ١٨ف/ع پَمْبَ زُتَ دُونِيَانِ
hunenwā na wengi sāna 18f/e
hunenwa na wengi sana * pembe zote duniani 18

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

كِنَ نَ كَوَاءِ سِنَانِ ١٨ه/غ مِزِي هَيْكُكَاتَ
kina na kwao sināni 18h/g
kina na kwao sinani * miziye haikukata 18

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

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