

THE FORM AND CONTENT

OF

TRADITIONAL SWAHILI LITERATURE

by

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Thesis submitted for the Degree of Ph.D. at the University  
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Ph.D. THESIS ABSTRACT

THE FORM AND CONTENT OF  
TRADITIONAL SWAHILI LITERATURE

Lyndon Harries

An investigation of Swahili verse-form as evidenced in existing manuscripts, mostly in Swahili-Arabic script. The types of verse-form are exemplified and wherever possible related to Arabian sources. The earliest known poems are studied, including the Liyongo poems, and the general conclusion is reached that no satisfactory evidence of their early origin or linguistic development can be established.

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*club  
Hanna*

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THESIS

THE CONTENT AND FORM  
OF  
TRADITIONAL SWAHILI LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Swahili is unique amongst the Bantu languages in possessing a literate tradition established before the nineteenth century. This tradition is accounted for by the early adoption both of an adapted form of the Arabic script and of some Arabian verse-forms.

The use of the term traditional applied to Swahili literature is a convention for distinguishing the earlier literary forms with definite Arabian influence from the literature of the modern period showing definite European influence. <sup>(1)</sup> The term has to be used with reserve, for the earlier literature is traditional only in the sense that it became customary for Swahili writers, especially in the coastal region to the north of Mombasa, to adapt for religious purposes some Arabian prosodic forms and Islamic themes. A natural development of this early borrowing was the creative activity of Swahili poets in the nine-

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(1) Hellier, A., "Swahili Prose Literature", Bantu Studies, Sept. 1940; He places the beginning of the modern period in 192

teenth century, who had learnt to adapt the borrowed medium for expressing themes of their own. Their work was the final consequence of the earlier borrowing rather than the establishment of a continuous literary tradition. It cannot be maintained that this creative activity is continued to the present day. Although Swahili writers still produce rhymed verse, <sup>(1)</sup> it is mostly of an inferior quality, just a conventional use of rhyme, and few, if any, of the modern writers are familiar with the prosodic forms employed by the Swahili poets of the last century.

The earlier Swahili literature is also sometimes referred to as classical Swahili literature. The term classical is applicable to cultural verse-forms influenced by Arabian models, and serves to distinguish verse of this type from songs recorded from a spontaneous oral tradition. The latter in their turn show some influence of the literate tradition. Once again, however, the use of the term is relative, and should not be meant to imply that the cultured work is in every instance classical in the sense of having universal qualities of excellence.

The Swahili literary achievement is sui generis

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(1) e.g. in the vernacular press - Mambo Leo.

in the Bantu field, because of its Arabian origin within the Bantu context. In content and form it is neither wholly Arabian nor wholly Bantu. In form at least it could never be wholly Bantu, and this may account for the reason why the tradition has flagged. The poetic medium has remained foreign except to a small section of the Swahili community who preserve Arabian contacts. Wherever Swahili poems have been incorporated into Islamic life and worship, the tendency is for such work to be preserved, e.g. the maulid are still sung in the mosques. But these poems are not modern, nor indeed is any attempt made nowadays to write verse in the same tradition even for religious purposes. The influence of the Roman script has adversely affected the impetus to seek for Arabian models either in form or content.

Any general survey of traditional Swahili literature must, therefore, begin with the understanding that the subject is to a very large extent foreign to the main stream of African artistic expression. The exceptional nature of this literature in relation to other Bantu cultures is perhaps its main interest for the student. At the same time, the obvious Swahili character of the material excludes any suggestion of absolute dependence upon Arabian sources. The literature was a creative activity, even though the

debt to Arabian inspiration may freely be admitted. But this creative activity had its origin in the faith of Islam rather than in the traditional concepts of Bantu life.

The source-material

It should be stated at once that the number of extant original manuscripts of traditional Swahili verse is very small, only about five per cent of the available material. Even the writings of most of the early nineteenth century poets, e.g. Muyaka b. Haji al-Ghassaniy, are known only through the work of later copyists. Of the manuscripts listed by Hichens in his edition of Al-Inkishafi,<sup>(1)</sup> for instance, not one is the original manuscript of the composer, Sayyid Abdallah b. Ali b. Nasir. Most similar editions of separate poems have been undertaken by European scholars either from single copies or from a collation of copies.

Conditions in East Africa have not favoured the preservation of manuscripts. Manuscripts were seldom individually owned, but were either the common property of relations who circulated them within the kinship group for recitation on social occasions, or else were the property of the mosques for use in public recitals. In both cases,

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(1) Al-Inkishafi, edtd. by W. Hichens, (S.P.C.K. London, 1939), p. 144.

manuscripts were subject to the deprivations of the white-ant and of the damp.

The modern scholar's dependence upon copies is an obvious disadvantage, especially because in the case of what are traditionally held to be the earliest Swahili poems there may not be a sufficient number of extant copies of a single poem to ensure, by comparative study, the identity of obsolete words. Furthermore, the copyists frequently omit the date of the original composition and even the name of the author, while including the name of the copyist and the date of his work. This absence of precise dating of original compositions makes it impossible to establish an historical survey of Swahili verse, though Hichens has attempted the task. (1) Many poems have an early origin, especially the Liyongo poems, but there is no certain way of establishing the exact period of their composition. In the absence of indisputable historical evidence, both internal and external, the whole question of the historical development of Swahili prosody is a matter only for conjecture.

The earliest extant original Swahili poem, to which a date can definitely be assigned, is the

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(1) Notes on Swahili Prosody (in manuscript), in Library of S.O.A.S.

(1)

Al-Hamziya of Sayyid 'Aidarus, written in 1749. Largely from external evidence, e.g. from genealogies of known authors, it is possible to show that the best-known of the traditional verse was written during the period A.D. 1785-1875. The manuscript evidence relating to the Liyongo poems is of recent date. There appear to be no extant early copies of these poems, and the argument for their early composition is supported only by the connection of their subject-matter with the early tradition of Liyongo himself.

The Liyongo tradition has influenced the popular estimate of the development of Swahili verse, for the poems relating to Liyongo are commonly attributed to his authorship. Some of the best-known poems in Swahili deal with features of the life and character of the Swahili traditional hero. The central theme of the Liyongo story is African, not Arabian, though the verse-forms employed and even the subject-matter of the shorter poems (e.g. the Wine Song) are influenced by Arabian models.

The general tendency has been for scholars to  
 (2)  
 accept Liyongo as a person in history. Even if this is

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(1) In Library of S.O.A.S. Ms No. 53823.  
 (2) e.g. Werner, A., in Festschrift Meinhof, "A Traditional poem Attributed to Liyongo Fumo", pp. 45-54; "It seems clear that Liyongo lived..... as early as the thirteenth century."

7.

established, further evidence is needed to prove that the poems concerning him were written by Liyongo himself. The popular attribution of authorship to Liyongo has hitherto not been seriously challenged by European students of Swahili traditional poetry, and by Hichens, at least, has been uncritically and emphatically asserted.<sup>(1)</sup> This is surprising in view of the fact that there is no early manuscript evidence to support this. The absence of documentary evidence has been overlooked because of the vague assumption, without serious investigation, that the Liyongo poems, like the tradition itself, must be of considerable antiquity. But the earliest extant poem connected with Liyongo, to which an approximate date can be given, is the Takhmis,<sup>(2)</sup> a quinzaine recension of the traditional Dungeon Song, written by Sayyid Abdallah b. Ali b. Nasir, the author of Al-Inkishafi, who lived between A.D. 1720-1820.

Most of the poems of the Liyongo tradition are in much more recent manuscript form, written by the scribes Mwalimu Sikujua and Abdallah Rashidi at the instance of the Rev. W. E. Taylor of Mombasa at the beginning of the

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(1) Notes on the Liyongo Saga (in manuscript), in Library of S.O.A.S. No. 53492.

(2) British Museum, No. Or 4534: also published in roman script in Steere's Swahili Tales, London 1870, and by Meinhof in "Das Lied des Liyongo", Z. für Eingeborenen Sprachen bd. XV. pp. 241-265.

(1)  
 present century. There is no doubt that these poems refer to an authentic early tradition, but there is absolutely no textual evidence to identify Liyongo as their author. The validity of the tradition is unquestionable, but it is not a tradition of versification. The most reasonable assumption is that verse has been employed by unknown authors, probably within the last two hundred and fifty years, to express what previously had been oral tradition. It will be shown that the oral tradition on this subject still survives. This corresponds to tribal history in other African tribes, with the important distinction that the Swahili people possessed a comparatively early poetic medium of Arabian origin for adding to the oral tradition a literate one.

It can safely be maintained that the material examined for the purpose of this thesis is fully representative of all that is extant of traditional Swahili verse. (2)  
 It is necessary to mention this, because in East Africa Swahili people have a way of confidently asserting that in a certain locality, usually where the research worker does not happen to be at the time, manuscripts abound. Such information is not meant purposefully to deceive, but is

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(1) Especially Vol. ~~III~~ III in Library of S.O.A.S., No. ~~4774~~ <sup>4775</sup> 47754  
 (2) No claim is made, of course, that every extant manuscript has been examined.

quite unreliable. Similarly, there is an optimistic belief among Europeans interested in the subject that Swahili manuscripts are still plentiful, if only one knows where to look for them. This is not really so. While it may yet be possible to find occasional manuscripts that have not yet been studied by an European, it is most improbable that anything remains to be discovered which will add to what follows in the present thesis on the form and content of traditional Swahili literature.

An important source of information has been the contemporary work of Sheikh Mbarak Ali Hinawy of Mombasa, who, besides making his own private collection of Swahili verse, provided Mr. William Hichens both with copies of poems and with much useful comment regarding them. The Hichens Papers are in the Library of the S.O.A.S.. Not all of Sheikh Mbarak's historical and linguistic notes have been accepted, for he shares the popular uncritical attitude towards traditional Swahili verse, but by interpreting his material in the light of the generally accepted principles of literary criticism, much remains that would otherwise have been unknown. Without the help derived from Sheikh Mbarak's own intensive investigations, it would have been impossible to understand much of the more difficult work. Furthermore, in 1951 Sheikh Mbarak kindly allowed me to examine his

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private collection of manuscripts at his home in Mombasa, and gave me permission to make photostat copies of any that were wanted. These photostat copies are now in the Library of the S.O.A.S.

The most comprehensive collection of traditional Swahili literature has already been mentioned, that made by Taylor of Mombasa, an outstanding Swahili scholar. Taylor's interest in the subject was primarily linguistic, and his own transliteration of the Swahili-Arabic script includes notes on the meaning of obsolete words. Hichens copied Taylor's transliteration of the poems of Muyaka b. Haji al-Ghassaniy and included them, without translation or annotation, in his anthology of the work of this poet.<sup>(1)</sup> While recognising that the material collected by Taylor is in a sense a forced product, being the work of copyists under European direction, the material must not be altogether discounted for this reason. Neither should the mistake be made, as it was by Hichens in his unpublished notes,<sup>(2)</sup> of referring to this material as though it contained the original manuscripts of the different authors.

Taylor also compiled a large collection of

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(1) Taylor Papers, Vol. VII , in Library of S.O.A.S. No. 47757  
(2) Notes on prosody, idem.

Swahili aphorisms and proverbs. In this he was helped by Hemedi b. Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Mambasiy. A selection of them (668 in number) was published in London in 1924.<sup>(1)</sup> This selection contained only about a quarter of the items included in Taylor's manuscript collection, now in the Library of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.<sup>(2)</sup> These proverbs and aphorisms have mostly originated in the oral tradition of the Swahili people. As such they do not come within the scope of a survey of traditional Swahili literature. A number of these sayings, however, originated as lines from traditional verse, or else were developed in verse according to traditional patterns. Their connection with verse has to be noted.

Further manuscripts in the Library of the S.O.A.S. include those collected by Werner. Among these is a collection of over two hundred short poems, referred to as the Hamilton Manuscript, for it was once the property of Mr. Justice Hamilton in Mombasa. Werner's published articles on traditional Swahili verse, together with contributions by Meinhof, Dammann, Buttner and others, are

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(1) African Aphorisms, W. E. Taylor, London 1924.

(2) A photostat copy of the collection at Johannesburg is now in the Library of S.O.A.S.

(1)

listed in the appendix. The recent work of Dammann provides the largest collection of Swahili epics, but the manuscripts from which the poems were transliterated are not included in the book. Dr. Dammann has kindly sent information (see <sup>Bibliography</sup> appendix) as to the material available in the German universities. Swahili manuscripts are very few there. The best collection is in the Library of the S.O.A.S., and most of the findings of the present thesis are based upon unpublished notes and manuscripts in that library.

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(1) Dammann, E., Dichtungen in Der Lamn - Mundart des Suaheli, Hamburg, 1940.

## I

INTERPRETATION OF THE TEXTS

The earliest extant Swahili manuscript poem is based upon an Arabic work, the hamzated poem entitled Umm al-Qura, by Muhammad ibn Sa'id al-Busiriy.<sup>(1)</sup> The initial impetus for the writing of Swahili poems in cultural verse-form was given by the desire to make either a free translation or a paraphrase of an Arabic original. In the nineteenth century the use of the Swahili-Arabic script was extended to record songs of Bantu origin. Ritual songs, e.g. mavugo or wedding songs, exist in manuscript form, together with sea-shanties and lullabies from the oral tradition.

While some useful linguistic material is discoverable from the earlier manuscripts, much is lost because of conformity to the conventions of Arabic orthography. The script is unsuitable for representing phonemes which may be of fundamental importance to the Bantuist in his study of the Swahili language, e.g. nasal combinations are not

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(1) Brockelmann, Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur, I. p. 266.

adequately represented, semi-vowels may be omitted, a single symbol may represent more than one phoneme, etc. Instead of adaptation from Arabic to Swahili, it is more correct to say that the obverse is true. At least in orthography it is Swahili which has been adapted to Arabic.

From the Arabist's point of view, the adaption is, of course, unsatisfactory, for the phonology of the Swahili language renders impracticable the application of a central principle of Arabic verse. De Sacy writes of Arabic verse as follows:-(1)

"L'art de la versification consiste essentiellement dans le mélange des syllables longues et breves, disposées dans un certain ordre....."

"Pour discerner les syllables longues et breves, c'est à la prononciation qu'il faut avoir égard, et non à l'écriture."

Swahili is a language in which vowel quantity is not semantic, so that it might be thought possible to lengthen or shorten a syllable to suit the prosodic metre. Hichens (2) has in fact attempted to illustrate what he calls 'the different forms of Swahili metrical feet' by taking the verbal stem -lala (sleep, lie down) as a basic measure and using the extended forms of this verb in the way that the

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(1) De Sacy, Grammaire Arabe, Paris, 1881, p. 616, notes 2 and 3.

(2) Notes on Swahili prosody, idem.

Arabian prosodists adopted the verbal root fa'al for a similar purpose. Inevitably he finds himself in difficulties and is forced to admit that 'Swahili compositions are rarely constructed throughout in the mould of a perfect metre'. There can be no doubt that any such attempt to identify Swahili metrical feet on the Arabian pattern must fail.

While Arabian metres are measured by quantity of metrical feet contained in a hemistich, Swahili metres are the measure of a whole hemistich in terms of mizani (Ar. al-mizān, a syllable), i.e. the number of harufi or vocalised syllables to the kipande or hemistich. It is not possible to arrive at any system whereby the measure of mizani can take into regular account the metrical feet within a measure. In measures of Swahili verse there may be major (on the penultimate syllable) and minor accentuations, but there is no metric system of stress, nor can this be related to the subject of vowel length or of metrical feet.

The importance of syllabic division in Swahili prosody might easily be overlooked, since the script often obscures the syllabic measure in the pronunciation, e.g. a syllabic nasal is often identifiable only from the pronunciation, a vowel omitted in the script may be heard in the pronunciation. De Sacy can be adapted to emphasise

a fundamental principle of Swahili prosody:

"Pour discerner les syllables, c'est à la prononciation qu'il faut avoir égard, et non à l'écriture."

In the pronounciation, besides syllabic division, the accentuation is of more importance than vowel quantity, but there is no regular method of observing this from the script.

Since the texts have to be interpreted from the known pronounciation, the interpretation of the texts, on the historical level, can have only a very limited historical reference. It is a serious criticism that texts like the Liyongo poems, attributed by Hichens and others to the thirteenth century, are transliterated by following the same rules of pronounciation as are valid for the spoken word of the last fifty years. If such texts really belonged to such an early period, there would be no safe means of identifying all of the sounds which the script was meant to represent, for obviously no modern scholar can know how Swahili was spoken so long ago. The most that can be done is to identify grammatical and lexical forms about which there can be no doubt, and to provide, wherever necessary, the alternative readings for words which may now be obsolete.

## The linguistic medium

The predominant linguistic medium for Swahili verse in the traditional manner is the dialect of Lamu <sup>(1)</sup> (Kiamu). The Kiamu dialect was the conventional medium used not only by the poets of the Lamu archipelago, but also by writers from so far south as Zanzibar. The literate tradition had its centre in the Lamu area, and even today poems well-known in Lamu, e.g. tendi or heroic religious verse, are comparatively unknown in the south.

Texts emanating from places where in speech there may be some variance of dialect, e.g. Mombasa and Pemba, do not show in the script any such variance. This is due to the inadequacy of the script for representing speech variants. Even on the lexical level, the influence of Kiamu is made apparent by the adoption of words of Arabic origin according to the Lamu tradition even where a Bantu equivalent, common enough in the speech of dialects further south, could be employed. In any case, the variant forms in the local speech of places north of Mombasa are not sufficiently wide in range to justify Stigand's classification of so-called <sup>(2)</sup> dialects in Swahili. The dialect known as Kitikuu, spoken

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(1) The chief differences between Kiamu and other forms of Swahili are explained in Hichens, W. Al-Inkishafi, Appendix B. pp. 111-118; see also Stigand, C. H., A Grammar of Dialectal Changes in the Swahili Language Cambridge, 1915.

(2) Stigand, C. H., passim.

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to the north of Lamu along the coastal belt, is an exception, for in speech this can be regarded as a separate dialect, but once again phonetic variants are obscured when a poem in this dialect is recorded in the Swahili-Arabic script. The Tikuu version of the Dream Song, for example, taken down by Werner in 1913<sup>(1)</sup> from the dictation of the blind poet of Witu, Mzee b. Bisharo al-Ausiy, shows in the Roman script the Tikuu use of the dental sounds represented by dh and th, variants for z in Kiamu, but the same symbol, b, represents any one of the three sounds in unrelated words when used in the Arabic-Swahili script. In the latter script this poem would be indistinguishable from a version written by a poet of Lamu.

In this connection, it may be noted that although the subject-matter of the earlier poems contains some references to the Galla and Somali peoples, there has been no borrowing from either language, not, at least, in the way that Arabic words have been borrowed and given a Swahili form. Dammann has recorded two Swahili poems, one with a number of Somali words<sup>(2)</sup> and the other with some Galla words.<sup>(3)</sup>

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- (1) Werner, A. in Bulletin of S.O.A.S. Vol.IV, p. 248-9.  
(2) Dammann E. "Ein Fluchgedicht auf die Somali in der Siu - Mundart des Suaheli" Z. für Eingeb.-Sprachen, Vol. XXXII; 1942.  
(3) Dammann E. Ein Suahelivers mit Gallvorten, idem, Vol. XXX, 1940.

In neither case is the use of foreign words a natural linguistic development. Their presence is sufficiently alien to warrant special explanation, and in each case Dammann provides a simple explanation by reference to the context.

Some word-formations in the earlier texts are, of course, no longer heard in any of the Swahili dialects, and some of these can be related to comparative forms in current usage in other Bantu languages. Obsolete words not related to comparative Bantu forms have hitherto been relegated to a convenient limbo called Kingozi, the Ngozi dialect. Intermediate between Kingozi and modern Swahili is said to be the dialect known as Kikae. The use of either of these terms in reference to early Swahili speech is arbitrary. Hichens follows the convention of other scholars, including Taylor, in describing Kingozi as 'the language of the Court and town of Pate and of the mainland strip of territory known then as Ngozi'<sup>(1)</sup>. Hellier is the only scholar who has hitherto expressed doubt as to the validity of this statement.<sup>(2)</sup> It is true that the term Ngozi (Nguzi, Gozi, Guzi, Ngudhi, etc.)<sup>(3)</sup> is used in early manuscripts and is generally applied to the

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(1) In notes in Library of S.O.A.S.

(2) Hellier, A. - Swahili Prose Literature, Bantu Studies, Sept. 1940.

(3) e.g. the Song of Shagga, see page 59-62 post.

name of the terrain of the old sultanate of Pate, but there are no records to establish the character of the contemporaneous dialect. As for Kikae, this term is an invention, for -kae is a contraction of -kale, long ago, and the prefix of Cl. 7, ki-, is the one employed in Swahili nominals denoting a language. No further explanation is needed than that certain words from the traditional literature are obsolete in modern Swahili. Obsolete Swahili speech may be referred to by such names as Kingozi or Kikae, but these names do not denote observable Swahili dialects and as such may never have existed.

#### The Swahili-Arabic script

There is no exact evidence as to the time when the Swahili-Arabic script became the established medium for writing in Swahili in East Africa. Hichens' assertion<sup>(1)</sup> that this script has been known to the Swahili for at least eight hundred years is not supported by textual evidence. Certainly the Arabic script has been used for writing Arabic in East Africa for that period. It can be safely established that the Arabic script was adopted as part of the technique of the die-stampers as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century. The coinage of the coastal sultanates<sup>(2)</sup> provides early positive evidence in this respect. But in the

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(1) Al-Inkishafi, idem, p. 119.

(2) Walker, M. "The History and Coinage of the Sultans of Kilwa" Numismatic Chronicle, Vol. XVI, 1936

absence of any further evidence either from inscriptions or manuscripts, it is not possible to ascribe a definite period when this medium was first adopted for writing Swahili. The most that can be said is that the existence of the Al-Hanziya of Sayyid 'Aidarus would indicate that in the middle of the eighteenth century the Swahili-Arabic script was a recognised medium of writing.

The use of Arabic script in Swahili has been discussed at length by other European writers. <sup>(1)</sup> Velten and Büttner stress its unsuitability for writing a Bantu language. It may be true, as Williamson suggests, that its unsuitability is more apparent to European students of the language than to the Swahili people themselves, though significantly only a few, even among those who make a practical, every-day use of the script, claim to be able to read the traditional verse. This is because the values given to many of the symbols employed may be known only from contemporary speech,

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- (1) Especially by:  
Allen, J. W. T. Maandiko ya Kizungu, London, 1938.  
" Arabic Script for Students of Swahili.  
Supplement to Tanganyika Notes and Records, November, 1945.  
Beech, M. W. H. Aids to the Study of Ki-Swahili, London,  
(undated)  
Buttner, C. G. Suaheli-Schriftstücke in Arabischer Schrift  
Stuttgart and Berlin, 1892.  
Seidel, A. Suaheli - K. Grammatik, Heidelberg, 1900.  
Velten, E. Erlernung der Schrift der Suaheli,  
Göttingen, 1901.  
Williamson, J. The Use of Arabic Script in Swahili,  
African Studies, Vol. VI, No. 4, 1947.

and where the latter no longer applies, the forms represented are obscure. As a contemporary medium of writing the Swahili-Arabic script may have a practical use, but without an intimate knowledge of contemporary speech even this use is lost to the reader.

Much of what has been written on the use of the Arabic script in Swahili is a repetition of what is found in the introduction to any standard Arabic grammar. It is not considered necessary here to reproduce the Swahili alphabets usually provided, but note must be taken of the fact that these alphabets do not include the aspirated consonants t', p', k', and ch' (t ' ). These sounds are not indicated even in Roman script written by Swahili scribes in transliterating from the Arabic script. They are not indicated in standard modern Swahili. Taylor observed their occurrence in Swahili, and even invented symbols to represent them, as follows:-

ت	for t'	پ	for p'	
ك	for k'	چ	for ch' (t ' )	ت

These symbols are never employed in scripts by Swahili writers, except in a few written under Taylor's

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(1) Taylor also adopted the following:- ء for e,  
 ى for i, ۆ for o, and ۇ for u.

direction, and even then not consistently. For any true phonetic rendering of Swahili verse, the aspirated consonants would have to be represented in the Roman script, but it is not always possible to know, as to the older manuscripts, whether explosive consonants in many obsolete words were aspirated or not. In view of the uncertainty in this respect and of the generally accepted practice of transliterating without denoting aspiration, it has been thought advisable in the transliterations which follow to adopt the same practice. This affects the whole question as to the orthography to be adopted in our presentation of Swahili verse in transliteration.

If this were a linguistic study that could be checked from observed speech, then an exact phonetic rendering would be advisable. But since the material examined is to some extent exclusively literary, the orthographical symbols employed cannot have regular correspondence with the known pronunciation. The pronunciation is not in every case known, and so the orthography must relate to established literary practice. This means that earlier transliteration in Roman script will be accepted even though there is no means of testing its orthographical validity. Its validity in relation to the Arabic script may not be in question, but only in relation to what might have been the actual pronunciation.

The following letters, listed with the Roman symbols used in the Encyclopedia of Islam, represent the same sounds in Swahili and Arabic:-

Name of letter	E.I.	Swahili
ا alifu	a	a
ث thei	<u>th</u>	th
ح hhei	h	h
ذ dhali	<u>dh</u>	dh
س sini	s	s
ص sadi	ṣ	s
ض dhadi	ḍ	dh
ل lamu	l	l
م mimu	m	m
ن nunu	n	n
ه hei	h	h
و wau	w	w.

The distinction in pronunciation between hhei and hei, dhali and dhadi, sini and sadi is maintained by Swahili speakers conversant with Arabic, but is lost both in the transliteration and in the speech of the majority of Swahili speakers. Arabic borrowings with the <sup>â</sup>tâ of the feminine ending may be written in Swahili manuscripts with <sup>â</sup>tâ marbûta, i.e. hei with two dots ( ه̣ ), and this may take fatha or kasra, e.g. وَقْتَةٌ , wakati, period of time.

The other letters represent more than one sound in Swahili. The following list shows the equivalents both in the Roman characters used in the Encyclopedia of Islam and in those used in Swahili transliterations:-

Name of letter	E.I.	Swahili
ب بے bei	b	b, p, mb, mp, bw, mbw
ت تے tei	t	t, nt
ج جی jimu	<u>dj</u> , j	j, nj, g, ng, ny (palatal nasal)
خ خه khe	<u>kh</u>	kh, h
د دالی dali	d	d, nd
ر ری rei	r	r, nd
ز زی zei	z	z, nz
ش شینی shini	<u>sh</u>	sh, ch
ط طوی twei	t	t, tw, chw
ث طوی thwei	z	z, th, dh, dhw
غ غی ghaini	<u>gh</u>	gh, g, ng, ng' (velar nasal)
ف فی fei	f	f, fy, v, vy, mv, p
ق کافو kafu	k (q)	k, g, ng, ch, sh, ny (palatal nasal)
ک کایفو kyafu	k	k, g, ng, ch, sh, ny (palatal nasal)
ی یای ya	y	y, ny (palatal nasal)

The use of jimu, kafu and kyafu (also called kyafu nyangwe) as symbols for the palatal nasal is infrequent, and ya is usually the symbol representing this sound. It

will be noted that the nasal consonant is not represented in nasal combinations, e.g. tei for nt, dali for nd, etc. (1) though in modern Islamic publications in Swahili, the nasals are included in the Arabic script. Once again the distinction of sound in such examples as khe, hhei and hei, kafu and kyafu is observed by Swahili speakers who know Arabic, but is not consistently indicated in transliteration into Roman script. Such distinctions are lost in modern standard Swahili.

There are three letters sometimes used in Arabic in writing foreign words, and each of these is found in early Swahili manuscripts:-

پ for p. چ for ch. ف for v.

Two other letters used in early Swahili manuscripts have also to be noted:-

ش or ش for ch. غ for g or ng' (velar nasal).

With so many alternative sounds represented by single symbols, it is not surprising that Steere should have written of the Arabic script in Swahili that 'it is absolutely necessary to have a good idea of what you are to read before you can read it all'. (2) Even to Velten and

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- (1) e.g. in Moslem Prayers and Worship, Tanga, n.d. and in the extinct journal Al-Islah, published in Mombasa.  
 (2) Steere, Swahili Tales, Introduction.

Buttner, who, as has been observed, stressed the unsuitability of the script for writing Swahili, the script appeared more adequate than in fact it is. This may be because both of these writers were concerned with teaching others how to use the script, rather than with exposing its deficiencies. But the student will observe in the examples given by them obvious anomalies which neither writer mentions in his descriptive paragraphs. These anomalies are most obvious in connection with the representation of vowel-sounds.

In early scripts the vowel signs fatha, kisra and dhamma are carefully recorded, and only in modern letter-writing are they sometimes omitted. But their uses are various and inconsistent. Especially in relation to vowel-quantity, there is no consistency whatever. Williamson's note (1) that stressed vowels are written as alifu with fatha, ya with kisra, and wau with dhamma is completely nullified once it is observed that the same symbols are frequently employed in unaccented positions, and, in the case of the last two to represent stressed or unstressed -yi-, -ye-, -i-, and -wu-, -wo- -u- or -o- respectively, e.g. مَيْي for mayai, eggs, and اَفُو for ufunguo, key. This illustrates the danger of stating fixed rules as to the

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(1) Williamson, idem, p. 5 of the Supplement.

methods employed in Swahili for representing vowel-sounds. There is no consistent method of observing the alternance of vowel quantity in early Swahili scripts, for the normal use in Arabic of writing a long vowel by the letters alifu, ya and wau with the appropriate vowel signs, e.g. بَ baa, بِ bii, بُو buu is often employed in Swahili as an alternative means of writing a short vowel.

The three vowel signs have to do duty for the five vowel sounds heard in Swahili, kisra representing either i or e, and dhamma either u or o. Tucker and Ashton have (1) shown that in Swahili the distinction between i and e, and between u and o is not always maintained in unaccented positions, so that in romanised texts the respective sounds have in some words been recorded as u or o, and as i or e. But the distinction is significant in verbal radicals and in accented positions in nominals, e.g. -tu- alight, come to rest, and -to- take out, give out; -li- cry, and -le- nurture, bring up. This distinction is very frequent in verbal forms, e.g. nina, I have, and nenā, speak; -liwa, be eaten and -lewa, be drunk. In the Swahili-Arabic script, therefore, not only the consonants, but also the vowel signs may give alternative readings.

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(1) Tucker and Ashton, Swahili Phonetics, 1942 (Reprint from African Studies, Vol. 1, No. 2 and 3)

It has to be remembered that in the early scripts the writers were quite uninfluenced by usage in roman script. Culturally, their background was Arabian and there was no standardised system of representing in Arabic script even the essential features of a Bantu language. There was no standard for writing the Swahili language to which they must adapt themselves. Only in recent years, when literate Swahilis have become familiar, not least through the medium of the vernacular press, with the accepted method of writing Swahili in roman script, has there been any attempt to introduce a form of Arabic-Swahili writing which gives the proper values to Swahili syllables. Sheikh al-Amin b. Aly of Mombasa produced a newspaper, now extinct, in which all words were written in full. This meant the addition of two vowel signs, viz.  $\bar{e}$  and  $\bar{o}$ ; a separate letter for v, p, ch and g, and fixed combinations for ng and n.<sup>(1)</sup> This system of writing was used in a book of worship and prayers published by Moslems at Tanga.<sup>(2)</sup> But it is significant that Sheikh al-Amin had to publish his books on 'Worship', 'Marriage and Divorce', 'Some European Appreciations of Islam',

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(1) The sounds not represented by the standard Arabic alphabet are written as follows:-

پ p, چ ch, گ g, ن n, ng, ف v.

(2) Moslem Prayers and Worship, Tanga. n. d.

and his graded lessons on Moslem doctrine, in roman characters.

In the early scripts Arabic literary conventions are retained, but not consistently, in contexts where, in Swahili, they may no longer be applicable. Other Arabic conventions are retained, but with a different purpose, which in turn, is not properly applied, e.g. in Arabic, the letters ya and wau take sukūn when they form diphthongs, but not when they lengthen vowels; in Swahili the same signs may denote long vowels, but are frequently employed where the vowel is exclusively a short one, and these uses with sukūn do not in Swahili express diphthongs. For example, أَفْعِيْرَا is written for ufagio, a broom, and كُتْنُغُوْرَا for kitunguu, an onion. In speech the final vowel of the first word is short, and of the second word it is long, but in the Arabic script the final vowel is written as long in both cases. (1)

Confusion arises from the fact that in Swahili, unlike Arabic, the vowels -u- (or -o-) and -i- (or -e-) occur with no supporting consonant. In such positions, these vowels are expressed by writing wau with dhamma and ya with kisra. These signs, وُ and يِ, are read with much inconsistency as -u- or -uu- or -wu- (-o-, -oo-, -wo-) and as -i- or -ii- or -yi- (-e-, -ee-, -ye-). In many

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(1) Note final alifu, but not pronounced after wau, which is a feature of verbal forms in Arabic, and not, as in Swahili, of nominal forms as well.

contexts, therefore, only speech-reference can establish whether a long or a short vowel is meant. Initially, and in medial position when there are three adjacent vowels, -u- (-o-) and -i- (-e-) may be expressed by the use of alifu with dhamma or kisra respectively, e.g. وَالِوُأَنْدُ رَى walioondoka, those who set out. But even in these positions, it is quite common to note the forms in wau and ya, e.g. وَالِوُيُنُو or وَالِيْ اِنُوْ for walioinua, those who lifted up.

In Arabic the letters wāw and yā (Swahili wau and ya) are regarded as consonants, which, like other consonants, may take sukūn to indicate the absence of a vowel, and are then transliterated as u (or w) and i (or y). In Swahili the consistent adoption of this method of expressing vowel sounds u and i would have been an advantage, but in fact sukūn is very seldom employed in this manner above wau and ya. Nevertheless, while writers of the Swahili-Arabic script prefer to treat wau and ya, in the Arabian sense, as consonants, vocalising them with a vowel-sign, in transliteration the consonantal value is arbitrarily either observed or ignored. Thus, as has been noted, -u- and -wu- are alternative readings for wau with dhamma, and -i- and -yi- for ya with kisra. These combinations do not, in fact, present the reader with any great difficulty, but the same disregard for the consonantal value is extended to the

same consonants when employed with any of the other vowel signs. Thus, ya with dhamma is transliterated either as -yo- or -o-, but in Swahili these are relative concords of different classes, -yo- of Cl. 6 and Cl. 9, and -o- of Cl. 2 and Cl. 3. Not only does the transliterator write either -yo- or -o- for what should only be -yo-, but the scribes write -yo- for -o-, e.g. ملي اغيزا for mlioagiza, you who order, or, which (Cl. 3) you ordered; تولي اغ for tulioaga, we who bid farewell.

(1)

When, therefore, Hichens writes that "all words, as written by the Swahili scribes, are disposable into syllables, each of which consists of one consonant and one vowel", he omits the fact that any absolute transliteration must inevitably obscure certain significant grammatical alternances. He is right, however, in maintaining that the consonantal value of rhymed terminal syllables should be regularly observed in transliteration. The omission of wau, ya, 'aini or hamza is normal in Standard modern Swahili, but the retention of such letters is often essential to the perfection of a rhyme-pattern in early scripts, e.g.:-

Swahili	Standard
Hawawezi kukimbiya	Hawawezi kukimbia
Kutembeya ni mamoya,	Kutembea ni mamoja
Ukapata na kuliya	Ukapata na kulia.

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(1) Unpublished notes, idem.

They cannot run,  
Nor can they walk,  
And you hear (lit. get) wailing as well.

The rhyme here is in -ya, ya with fatha, and to present accurately the rhyming sequence the -ya must be retained in transliteration; in mamoya the -y- is a functioning consonant, the Kiamu equivalent of -j- in the Kimvita word mamoja.

Similarly -w- should be retained in rhyming sequences, e.g.:-

Swahili	Standard
Kayifunga kwa sitawa	Kajifunga kwa sitawa
Silaha za kuteuwa	Silaha za kuteuliwa
Pandu tatu katukuwa	Panda tatu kachukua

He girded himself with vigour  
(With) chosen weapons  
And carried three catapults.

Here -w- is a functioning consonant in sitawa, the passive formative in kuteuwa, and it is an essential complement to the rhyme in katukuwa.

The same principle should apply in every instance to a final syllable with hamza over alifu, wau or ya, but the function of hamza is ignored both in transliteration and in speech. Adjacent vowels, i.e. with hamza or 'aini omitted in the transliteration are often pronounced with a single beat if they are of the same quality. Any long vowel, however it may be written in the Arabic script, may

be pronounced either as a mono- or disyllable in order to suit the syllabic measure of the line. There is often therefore no need either for the hamza or the 'aini in the script, and indeed Allen observes of the uses of hamza that (1) 'they are quite unnecessary to the Swahili writer.'

Nasal combinations are of frequent occurrence in Swahili, but the nasal element is usually omitted in early scripts, e.g. dali may represent nd as well as d, bei may stand for mb or mp as well as b or p, etc. If mimu is written (or nunu), dhamma is often written over it, even where the vowel sound is not pronounced in speech. Sheikh Al-Amin recommended the use of sukun over the nasal in such combinations as mb, nd, nj, etc., and this is usual in modern scripts. But more frequently the nasal is omitted in the earlier scripts, for, as Allen observed, 'many of the best writers consider that mimu and nunu should never be written with sukun' (2). In Swahili speech, 'the nasal consonant of a nasal combination has syllabic value only rarely, but in reading from the early scripts it is often necessary to give syllabic value to such nasal consonants, even though they may not be written in the script, in order to perfect the syllabic measure of a line. When it is remembered

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(1) Allen, J. W. T. op. cit. p. 27.  
 (2) Idem, p. 14.

that long vowels which normally have a single beat in Swahili speech, may also be either mono- or disyllabic sequences in Swahili verse for the sake of the syllabic measure, it will be understood that the syllabic measure in Swahili prosody is often effected only by departing from normal speech standards.

The semi-vowel -w- is usually omitted in such combinations as -kwa or -dwa-, so that forms like -penda, like and -pendwa, be liked, are indistinguishable in the script. Cp. kwetu, our home, and kitu, a thing, both written as

The sign tashdid ~ is used in scripts to indicate a double consonantal sound, but its use is superfluous since only Arabic-speaking Swahilis pronounce the double consonant, and double consonants are not written in modern standard Swahili.

It is evident, therefore, that for a proper interpretation of Swahili texts in Arabic script, speech reference is essential. Where this cannot be safely established it is necessary to make an exact transliteration and to provide the possible variant readings. In most texts speech reference is possible, and this may indicate that there is no considerable gap between the linguistic content of the early literature and that of the present day.

## 2.

The Liyongo Poems

Liyongo Fumo wa Bauri has been referred to as an African Balder,<sup>(1)</sup> and the tradition concerning him has been compared with the Arthurian legend,<sup>(2)</sup> and to the Siegfried saga.<sup>(3)</sup> It is necessary to consider the external evidence relating to his history and the internal evidence provided by the poems attributed to his authorship.

There is no mention of Liyongo in historical manuscripts relating to the Swahili people. His tradition has been preserved orally,<sup>(4)</sup> and in the Swahili poems discussed in the present chapter. The case for establishing

- (1) Frazer, Sir J. G., The Golden Bough, vol.11, p.314 (edtn. 1913).
- (2) Ingrams, W. H., Zanzibar, London, 1918, p. .
- (3) Meinhof, C., 'Das Lied des Liongo', Zeitschrift fur Eingeborenen-Sprachen, bd.XV, 1924-25, p.241.
- (4) The principal sources for the oral tradition are: Prose stories by Juma b. Mbwana, taken down by the Rev. W. E. Taylor at Mombasa in 1882; by Khamis wa Kayi, taken down by Bishop Steere and published in his Swahili Tales, London, 1870; by Muhammad b. Abubakar b. 'Umar al-Bakariy, in letters to Hichens in 1936 and in notes taken for Hichens by Dr. Ernst Damman<sup>n</sup> at Lamu; by Mshamu b. Kombo, in Werner's 'The Swahili Saga of Liongo Fumo', B. S. O. S., vol.IV, p.247 et seq; and a Pokomo version in Pokomo Grammatik mit Uebungsstucken, Neukirchen, 1908, p.136 et seq.

the factual background of the tradition depends largely upon Liyongo's association with the citadel of Shagga. This citadel is mentioned more than once in the poems in connection with Liyongo, e.g. in the mutilated fragment referred to as The Song of Shagga,<sup>(1)</sup> though any other evidence for its former existence is only slight.

Shagga (Ar. *Shāgha*), also transcribed as Shagha, Shaga, Xanga, Shanga or Shaunga, is no longer marked on maps of Pate Island. The site is marked upon an old Arab chart of Pate, east-south-east of Siu, south-east of Faza and almost due north-east of Pate citadel.<sup>(2)</sup> A probable historical reference to Shagga is made in the Kitab as-Sulwa fi-Akhbar Kulwa,<sup>(3)</sup> The Pleasant Book upon the History of Kilwa, commonly called The Chronicles of Kilwa. This anonymous work, written in A.D. 1498, records the history of the sultans of Kilwa from the time of Ali I, son of Hassan b. Ali, who migrated from Shiraz to the African coast and founded the sultanate of Kilwa, c.A.D. 1160. The second chapter of the Sulwa is concerned with the invasion of Kilwa during the reign of Ali III by al-Mutamandilin wa hum 'ahlu Shagha,

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- (1) In Chuo cha Diriji, A Book of Songs, kept by Ma'alim Bwana Kombo at his house in Mombasa and subsequently transcribed by Abdallah b. Rashid b. Muhammad b. Rashid al-Mazrui, c. 1893. (In library of S.O.A.S.)
- (2) Reproduced in 'A Swahili History of Pate', Journal of the African Society, vol.XIV, April, 1915, p.280.
- (3) Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1895, pp. 385-430.

i.e. by the kerchief-wearers, that is the people of Shagha. There is no absolute proof that Shagha in this text refers to Shagga on the island of Pate. De Barros, the Portuguese chronicler, stated that sultan Daud I was driven out of Kilwa by one Matata Mandalima, 'rey de Xanga'. Once again it cannot be proved definitely that Xanga in this text is the same as the Patean Shagga, though Hichens in trying to establish the connection notes, perhaps too conclusively, the similarity between the names al-Mutamandilin and Mandalima.

Explicit reference to Shaga on Pate Island is made in the Akhbar Pate,<sup>(2)</sup> or Chronicles of Pate, in which Shagga is stated to have been a citadel of importance at the beginning of the thirteenth century. At that time, relates the Akhbar Pate, in the year 600 A.H. (A.D. 1204), there came to the island of Pate, from Arabia, a Nabahan prince and sultan, Suliman b. Suliman b. Mudhafar an-Nabahaniy. He found at Pate a ruler, Is-haq,<sup>(3)</sup> who bestowed upon Suliman the hand of his daughter in marriage, and as a wedding-gift the rulership of Patean domain.

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(1) De Barros, Asia, Decada, i, liv.viii, cap.vi (Lisbon and Madrid, 1563/1615).  
 (2) Werner, A., op cit in J. African Society, Jan, 1915.  
 (3) Copper coins of Is-haq b. Hassan are probably attributable to this Is-haq of Pate, see Walker, J., 'The History and Coinage of the Sultans of Kilwa', Numismatic Chronicle, vol,xvi, 1936, and Hichens, Al-Inkishafi, Appendix C, pp. 119-120.

The Akhbar Pate states:-

'Kwalina na mui katika matlai ya Pate, huitwa Kitaka; kwalina na mui wa pili walikitwa Shanga, katika matlai ya Pate... Ukaketi ufalme wa Pate na mii hini'.

'There was a town in the east of Pate called Kitaka; there was a second town called Shanga in the east of Pate... These towns were under the rulership of Pate'.

The Akhbar Pate is not a contemporary historical document, nor is it based upon reliable earlier documents, but expresses only oral tradition. This document cannot provide absolute proof of the early existence of Shagga. Archeological investigations on Pate island by Kirkman<sup>(1)</sup> have produced no evidence for the former existence of Shagga. Yet it is possible that the tradition based upon its early existence has some factual basis, and this is the most that can be said on the historical side.

According to the tradition preserved in Akhbar Pate, Shagga was a citadel on Pate before Suliman b. Suliman established the Nabahan dynasty in the first years of the thirteenth century; that although at that time Shagga may have been in allegiance to Is-haq, the sultan of Pate, yet the citadel preserved sufficient autonomy to rise in war against the Nabahan rule, until the walls were rased and its people conquered by Muhammad I. in the second quarter of the thirteenth century; and that Shagga foundered

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(1) Communicated to me by Mr. Kirkman.

before the town of Siu (or Siwa) came into being as a refugee city built by Shagga fugitives.

Shagga may be identical, if not in the site of its citadel yet in the name of its sultanate, with Shangaya or Shungwaya, a settlement recorded to have been established<sup>(1)</sup> by Arabs of the Zaidiyah clan c. 689 A.D. and which by tradition is held to be the point of dispersal of subsequent Swahili tribes. But as the existence even of this early settlement is not reliably verified, it is possible only to mention the tradition.

From the records mentioned, it is clear that no indisputable evidence establishes the previous existence of Shagga, but that if the tradition preserved in Akhbar Pate be accepted, then any association that Liyongo may have had with the citadel was before the second quarter of the thirteenth century. This is the interpretation commonly accepted, but it is important to emphasise in studying the Liyongo poems that such an interpretation is, at best, only supposition.<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) For the possible origins of Shangaya or Shungwaya, see Prins, A. H. J., The Coastal Tribes of the North-Eastern Bantu, Ethnographic Survey, London, 1952. p. 8 et seq.

(2) Hichens in his notes on Liyongo uncritically accepts the early association. Hichens' notes contain some valuable material which has been used in the present chapter with acknowledgement in the footnotes.

No single reference in the poems suffices to establish the historicity of Liyongo, but the cumulative effect of many references is to support the probability of his having been a real person. The following short extract from the fragment, The Song of Shagga, is concerned with the theme of the Liyongo tradition, that the ruling fumo of Shagga sought to encompass Liyongo's death:-

'Fumo wa Shagga sikiya shabah mitaa pwani,  
Fumo wa Shagga chambiya watwa mfunjiyani.

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Fumo, ruler; -fum- in mod. Swah. means pierce with spear or arrow. Fr. Monclaios who accompanied Francis Barreto to Pate in 1572 wrote that 'in this whole country there are no kings, but many fumos who seem to be the lords of the land, some being strong and others comparatively weak and all live in continual wars against each other'. (Letters of the Jesuits from S.E. Africa, in archives of Royal Library of Lisbon, quoted by Hichens.)

sikiya, an alternative reading would be to treat this as an imperative, but the form chambiya in the next line is a contraction of akiambiya, and the omission of aki- in akisikiya is quite normal in poetry; to effect the line of 15-mizani the grammatical elements are omitted.

watwa, the foreigners of the mainland; Werner notes (The Language Families of Africa, London, 1925, p.118 and footnote) that the Wapokomo of the Tana call the Wasanye, Wa-hwa, which is the same as Wa-twa. The term includes the Buni or Boni and the Sanya or Sanye. (See The Batwa: Who are They? Africa, Vol.XXIII, No.1, article by M. D. W. Jeffreys).

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'The Spearlord of Shagga hearing rumours from the coastal settlements,  
The Spearlord of Shagga speaking to the Twa, Do ye capture him.

(1)

The conflict between Liyongo and his cousin, Daud Mringwari, Fumo of Shagga, concerning the accession to the Shaggan rulership is the central theme of the tradition, but there is no means of checking its authenticity by reference to historical documents. The cause of the feud, however, is one which can be observed throughout the whole course of Swahili history, viz. the conflicting claims of two different systems of inheritance, the matrilineal and the patrilineal.

(2)

Daud stood in relation to Liyongo as mwana wa shangazi i.e. the son of Liyongo's paternal aunt, his father's sister. By the indigenous matrilineal law of succession Daud was the rightful heir. Liyongo, as the eldest son, would have succeeded his father, Fumo Mringwari I, according to the foreign (Arabian or Persian) patrilineal law of succession.

(3)

In more than one of the early poems Liyongo's clan or tribe is referred to as being that of the Bauri. Descendants of the Bauri clan live at the present time at Lamu, at Zanzibar, and also as a community at Bura, a village upon the Ozi river where, according to the tradition, Liyongo

(1) Werner wrote: "Liongo is possibly a contraction of Kilio ngoa, a cry of envy", (Miqdad and Maya<sup>a</sup>, p.85), but this is not very convincing.  
 (2) See footnote, Mringwari, p.53 post.  
 (3) e.g., 'Ewe mwana nyamaa silie kasikia Fumo wa Bauri', O lady, be calm, weep not, but list to the story of the Spearlord of the Bauri'. Swahili MSS, Taylor Papers, vol.111, x.41, in Library of SOAS.

lived and ruled.<sup>(1)</sup> These present-day members of the Bauri clan claim that their ancestral home-town was Bur (or Bor, بُور), a village to the north-east of Saiwun in the Hadramaut.<sup>(2)</sup> Their long association with the Ozi, the traditional site of Liyongo's principality, is perhaps not merely coincidental. It is this type of evidence which, though not capable of absolute proof, yet adds weight to the measure of probability that Liyongo was in fact a person of history.

Both the oral and the literate traditions affirm Liyongo's Persian descent. It is asserted that he belonged to a family of Teheran, one of the senior branches of a party of Persian immigrants who had previously come to East Africa in the time of Harun al-Rashid, A.D. 786-809.<sup>(3)</sup> The title shah (pl. mashah) is preserved in a number of Swahili poems relating to Liyongo.<sup>(4)</sup> Hichens professes to find further evidence of Liyongo's Persian descent in the following Wine Song, but the attribution of this poem to Liyongo is quite arbitrary. The poem undoubtedly shows early foreign influence, but there is no means of dating it. It might

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- (1) Liyongo ruled the principality of Shaka on the Ozi river, not to be confused with Shagga on Pate island.
  - (2) I am grateful to my colleague, Dr. Serjeant, for identifying this village.
  - (3) Werner, Bulletin of SOAS, vol.1V, p.248, quoting oral tradition.
  - (4) e.g. in the poem beginning, Ai, mwezi kuwawato, (see post).

have originated, so far as the theme is concerned, either in the Hadramaut or in Persia, more probably in the former. It is of special interest, not so much for its supposed connection with Liyongo (this cannot be established), but as being the only song upon the grape known to exist in traditional Swahili literature:-

The Wine Song<sup>(1)</sup>

- i. Ewe mteshi wa uchi / wa mbata ulio utungu,  
Nitekea wa kikasikini / tesheweo ni ngema wangu.
- ii. Nitekea wa kitupani / uyayongao kwa zungu,  
Nitekea ulio nyunguni / ulopikwa kwa kunyinywa nyungu.
- iii. Hishirabu nikema kuwewa / nilitake embe-kungu langu,  
Embe-kungu la mani ya tuma / mpiniwe mba tungutungu.
- iv. Embe-kungu kangika changoni / pangikwapo siwa na mavungu,  
Pangikwapo magoma ya ezi / na mawano-mawano ya bangu.

- 
- i. Ho! thou tapster of soured wine from the sheath of  
the withered palm,  
Draw for me wine in the pipkin-jar that was tapped  
by mine own winester.
  - ii. Draw for me wine in the little flask that makes a  
man stagger and sway,  
Draw for me wine in the wine-jar, hot-mulled and  
dregged of its lees.
  - iii. When I am well-wined I stand, demanding my keen-edged  
sword,  
My keen-edged sword with its guard-leaves of steel  
and its hilt of mtupa-wood.
  - iv. My keen-edged sword that hangs from the peg where the  
war-horn and trumpets hand,  
Where are slung the state-drums and the rack-edged  
spears of battle!

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(1) *Hickens papers*, No. 534 q3, copied by Abdallah b. Rashid.

- i. uchi, in Giriama means palm-wine.
- mbata, coco-nut in last stage of ripeness, yielding a bitter sap; good wine drawn through the stem of a bitter-sapped nut, when fermented, yields a thick liquor consistency not unlike Kummel in appearance, and snaps in taste. It is potent.
- tesheweo, for mod. Swah. uliotekwa; passive, relative, with modified base and subjectival concord omitted.
- ii. nitekea, for mod. Swah. unitekee or nitekee; suffix -a in the imperative with objectival concord of 1st. pers. sing. is found in other Bantu languages, e.g. in Ganda, but not in mod. Swah.
- uyayongao kwa zungu, for uyayongeshao kwa kizunguzungu, which makes them (maguu, legs) stagger with giddiness.
- nyunguni, in the cooking-pots; cf. nyungu, strength, pungency, bitterness.
- ulopikwa, for mod. Swah. uliopikwa, which is/was cooked. In relation to the prohibition against intoxicants, Muslims have quietened their consciences by drinking wine that has been boiled over a fire, by which it is partly consumed and becomes sweet. 'Having changed its taste, they change its name, and no longer call it wine, although it is such in fact'. (Marco Polo, Travels, edn. var., Bk.1, ch.xii).
- iii. hishirabu, for nikishirabu, if/when I drink.
- nikima or nikema, for nikaima, and I stand. The radical -im-, stand, is obsolete in mod. Swah.
- kuwewa, for mod. Swah. kulewa, to be drunk.
- nilitake, modified base, now obsolete, of -tak-, want, with objectival concord of Cl.6 and subjectival concord of the 1st. pers. sing.
- embe-kungu, lit. edged sword; embe, sword, cf. mod. Swah. jembe, a hoe, and for kungu, cf. mod. Swah. -kung-, make a border, trim.
- mani, or maani, obsolete plural of jani, leaf, pl. majani.

mba, written ba, a contraction of ni ya, it is of,  
i.e. belonging to, with.

tungutungu, species of Euphorbia, now known as mtupa.

iv. kangika, for likiangika, hanging from.

siwa, a long horn, usually carved from an entire elephant-tusk or, as in the case of a famous siwa at Lamu, from two tusks. The orifice through which the trumpeter blows is at the side, a few inches from the base of the horn. Siwa are royal emblems upon the Swahili coast and are used only at the instance of a ruler or of those in delegated authority. Some siwa are carved from wood, e.g. those kept at the Residency in Zanzibar, and others, like one at Lamu, are made of brass or bronze. It has been held that upon the Coast the siwa is 'peculiar to the cities ruled by the descendants of the Persians of Shiraz who settled on this coast in the eleventh and twelfth centuries'. (Ravenstein, E. G. in Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama, Hakluyt Society, quoting Sir John Kirk). But siwa-shaped horns are in use by a number of African tribes.

mavungu or mavugu or mavugo, horns, usually of the African buffalo, and are sometimes provided with an orifice for blowing, or else are played by being beaten with a stick.

magoma ya ezi, the state-drums; ngoma ya ezi or ngoma kuu was beaten only by permission of the ruler or governor. Wherever it was taken to be beaten, it had to remain until a further occasion arose for its use when, upon its removal to another place, it likewise remained there until it was required again. This drum was never put on the ground, and when not in use was hung on a peg. (Sheikh Ali Hemed, Habari za Mrima, Mambo Leo, 1934, p.145 and 1935, p.6).

mawano-mawano, fighting weapons, -wana, fight together, engage combat; also notched sticks used in divination.

bangu, war, conflict, for mod. Swah. vita.

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A short-measured poem of six mizani to the line and rhyming aaab,cccb is traditionally associated with Liyongo's bravery as a warrior. The verses are written in couplet form, whereas in most manuscripts of this type of verse the whole baiti or verse is written as a single line, with vituo or rests marked in triangular pattern to indicate the end-rhymes.

Warrior Song (1)

- i. Sikai muyini / hawa kitu duni  
nangia mwituni / haliwa na mngwa.
- ii. Mngwa kinipata / kaninwa mafuta  
ni ada ya vita / kuuawa nangwa.
- iii. Mwanangwa ni filii / hafi kwa ulili  
ela fumo kali / liuwalo mwanangwa.
- iv. Mwanangwa ni fiya / hufa kwa bidiya  
akenda akiya / huyo si mwanangwa.

- 
- i. I dwell not in the city, to become a worthless object,  
I go into the forest, to be fodder for the alien.
  - ii. If the alien seizes me, and devours my flesh,  
It is the fortune of war, to be killed by the enemy.
  - iii. A nobleman is (fierce as) an elephant, he dies not  
on a divan,  
but (by) the keen-edged spear, which kills in battle.
  - iv. A nobleman is a spitting cobra, he dies hard,  
If he comes and goes, this is no nobleman.

i. hawa, for nikawa; ha- for nika- in Kiamu, cf. haliwa for nikaliwa in the same verse.

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(1) Hichens papers, from script by Mwalimu Sikujiu

nangia for naingia, I go in.

mngwa, an alien. Hichens gives this as 'a semi-mythical beast, also referred to as nunda or nungwa'. Johnson (Standard Dictionary) gives nunda, a fierce animal or beast of prey. This is more likely a nominal form with stem -ngwa. This stem is used as an enclitic in Kiamu, e.g. shokangwa, an axe belonging to other people. Taylor called this the possessive pronoun of alienation (African Aphorisms, pp.166-167).

ii. kaninwa mafuta, for akaninywa mafuta, lit. and drink me the fat. This construction, though no longer used in Swahili, is typically Bantu, e.g. in Venda, Onndya mapfura, He deprived me of my strength. In the poem it might mean 'and overcomes me' or 'and kills me'. In the script the subj. concord is omitted, also in kinipata; note also the double object, the verbal being -nywa, and infix -ni- is the obj. concord of 1st pers. sing.

nangwa, for namngwa; the omission of -m- may be for the sake of the metre.

iii. mwanangwa, lit. a son of other people; enclitic -ngwa. This term was applied by the indigenous tribes to the descendants of Arab immigrants, i.e. the nobly born. The expression is obsolete, but cf. in the old Utendi wa Herkal, v.27, Na wanginewe ansari wanangwa wa kuteteya, And other men, valiant noble-men.

fili, an elephant, in mod. Swah., ndovu or tembo.

liuwalo mwanngwa, Hichens gives liowalo mwanngwa, and translates 'death-charmed by a wizard'. The subject of the relative verbal is fumo, spear, and the relative verbal is -uwa or -ua, kill. The word for wizard is mwanga, not mwanngwa, and both may be read from the script. Taylor (op. cit. p.5) gives mwamnda, or katika vitu vya mnda, i.e. Paradise, garden of Eden. The phrase might be translated literally as 'which kills in the things of others', and is taken to mean here 'in affairs concerning the alien'.

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- iv. fiya, the spitting cobra (in other manuscripts and different context as fira, firi, piri, pili), this could also be read as 'rhinoceros', occurring also as peya, and in mod. Swah. as pera.

kwa bidiya, related to the verbal -bidi, put pressure on, compel; applied form -bidia. In mod. Swah. kwa bidia, by being forced to it.

---

An interesting Bow Song in irregular short-measure belongs to the early short poems associated traditionally with Liyongo:-

Bow Song.<sup>(1)</sup>

- i. Sifu uta wangu wa chitanzu cha mtoriyo /  
upakwe mafuta unawiri kama chiyo.
- ii. Mwanzo chondoka nifumile nyoka umiyo /  
hafuma na ndovu shikilole kwa mautiyo.
- iii. Hafuma kungu na kipaa chendacho mbiyo /  
wanambia, Hepe, Mwana Mwasho, nasha matayo.

- 
- i. Praise my bow with haft of the wild-vine,  
Let it be dressed with oil and shine like glass.
  - ii. When first I set out I shot a snake through its throat,  
And I shot an elephant through its ear as it trumpeted.
  - iii. Then I shot a piebald crow, and a duiker-buck running  
away,  
And they tell me, Stand aside, son of Mwasho,  
lay your weapons aside.

- 
- i. wa chitanzu cha mtoriyo, chitanzu for kitanzu; note chi- for ki- in chiyo, chondoka, chendacho for mod. Swah. kioo, nikiondoka, kiendacho. mtoriyo, for

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(1) Hichens papers, from script by Duralim Siliyine

mtorio, *Landolphia petersiana*, a wild rubber-vine; the consonant ya in the Arabic script is retained throughout in the rhyme-endings, because in the last word of the poem it is a functioning consonant. Muhammad Kijuma's MS of this poem reads either mbungo or mbogo for mtoriyo. The substitution is to provide a more satisfactory rhyme. Mbungo, *Landolphia florida*. Mbogo, a buffalo. Bows of buffalo-horn are still in use by some of the frontier tribes of Persia and India.

chiyo, for mod. Swah. kioo, a mirror, a piece of glass.

ii. nifumile, I pierced, for mod. Swah. nilifuma.

umiyo, throat passage, in mod. Swah. umio.

shikilole kwa mautiyo, for mod. Swah. sikio lake kwa magutio; -guti- shriek.

iii. hepe, verbal interjection; -hep- move aside.

Mwana Mwasho, Liyongo's mother is referred to in several songs as Mwasho; this could also mean 'Lady Mwasho', but omission of the possessive element (Mwana wa ..) is common in Swahili poetry, and the meaning 'son of' is here preferred.

nasha, for mod. Swah. ukaache, or na acha, and leave.

matayo, your weapons; mata, pl. of uta, bow, and with enclitic -yo of 2nd. pers. sing. of the possessive. In mod. Swah., silaha zako.

---

Further mention of Liyongo's prowess with bow and shaft is made in a fragmentary poem from a manuscript by Mwalimu Sikujua. In its present form the poem consists of the irregular number of eleven hemistichs:-

(1)

Fragment.

Pigjia pembe ya nyati mke yenye tao.

...

Mama niliko hatezame umbuji kwao,  
 kukuteneke washorongwa na nyemi zao.  
 Yeo ni siku ya kunyema wasikiyeo,  
 mshika gogo na towazi yeo ni yeo.

...

Kumbuke Mwasho na Kundazi na Fumo kwao,  
 uta na zembe silahaye atukuweyo.  
 Uta ni baba ndiyo ni mama azaziyeo,  
 siisi kamba na kunena siku ya yeo.

...

Tupate radhi ya wazee wazazi yeo,  
 vuani mato mutezane wambuji u mmbuji yeo.

...

Enda kawete Mringwari walinda nini?

---

Beat the curved horn of the she-buffalo.

...

Lady, from where I am let me behold the festive array there,  
 where the players are met together with joyful clamour.  
 Today is the day for merry noise, hear them today,  
 the drum-stick player and the cymbals, today is the day.

...

Remember Mwasho, Kundazi and the spearlord at their homeland,  
 the bow and the spear-heads, his arms that he bore.  
 The bow is his father, 'tis e'en as his mother who nurtured  
 him,  
 I know not what to say or speak on this day of days.

...

Let us seek a blessing from our elders, our parents, today,  
 Raise thine eyes and behold the fair maidens, thou are  
 fair today.

...

Go and call them, Mringwari, for what are you waiting?

---

pijia, for mod. Swah. pigia, strike on something. The injunction to beat the buffalo-horn occurs frequently in the opening phrase of songs in the Vyuo vya Diriji.

yenye tao, having a curve; in agreement with pembe, horn. The rhyme-endings in exact transliteration are, of course, tawo, kwawao, zawo, wasikiyeyo, etc.

hatezame, for mod. Swah. nikatazame, and let me look at.

umbuji, grace, elegance; the stem is -mbuji; in the last line but one u mmbuji, you are a graceful person.

kukuteneke, modified base of -kutanik- be met together; initial ku- is the locative in agreement with kwao.

washorongwa, players of drums and cymbals at a dance-tourney.

nyemi, pl. of ukemi, shout, cry, joyful noise; cf. -nyem- make a joyful sound.

wasikiyeyo, this could be for wasikileo, for mod. Swah. waliosikia, those who heard, but a more likely reading is to take this as a contraction of mod. Swah. uwasikie leo, hear them today. Note Kiamu use of -y- for -l-, e.g. yeo for leo.

mshika gogo, the one who holds the drum-stick or gong-stick; gogo in mod. Swah. means tree-trunk, a log.

towazi, cymbal or large castanet.

Kundazi, by tradition the name of the concubine of Liyongo, who betrayed him to his enemies as he slept (see the Dream Song).

zembe, for mod. Swah. vyembe, sing. chembe, spear- or arrow-head. In Cl.8 zi- occurs for vi- in Kiamu.

atukuweo, defective rhyme; the verbal is mod. Swah. -chuku- carry, and vowel -e- here is most likely read as giving the modified base, not the subjunctive. Final -o is relative particle agreeing with Cl.1, sing. for in Kiamu both -ye- and -o- are used to express the singular. In mod. Swah. this would give aliyechukua, he who carried, and the construction is not related to alizozechukua, which he carried.

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azaziyeo, for azazileo, for mod. Swah. aliyemzaa, who bore him; relative -o- again for -ye-.

siisi, I do not know; -isi, know (Kiamu), in mod. Swah. sijui.

kamba, for kuamba; -amba, speak, say (Kiamu).

siku ya yeo, lit. the day of today. Hichens transliterates this as sikuja leo, I did not/do not come today. From this he claims to interpret the poem as a dialogue in which the suitor pleads with a maid to accompany him to a dance, and she refuses.

kawete, for mod. Swah. ukawaite, and call them.

Mringwari, a reference to Daud Mringwari, Fumo of Shagga, who, fearing that Liyongo would usurp his throne, drove him to refuge on the mainland. Mringwari has been referred to as Liyongo's brother (Werner, Fest. Meinhof, p.47 and by the translator of Mshamu b. Kombo's prose narrative, B.S.O.S. vol.iv. p.249) as a result of translating the word ndugu as 'brother', when it may mean 'male kinsman'. According to the Song of Shagga and the Dream Song Mringwari was Liyongo's cousin.

walinda, for mod. Swah. wangoja, you are waiting.

---

Only one version of the Dream Song is known to exist, and this was taken down by Werner in roman characters from the dictation in 1913 of the blind minstrel of Witu, Mzee b. Bisharo al-Ausiy, an Mgunya or native of the Bajun coast north of Lamu.<sup>(1)</sup> The poem is in the Tikuu dialect and substitutes either of the dental sounds represented in mod. Swah. by th and dh for z. The poem is in utendi form of

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(1) Werner, A., op. cit., see p. 18.

6-mizani to a hemistich, with four hemistichs or lines rhyming aaab, cccb, dddb, etc. Kundazi is mentioned as the name of the woman who betrays Liyongo. The poem opens with Liyongo dreaming of a plot by his cousin to betray him:-

The Dream Song

- i. Nili kwangu ndele / nami totomile / ndosele mbwele / kilipacho wathi.
- ii. Ndocho ndoseya / toshee miuya / kuuawa nduya / mwana wa shangathi.
- iii. Kondoka tikima / nguu kaiyuma / moyo ukanima / kamwita Kundathi.
- iv. Kundathi amwao / kachwaliye ngao / na msu ndonao / pamwe na shiradhi.
- v. Kinoo ndechea / msu chuga chia / n'uo ninoea / utishao mwadhi.
- vi. Ninoe kipate / makali ya nete / payewepo pite / sitowe dhimidhi.
- vii. Payewepo nyime / moyo usimame / niwe ngombe tume / kiuka cha mbudhi.

- i. I was at home asleep,  
and I was deep in slumber,  
and I dreamed a fevered dream,  
that gave clear foresight.
- ii. I dreamed a dream,  
that I was suprised by danger,  
being slain by my kinsman,  
my father's sister's son.
- iii. I awoke with a start,  
my strength mocked me,  
my heart stood still,  
and I called Kundazi.

- iv. Kundazi came cautiously,  
and took away my shield,  
and the sword that I had,  
together with a lantern.
- v. Bring me the whetstone,  
I fear to be without a sword,  
and I sharpen the scabbard,  
that it alarm the slayer.
- vi. Let me hone till it attains  
a keen cutting edge,  
and wheresoever is approach,  
I will not cease to resist.
- vii. Wherever there is opposition,  
let my heart stand firm,  
and I will be as a strong bull,  
leaping over the goat-house.

- 
- i. ndele, for mod. Swah. nimelala; totomile, for nitotomile, I was lost, i.e. in sleep; ndosele, modified base of -lot- dream (mod. Swah. -ot-) with concord of 1st. pers. sing.
- ii. ndoseya, for mod. Swah. niliotea; toshee miuya, for nitoshele ni miuja, I was astounded at the danger; nduya, for ndugu yangu, my kinsman.
- iii. nguu kaiyuma, prob. for nguvu zikajiuma, lit. (my) strength injured itself; moyo ukanima, the verbal -nima is not known, and this might be a contraction of ukaninyima, refused me.
- iv. anwao, obsolete radical -amu- tiptoe; relative construction with subj. concord omitted. Kachwaliye, for mod. Swah. akatwalie, that she might take up. Msu, pl. in mi- or ma-, a sword, scimitar, dagger; ndonao, for mod. Swah. nilionao, or niliokuwa nao, which I had.
- v. ndechea, for niletea, or in mod. Swah. uniletee or niletee; msu chuga chia, prob. for msu nikichuga nikichia, the sword, I being unprepared and afraid about (not having it). In mod. Swah. -chugachuga, be in a state of uneasiness at not being prepared. Ninoea, for mod. Swah. nanolea, I sharpen.

- vi. makali ya nete, the edge of a blade, cf. in mod. Swah. makali ya upanga, the edge of a sword; payewepo pite, cf. in next verse payewepo nyime, both pite and nyime are nominals of Cl.9 related to -pit- pass and -im- stand, respectively. The form payewepo for palipo is obsolete. Sitowe, for nisitoe, let me not give (resistance).
- vii. tume for dume, male; kiuka cha mbudhi, the most likely rendering is ikiuka (kizizi) cha mbuzi. There is no recorded nominal kiuka in Cl.7 and kiuka in the text is probably a verb-form; cf. -kiuka, step over, get over by mounting, surmount.

---

There are a few interesting fragments surviving only in roman characters, and these may have formed part of longer poems in the Liyongo tradition. A fragment popularly ascribed to one of the followers or kinsmen of Abu Bakr b. Salim, c.A.D. 1600, of the Hadramaut, may be referred to as The Lament. Abu Bakr is said to have sought a wife among the women of Ozi on the Tana river, but had her eventually from the people of Shaka. The song is held to have been sung by the people of Shaka as against the Ozi folk who had turned away so estimable a suitor.

The Lament.<sup>(1)</sup>

Ai mwezi kuwawato / kuwawia makutani,  
 Kuwawia Shaha Shagga / Shaha Ozi yu gizani,  
 Chui ho ho chui kimango.

---

(1) Hichens, MS notes, in which he writes of this fragment: 'From script by the poet Ahamed b. Muhammad b. Ahamed al-Mambassiy, A.D. 1885'.

Ah! how brightly shines the moonlight / gleaming on the walls  
 Gleaming on the Shah of Shagga / darkness Ozi's Shah  
 empalls,  
 Leopard, ho! ho! thou mighty leopard.

---

kuwawato, radical -waw-, now obsolete, with intensive enclitic -to.

Shaha Shagga, not Shaha Shaka, a term that might have applied to Liyongo; Hichens notes that the title 'leopard' is meant to apply to Liyongo, but there is no evidence to support this.

---

Another fragment may be referred to as The Bathing Song. By tradition, during his exile from Shagga on the mainland Liyongo visited regularly a place called Gana to bathe in the lake said to have existed there.<sup>(1)</sup>

The Bathing Song.<sup>(2)</sup>

Noa chifua na nguoza mbwenepo mayi /  
 Hateka chinwa nisisaze kasia nyota,  
 Aniombao nisiize nduu na mbasi /  
 Sina la kwamba nambe nini tama nisiize.

---

(1) The Pokomo tradition of Liyongo's bathing at Gana is given in Pokomo Grammatik, Neukirchen, 1908, p.136; Werner in B.S.O.S., vol.iv, p.253, gives a fragment of a song by a woman at Witu in 1912, which may also commemorate Liyongo's journeys to Gana, but the song as heard by Werner goes on to the opening lines of the Song to Saada (p. 84 post). The blind minstrel, Mzee b. Bisharo subsequently amended the woman's version for Dr. Werner and repeated the tradition (Hichens, MS notes).  
 (2) In Hichens' MS notes, and given as 'from a MS by Mwalimu Sikujua'.



(1)

The Song of Shagga.

- i. ...mtezi na Mwasho na Kundazi /  
Pijiani pembe vikoma mle na towazi /  
Mmbeja mwiwa kumbuke mwana wa shangazi /  
Yu wapi simba ezi li kana mtembezi?
- ii. Fumo wa Shagga sikiya shabah mitaa pwani /  
Fumo wa Shagga chambiya waTwa mfunziyani /  
Kikaze muwi nguwo nawapa za kitwani /  
Mkapatiya na mikumbuu viunoni.
- iii. Papa kitambi kamwinde huwo manyikani /  
Wasi washinda ila ye pweke manyikani /  
Kenda wambiyeni kasite yuu tumuyeni /  
Ye yufite Ngozi Kiyungwa shake la Buni.
- iv. Nikila tapo na zipopo za mwitunxi /  
Wachamba kila tiwiye tule kikoa wa sisi al-sultani /  
Achamba hila kikoa mkata muno talipani?  
Achamba tashukuma wivu la ngaani.
- v. Tule cha yayi tafuma wivu la ngaani /  
Kafuma ngaa wachamba huyu si mtu yunga jini /  
Liyongo Fumo hukufilike Liyongo koka hudani /  
.....

- 
- i. ... the performer and Mwasho and Kundazi.  
Beat the horns, the state drums and the cymbals.  
Fair lady, discerning one, remember the cousin,  
Where is the mighty lion who is as a  
wanderer?
  - ii. The Spearlord of Shagga hearing rumours from the  
coastal settlements,  
The Spearlord of Shagga speaking to the Twa, Do  
ye capture him.  
Fix it and to the killer I give you cloths  
for the head,  
And ye shall gain cinctures for your loins.

---

(1) Taylor Papers, Vol.III, in Library of SOAS, No. 47754.

- iii. Flap the hand-cloth and hunt this person in the wilds,  
 Where none dwells except he alone in the wilds.  
 Go, I tell you, and hide, let us leave him  
 (for dead) up aloft.  
 He is hiding at Kiyungwa in Ngozi in the  
 miserable haunts of the Buni.
- iv. Eating wild fruit and the areca-nut of the forest,  
 They said, Eating a bad thing? Let us eat a  
 sharing-feast, we who are the sultan's people.  
 And he said, If I eat a sharing-feast, what  
 shall I, a poor man, pay?  
 And he said, I will shake down the ripe  
 fruit of the topmost branch.
- v. Let us eat of the choicest, I will pierce the ripe  
 fruit of the topmost branch,  
 And he shot down the topmost branch, and they said,  
 This is no man, he is like a jinn.  
 Liyongo the spearlord is not slayable, Liyongo  
 escapes by Divine guidance .....

.....

- i. mtezi, a player, performer, cf. mod. Swah. -chez- play;  
 the first two lines are part of a conventional intro-  
 duction, which usually is an address to the minstrel.
- mmbeja....., mmbeja, pl. wambeja, a lady of culture;  
mwiwa or muwiwa, pl. wawiwa, a clever, sensible  
 person; both terms now obsolete; mwana wa shangazi,  
 lit. son of father's sister.
- ii. kikaze....., this might be an obsolete form with  
 possessive enclitic of 3rd. pers. sing. -ze, but the  
 rendering given interprets this as related to -kaz-  
 fix, though concord ki- is obscure; nawapa, I give  
 ye (pl.), but one would expect nakupa if the killer  
 is being addressed. It is possible that kikaze  
muwi is a separate phrase.
- iii. papa, flutter, flap, -pap-; kamwinde, for ukamwinde.  
wasi washinda, prob. for mod. Swah. wasipo watu wa-  
kushinda, where no people dwell; ye pweke, for mod.  
 Swah. yeye peke yake.

wambiyeni kasite, for mod. Swah. nawaambieni mkajifiche; -sit- hide, is obsolete; kasite, displaced dependent following upon the initial imperative kenda, also an obsolete form.

yufite, concord yu- with modified base of -fit-; mod. Swah. amejificha.

yuu tumuyeni, Hichens translates this, Let us slay him up aloft. The presence of -y- in tumuyeni makes this rendering invalid, since radical -u- kill, cannot be related to the use of -y- here. The word is more likely tumuuyeni, let us leave him, from -uy- leave (obsolete). The plan, according to the tradition, was for each man in his day's turn to climb a palm and pluck down the fruit; when Liyongo's turn came they would shoot him in the tree-top. But Liyongo seized the bole of the palm and shook the fruit down. According to the Hadithi ya Liyongo, the conspirators sought out the tallest palm, but instead of climbing it, Liyongo with great skill shot down the ripest, topmost cluster of fruit.

ngozi kiyungwa, the locality of Kiungwa, now mapped as Kiongwe to the immediate south of Ras Mtio; ngozi is the name by which the terrain of the Pate sultanate, both as to the island and the mainland, was called. For the people of Kiyongwe and their migration to Tanga, see Habari za Mrima, by Sheikh Ali b. Hemedi, Mambo Leo, 1934, p.134. Pate Island is now separated from the mainland only by the narrow Mkanda channel, and there is some reason to suppose that about the 12th century, the island was joined to the mainland, see, Stigand, C. H. Land of Zinj, passim.

iv. tapo, wild fruit like the areca-nut, in mod. Swah. popoo.

kila tiwiye, perhaps for tukila chiwi je? Our eating a bad thing, why?

kikoa or kikowa, a contributory meal in times of food shortage, for which each guest, turn and turn about, provides the food. On this occasion the Buni suggest that the fruit of the dum-palm, Hyphaene Thebaica, shall be their resort, as it not uncommonly has been for the coastal tribes in times of drought when crops fail. Note that wa sisi is not in cordial agreement with kikoa.

hila, for nikila.

talipani, for nitalipa nini? what shall I pay?

tashukuma wivu la ngaani, for nitasukuma, etc.; wivu, related to -iv- get ripe; la ngaani, this could be transliterated as la angani, lit. of the air, but the use of ngaa in the next line favours the version given in the translation, cf. Hadithi ya Liyongo, v.67.

v. yayi, the choicest fruit of a cluster on the dum-palm.

yunga, or yu nga, he is like (obsolete construction), for mod. Swah. ni kama.

hukufilika, lit. you were not slayable; 2nd. pers. sing. of the negative past from simple radical -f- die.

koka, for huokoka, he escapes; this would be followed by the element ni, the link particle, in mod. Swah.

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An old lullaby in regular 10-mizani measure tells of an attempt to waylay and kill Liyongo. Muhammad Kijuma, writing in 1913, knew this poem in its present form. It will be noted that the last two lines are very similar to the conclusion of the Song of Shagga, from which they may have been adapted.

Lullaby.<sup>(1)</sup>

- i. Ewe mwana nyamaa siliye / kasikiya Fumo wa Bauri /  
Kasikiya fumo yu mukenge / mudanganya yuu la namiri.
- ii. Yuasiye jini yuasiye / hata mwizi Fumo Mringwari /  
Ata shake muwiwa siliye / ukaliza yangu yakajiri.

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(1) Taylor Papers, Vol.III. Library of SOAS, No.47754.  
(Arabic script)

- iii. Washorongwa wapozeze mali / kumuzinga Fumo wa Bauri,  
Akateza Liyongo na Twa / na mwiwa Mwasho kamshamiri.
- iv. Wakenenda wasowene simba / yushishiye msu na hanjari /  
Wakarudi kwa umoya wao / kamwambia Fumo Mringwari /  
Hawezeki Liyongo ni moto / si kiumbe huyule ni  
nari.

- 
- i. O my child, be calm, weep not / listen about Fumo wa  
Bauri,  
Hear of Fumo the refugee / who could outwit even  
a leopard.
- ii. Who defied the affreet, who defied / even the impostor  
Fumo Mringwari,  
Stop crying, gentle one, weep not / wait for my  
story to take effect.
- iii. The players were made to accept money / to surround  
Fumo wa Bauri,  
And Liyongo was dancing with the Twa / and dear  
Mwasho gave him warning.
- iv. So they went but did not find the lion / who wields  
sword and scimitar,  
And in one body they returned / and told Fumo  
Mringwari,  
Liyongo is unassailable, he is a fire / he is  
not mortal, he is a flame.

- 
- i. mukenge, a fugitive; yu la namiri, concordial agree-  
ment with yu (for juu) should be in Cl.9 giving ya-  
for la, and this may be a scribe's error; namiri,  
leopard, Ar.
- ii. yuasiye, subj. concord yu- of 3rd pers. sing., now  
obsolete in relative construction; the verbal stem  
is -asi, rebel, mutiny.

shake, Cl.5 or Cl.10, lamentation, sobbing.

siliye, for usilie, do not cry.

ukaliza, causative of the applied form -kalia of radical -ka-; note suffix -a for -e; the word yangu, mine, may agree with maneno, words, which is understood.

iii. wapozewe, causative of -powa, receive (with modified base).

kamshamiri, for akamshamiri; -shamiri, prepare for, make ready for.

iv. wasowene, for mod. Swah. wasimwone; the form in the text has modified base.

yushishiye, from -shish- lay hold of, grasp; a relative construction.

hawezeki, neuter form of -wez- be able.

huyule, Kiamu demonstrative of reference for mod. Swah. huyo.

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Some other short poems, usually included in the Liyongo poems, e.g. Utumbuizi wa Mwananazi, Gungu la Kukwaa, etc. cannot be shown to have any connection with the tradition. The Takhmis by Sayyid Abdallah b. Ali b. Nasir, however, definitely mentions Liyongo and the scroll MS. copy of this poem in the British Museum (Or. 4534) is usually referred to as Utendi wa Liyongo. The poem was first published by Steere, E. in Swahili Tales<sup>(1)</sup> in roman characters only. He wrote: 'The translation of the Poem of Lioigo into the current Swahili of Zanzibar was made by Hassan b.

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(1) op. cit. pp. 454-469.

Yusuf, and revised by Sheikh Mohammed b. Ali, to whom I was indebted for a copy of the original with an interlinear version in Arabic'. Steere gives the Zanzibar version together with a transliteration from the version in Arabic script.

An edition of the Takhmis from three manuscripts in Arabic script and form Steere was published by Meinhof<sup>(1)</sup> who, following Steere, adopted a number of misreadings in the former's version, though his transliteration is faultless. In the version given below the emendations are noted, but it is not considered necessary to give in every instance the variant manuscript forms, for these can be seen in careful detail in Meinhof's work and are not of equal importance.

In the last two verses of the Takhmis the author is named and his lineage given, Sayyid Abdallah b. Ali b. Nasir, descended from Sheikh Abubakar b. Salim through his son Ali, whose great-great grandson was Ali b. Nasir, the poet's father. This is a well-known family in the Hadramaut, and their place of origin is stated in the poem to have been at Tarim. Sayyid Abdallah was also the author of the Swahili poem, Al-Inkishafi, and in the preface to an edition of that

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(1) Meinhof, C., Das Lied des Liongo, Z. für Eingeborenen-Sprachen, bd. xv, pp. 241-265, Hamburg, 1924-25.

(1)  
poem by Hichens adequate reasons are provided to show that Sayyid Abdallah lived between the years 1720-1820 A.D. We may thus assign the Takhmis to a time about the end of the 18th or the beginning of the 19th century.

The Takhmis is composed in the acknowledged manner of takhmis poems, each verse consisting of five lines, the first three of which are definitely the work of the author. The work is popularly held to be a quinzaine recension of a shorter poem; this is considered to be a Dungeon Song sung by Liyongo at the gungu-dance when he made his escape from Shagga's gaol. No separate manuscript of the Dungeon Song has been found, so that it is not possible to take the last two lines of the verses as comprising a separate poem of different authorship, although Hichens does so. There is no proof for this, and it is better to take the whole work as of Sayyid Abdallah's authorship rather than to assert that a poem actually by Liyongo is preserved within it. In MS. copies the scribes invariably write the last two lines of a verse as one long line, i.e. as a complete strophe, but this is the usual practice in takhmis poems and cannot be accepted as evidence for their separate authorship..

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(1) Al-Inkishafi, by William Hichens, London, The Sheldon Press, 1939, pp. 9-24.

In other Swahili takhmis poems the probability is that the whole work is by a single author.<sup>(1)</sup>

Nevertheless, verse 11, in which the hero invokes the vengeance that would be his were he not shackled, foot and neck, leaves no doubt as to the circumstances around which the author has composed a homilectic in order that men may observe the knightly code of a warrior prince.

The three manuscripts in Swahili-Arabic script employed in Meinhof's collated edition were M., in the British Museum, described by Taylor who deposited it there as 'a valuable and perfect manuscript'<sup>(2)</sup>, W., written in 1914 for Werner by Muhammad Kijuna at Lamu, and B., a text in the possession of Buttner in Berlin. Meinhof referred also, of course, to Steere's text (St.) in the roman script.

Since the work has already been published in Meinhof's edition, it will be sufficient here to give the first twelve verses (there are 28 in all) in order to exemplify variant readings. The translation is adapted from one by Hichens,<sup>(3)</sup> and the notes refer to the different versions.

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(1) See A Swahili Takhmis, African Studies, by Lyndon Harries, Vol. II, Part II, pp. 59-67  
(2) The MS. is in fact only of average standard and is clearly not an ancient document. It is the work of a copyist writing about the end of the 19th century.  
(3) In MS. notes in Library of S.O.A.S.

Takhmis ya Liyongo

- i. Nabudi kawafi takhamisi kiidiriji /  
Niidhihirishe izagale kama siraji /  
Ili kufuasa ya Liyongo, simba wa miji /  
Ai, waji-waji naza waji kisiza waji ma'a kadiliza kisiliza  
mwanangwa mwema.
- ii. Pindi uonapo ali shari mume mwendo /  
Pindua mtima ujitile kani na vindo /  
Uwe ja namiri tui mke katika windo /  
Mwanangwa mbonaye mbuzi wako katika shindo ukemetwe pembe na  
mkami akinkama.
- iii. Akhi ewe mbuya twambe mambo yakujelele /  
Huyi muungwana shati 'ari aiondole /  
Nakuchea kufa mwenye cheo kavilekele /  
Mtu huonaye muhakara kwakwe wimile asiradhi kufa na mayuto  
yakaya nyuma.
- iv. Napa kwa injili na zaburi ili kiapo /  
Si mkengeufu pindi shari limbwagazapo /  
Nalekeza moyo katokoza shari lilipo /  
Mtetea cheo mwenye cheo ateteapo hambawi ninawi hata roho  
na ingatama.
- v. Naitenda mja kwa wenzangu kapata sono /  
Wala sina wambo siwenendi kwa mavongono /  
Bali sikubali lenye dhila na matukano /  
Ni mwofu watu nishikwapo naoa mno ni muwi wa kondo sikiapo  
mbi kalima.
- vi. Sibwagazi kondo msi lango kapija kifa /  
Ili kusifiwa kwa ambazo ni tule sifa /  
Nitegemezapo kondo zito tende hakhafa /  
Ni mwana shaji'i mpendeza nyemi za kufa kwa kuta mpeo na  
aduiwa kunisema.
- vii. Mbonapo harubu chiugua nawa na afa /  
Kawa na furaha ja harusisi ya mzafafa /  
Kaekeza moyo kwa Muungu nisikhilafa /  
Ni mwana asadi mtanganya moyo wa kufa kwa kucha khazaya na  
adui kumbona nyuma.
- viii. Napa kwa Muungu na Muungu ndiye kiapo /  
Nampenda mtu pindi naye anipendapo /  
Bali nduu yangu pindi ari ambwagazapo /  
Ninga mwana kozi sioneki niwakuapo ni muwi wa nyuni nawakua  
katika yama.

- ix. Wallahi nithika saya yangu si maongope /  
Teteapo cheo kiwa mwiu nawa mweupe /  
Nimpapo uso aduiya shati akupe /  
Ninga mwana tai shirikene na mwana tope na mlisha yani  
zenye tani na zingulima.
- x. Laiti kiumbe pindi mambo yakimpinga /  
Papale angani aduize akawainga /  
Awavunda paa na mifupa ya mitulinga /  
Ningali kipungu niushile katika anga kala nyama toto hata  
simba mkuu nyama.
- xi. Ningatindangile kwa sayufu na kwa sakini /  
Na msu mkuli kiupeka yuu na tini /  
Kavuma ja mwamba usokanile na kani /  
Illa muu yangu yo mawili kuwa pinguni na shingoni mwangu  
niweshiwe peto la chuma.
- xii. Ningashahadiza Kuruani yangu kalima /  
Illa uketeze kuwa nyimbo Mola karima /  
Wama huwa biqawli sha'iri qalila ma /  
Tufutufu mayi kizimbwini yanganguruma kamwezi kwima liushapo  
wimbi Ungama.



- i. My ode I begin in the measure of quinzaine verses riming,  
So setting it forth that it gleam as a lantern-light shining,  
To tell of Liyongo, the lion of cities, the daring,  
Aye! Tis a homily that I begin and bring to its ending,  
That all men may honour the traits of a noble-man born of  
good fame.
- ii. When in ill-plight thou beholdest a fellow, thy friend,  
Harden thy heart and commit thee to wrath and firm stand,  
Be thou as the leopard, as leopardess in a hunt doth wend.  
O nobleman! couldst thou behold in harry of battle thy friend,  
Hard pressed in ambush by menacing foe who him would defame?
- iii. O thou, brother mine, let us tell of matters that honour  
become,  
Bound to cast away evil is he who doth gentle birth claim.  
It befits him not to fear death who holds honoured name.  
Can a man behold the uprising of shame,  
And yet be unwilling to die e'er remorse in the aftermath  
came?

iv. I swear by the Word and the Psalter, and oath 'tis in trow,  
 No wavering falterer I, when shame at me smiteth its blow.  
 I confront my heart to evil and scoff at shame where'er it  
 show.  
 He who strives for honour's honoured e'en while striving he  
 doth go,  
 Ne'er be said to him, 'Thou art shamed', lest his soul be  
 made claim.

v. To my friends I make me humble, that good fellowship we gain,  
 I utter no slander 'gainst them nor to them my complaints bemoan,  
 But I submit not to abuse nor cunning rumour's sly suborn.  
 Gentle am I, most yielding a man and e'en by a handclasp  
 subduen,  
 Yet am I a slayer fearsome when I hear ill-word's infame.

vi. Not in combat do I plunge me, lacking cause to smite my  
 breast,  
 Lest 'twere said that being honoured 'twere praise of poor  
 attest,  
 But when I the brunt of battle bear I hold it of slight hest.  
 For I am a man of the warrior-breed, well pleased with  
 death's zest,  
 Fearing only a victor and ought that my foe might say to my  
 shame.

vii. When I sight the affray, though weary, yet to vigour grow I  
 well,  
 I am joyed like a festival'd groom with the bridal-walk's  
 zeal.  
 My heart towards God do I turn, nor against him rebel.  
 I am as a lion whose heart, braving death, with courage doth  
 swell,  
 Fearing nought, but from foe turning back to encounter ill-  
 fame.

viii. Yea, soothly I swear by the Lord, Who in truth is an oath,  
 I do love any man the wherwhile he love me in good troth,  
 But if my own kinsman on me should cast ill-doing's scathe,  
 I am as a young eagle, down-swooping in quarrying's rathe,  
 Like hawk that doth raven the bird from the flock I become.

ix. By Allah I swear that my words are no boasting recite.  
 When for honour I strive, though e'en black, yet do I become  
white,  
 And when to my foe I turn face, must he quail in his fright.  
 I am as a vulture 'gainst antelope striving in fight,  
 'Gainst beasts that on grass-plains or on high mountain-peaks  
roam.

x. Alas for the mortal when danger around him doth reeve,  
 And full in the open his foes he doth plainly perceive,  
 Then doth he cleave wide their skulls and to their shoulder-  
blades cleave.  
 I am as a vulture that soars, swift-stooping from skies high  
above,  
 To prey upon beasts, the beasts small and e'en the great  
lion of fame.

xi. Thrusting would I force my way through with my sword and  
cutlass keen,  
 Swinging high my keen-edged sabre, swinging low its blade  
ashine,  
 I would thunder as the heavens undenied in rage condign,  
 Wer't not that my two limbs are in shackling-chains'confine,  
 And fast by the neck am I gripped by the iron-ring's clam.

xii. I would to the truth of my words the Quran's witness crave,  
 Were it not denied by God the Bountiful as poem to serve,  
 'Tis not as the word of poets, O ye who little do believe,  
 When the lagoon's sougning waters leap up-roaring into wave,  
 No man can withstand the billow up-leaping in Ungama's foam.

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i. nabudi, for nabtadi or nabutadi, I begin, Ar. 'abtadi; kawafi, rhyme, from Ar. qawafi; kiiqiriji for nikiidiriji, versifying it; izagale, that it may shine, cf. in mod. Swah. -zagaa, shine, glisten; siraji, a lamp, Ar. siraj; waji-waji, St. and M. read this as wanji wanji and translate as 'much, much..', but the reading given above is supported by Werner's version taken down in 1913 from dictation; kisiza, for nikisiza, -siza, causative of -sia, come to an end, simple radical -s-end; kadaliza, for nikaandaliza, and that I may set out in order, arrange; kisiliza, for nikaishiliza (St.), and that I may bring to completion, -ishiliza, note the use, common in

poetry of suffix -a in subjunctive with 1st. pers. sing.; the metaphor of the lantern-light in this verse is adopted from the Quran, Ch. 24, An-Nur, v. 35.

- ii. ali shari, for aliye na shari, who has ill-luck; mwendo, for mwenzio, thy friend; ujitile, for ujitie, put thyself in; kani, strength, vigour; vindo, oppositions, objections; mbonaye, for mu-wona-je or ni-wona-je, in this case the former; mbuzi wako, etc., St. and Meinhof translate this as 'Child, how see you your goat in the pathway, its horns held and a milker milking it?', 'Wie sehe ich deine Ziege in der Herde, wie sie von Milker, der sie melkt, am Horn angegriffen wird?', - by reading mbuzi, goat, for mbuzi (more properly mmbuzi) gossip, companion; pembe, horn, for pembe, corner restricted space; mkami, milker, for mkami, bully; and -kama, milk, for -kama, threaten, press upon; mbuzi or mmbuzi, cf. -buz- greet.
- iii. mbuya, for umbu yangu, a fellow, companion; yakujelele, simple verbal -jali, give honour to, respect, obsolete modified base probably of -jalila, the infix -ku- is Cl. 15 and not the objectival concord; huyi, verbal -huyi, urge, put pressure on; kavilekele, St. has this for haviKuelekea, but both forms are obscure; muhakara, shame, Ar. hakara, despise.
- iv. napa, for naapa, I swear; mkengeufu, a waverer, -kengeuka, be diverted from path or purpose, cf. mukenge, a runaway; limbwagazapo, lit. when it hurls me down; nalekeza, for naelekeza, I direct; katokoza, for nikachokoza, and I bully annoy; hambiwi, for haambiwi, lit. he is not told; ni nawi, prob. for ninawe, thou art mine, St. gives 'wrong and wrong', but this cannot be; ingatama, even though it come to an end/lest it come to an end.
- v. sono, lit. ease, rest; wambo, slander, cf. -amb- slander, abuse; siwenendi, for mod. Sw. siwaendei, but St. gives siwatayi, I do not mention them, the above rendering could mean, I do not go to them; kwa mavongono, with complaints; naoa, I yield, I submit, cf. -oama, be nonplussed; muwi, the radical here is -uw- or -u- and the meaning is slayer, cf. -wi, bad, which usually gives mbi in Cl. 1; kondo, for mod. Swah. vita, war; sikiapo, for nisikiapo; mbi kalima, lit. bad voice, kalima is Arabic and the normal order of independent nominal followed by dependent nominal is reversed, not uncommon in Swahili poetry.

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- vi. msi lango, lit. wherein is no door, msi, locative m- with negative of defective verbal -li, the concord is omitted in lango for mlango; kapija kifa, for nikapiga kifua, to smite my breast; ili, St. gives this as a contraction of kwa ajili, and is probably right; kwa ambazo, for which (praise); tule, grievous, hurtful, vexatious, cf. -tu- vex, and the order of words is reversed in tule sifa; tende hakhafa, I make it a small matter, tende for nitende, modified base of -tend- do; mwana shaji'i, lit. a brave young man/a brave son; kuta, for kucha, to fear; mpeo, a victor, a perfect person, cf. -pe- attain the acme of perfection.
- vii. harubu, affray, battle, Ar. harb; chiugua, for nikiugua, I being ill; nawa na afa, for nawa na afya, I become well; mzafafa, bridal procession on the lailat ed-dukhleh or 'night of entrance', Ar. zafaf, see Modern Egyptians, Lane, H. W., Ch. 6; nisikhilafa, for nisikhilifu or nisikhilafu, lest I disobey, rebel; mwana asadi, lit. offspring of the lion, mwana is often prefixed to names of animals to personify their traits, e.g. the meaning here is not 'young lion' but 'fierce lion', 'courageous lion', similarly mwana ng'ombe does not mean 'young calf' but 'savagely wild bull'; mtanganya, one who is proud of something; khazaya, disgrace, Ar. khizyun; kumbona, for kuniona, seeing me; St. translates this to mean, fearing only disgrace and that my enemy should see me behind people, i.e. in a cowardly position.
- viii. sioneki, lit. I am not visible, for mod Swah. sionekani; niwakuapo, for niakuapo, when I alight, come down, swoop down; yama, concourse, throng, in this context of birds.
- ix. nithika, St. gives nithiika, M. gives 'von arab., wathaga, Imp. yathiqu, 'vertrauen'; saya, for haya, these (words, maneno); maongope, hasty, proud speech; akupe, from -kup- blink, flinch; ninga, for ni kama, I am like; shirikene, St. and M. prefer the meaning 'share' in the sense of the vulture and the beasts of the field sharing life together, but -shiriki can have another meaning, e.g. shiriki ulevi, addicted to drunkenness, and here the preferred meaning is of the vulture addicted, devoted to preying on animals; tope, antelope, cf. Nyika, tove, and in Shambala, tohe, for mod. Swah. paa; na mlisha.. etc. lit. and the animal browsing on grass on the plain and the mountain-range, zenye for kwenye, but cf. in mod. Swah. zetu, our home, for kwetu; tani, the same as yani, grass; zingulima, occurs also as vyengulima, mountain-range.

- x. akawainga, and sees them, -ing- or -eng- see; paa, lit. roof, used here for utosi (St.), crown of the head; mitulinga, sing. mt-, collar-bones; niushile, from -ush- fly upward, leap upward, cf. liushapo in v. xii.
- xi. ningatindangile, I would thrust through, -tindang- push through forest or bush from one side to another; sayufu, sword/s, Ar. suyuf, pl.; sakini, knife, Ar. sikkin; msu mkuli, polished sword; kiupeka, for nikiupeleka; mwamba, the vault of the sky; usokanile, for mod. Swah. usiokanwa; muu yangu yo mawili, for maguu yangu yote mawili, my both legs, in mod. Swah. -guu, leg, is in Cl. 4 only, not Cl. 6.
- xii. uketeze, for mod. Swah. umekatazwa, it is refused; Wama huwa bigawli... etc., from Quran, Ch. 69, v. 41; tufutufu, whirling, cf. -tuf- go round; kizimbwini, in the deep sea, locative suffix -ni; kamwezi, initial k- is obscure, as in kavilekele in v. iii, but the relationship here is probably with -wez- be able; Ungama, an ancient town on the shores of what is now Formosa Bay at the southern effluent of the Tana river, is said to have been overwhelmed by an immense tidal-wave as a punishment for the arrogance and wastefulness of its towns-people, cf. Krapf, J. L. Dict. Suaheli Lang. London, 1882, p. 405, and a reference in verses by Muhammad b. Ahamed al-Mambassiy to Su'ud b. Said al-Maamiry.

The Takhmis of Liyongo exemplifies the manner of composition of early Swahili verse. Grammatical elements are frequently elided or omitted, and word-order in speech is often reversed. Words with no corresponding Arabic form may be obsolete, and for their meaning one is dependent, wherever possible, upon Swahili informants of the older school whose suggestions do not always agree. As a literary curiosity such works are of interest, but linguistically their value is not high.

In more recent Swahili verse grammatical correctness is still a minor consideration, though the omission of

grammatical elements is usually upon a consistent and recognisable basis. Even though the lexical content is more Arabic than current speech, uncommon forms can be identified by reference to their Arabic equivalent.

The main fabric of the Liyongo tradition as it is preserved today is found in the modern poem, Hadithi ya Liyongo, by Muhammad b. Abubakar b 'Umar al-Bakariy (Muhammad Kijuma) written in 1913 A.D.<sup>(1)</sup> There is no means of knowing whether this is a copy of an earlier work or the original work of the author, but the latter seems more likely. The poem is cast in utendi form, with a four-line verse rhyming aaab and the end-rhyme carried throughout the poem; each line is of 8-mizani. The poem has 231 verses, and extracts from these are given below. In the translation no attempt has been made to reproduce the internal rhymes of the verses, but only to preserve the metre as nearly as possible and to carry out a line-end rhyme. The constant rhyme in the last line of each verse is in -ya, but it will be seen that occasionally the poet fails to maintain it.

Hadithi ya Liyongo (Extracts)

v.6 Liyongo kitakamali / akabaleghe rijali /  
akawa mtu wa kweli / na haiba kaongeya.

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(1) Photostat copy in Library of S.O.A.S.

- v.7 Kimo kawa mtukufu / mpana sana mrefu /  
majimbo kawa maarufu / watu huya kwanguliya.
- 8 Walienenda waGala / kwa yumbe wa Pate dola /  
kwa kununua chakula / pamoya kumwangaliya.
- 9 WaGala hao yuani / ni wakuu wa mwituni /  
kabila yao sulutani / mashujaa wote piya.
- 10 Sulutani Pate bwana / papo naye akanena /  
waGala mumemuona / Liyongo kiwatokeya.
11. WaGala wakabayini / huyo Liyongo ni yani /  
kwetu hayayulikani / wala hatuyasikiya.
- 12 Mfalume kawambiya / waGala kiwasifiya /  
humwegema watu miya / hawawezi hukimbiya.
- 13 Ni mwanamume sahihi / kama simba una zihi /  
usiku na asubuhi / kutembeya ni mamoya.
- 14 Ghafula kikutokeya / mkoyo hukupoteya /  
tapo likakuiliya / ukatapa na kuliya.
- 15 Mato kikukodoleya / ghafula utazimiya /  
kufa kutakurubiya / kwa khaufu kukungiya.
- 16 WaGala wakipulika / kwa dhihaka wakateka /  
wakanena twamtaka / na sisi kumwangaliya.
- 17 Na yeye alikiketi / kwao ni Ozi si katiti /  
i hoko yake bayiti / kwa wangwana wa mashaha.

- 
- 6 When from his years of noble youth  
Liyongo grew to manhood's prime,  
A man of men was he in truth,  
His grace increased with passing time.
- 7 Of knightly stature he became,  
tall, mighty-chested, broad and bold,  
A man whom, widely known of fame,  
people would journey to behold.
- 8 There travelled thus to Pate's court  
some Galla merchants, and they came  
to barter food for wares they brought,  
and to behold this man of fame.

- 9 And, know ye well, these Galla men  
 were chieftains in their forest land,  
 for they were of the ruling clan,  
 all warriors brave of courage grand.
- 10 The sultan, lord of Pate's state,  
 conversed with them, 'I understand  
 that ye have seen this warrior great,  
 Liyongo, in your native land?
- 11 The men of Galla then declare,  
 'Liyongo, who is he? His name  
 is yet unknown in Galla. There  
 we have not heard Liyongo's fame'.
- 12 In words of praise the sultan then,  
 spake to the Galla. 'E'en though he  
 were pressed by foes, aye, ten times ten,  
 They would be pow'rless, they would flee.
- 13 'In truth he is a man of might,  
 a lionheart of bold essay,  
 amidst the perils of the night  
 he walks, e'en as he walks by day.
- 14 If suddenly he should appear,  
 to water melt your bowels brave,  
 trembling o'erwhelms you, and with fear  
 you quake and cry in terror's crave.
- 15 When, fierce, his eyes upon ye glare,  
 then, you think, doth death draw near,  
 you faint beneath that fearful stare  
 that filleth you with mortal fear'.
- 16 The Galla chieftains, as they list,  
 say, amidst laughter, as at jest,  
 'To meet this man is our request,  
 to see him for ourselves were best'.
- 17 Now at that time Liyongo dwelled  
 at Ozi, no small way. 'Tis far  
 where ruined lies his mansion old  
 at his kinsfolks' place Mashaha.
-

The Sultan of Pate, who by tradition is identified with the Sultan of Shagga in the present context, sends for Liyongo and the hero's coming to Pate is described as follows:-

- 23 Liyongo siku ya pili / ndiya akakabili /  
kaenenda tasihili / ndiya akaemeya.
- 24 Kaifunga kwa sitawa / silaha za kuteuwa /  
panda tatu katukuwa / kaziwagaa pamoya.
- 25 Na mtu kitoka Shaka / hata Pate ukafika /  
siku nne kwa haraka / alo hodari sikiya.
- 26 Liyongo kenda muini / akipata mlangoni /  
panda katiya kanwani / kivuzia kapasuwa.
- 27 Liyongo akikabili / ndiya kenda rijali /  
alikuwenda siku mbili / na ya pili ni kungiya.
- 28 Kiivuzia hakika / muini wakashutuka /  
panda ikapasuka / waGala wakasikiya.
- 29 Wakauliza n'nini / yowe melipija nani /  
akajibu sulutani / ni Liyongo amekuya.
- 30 Liyongo asimuhuli / akaipija ya pili /  
panda isihimili / na ya pili kapasuwa.
- 31 Kaishika na ya tatu / wakajujumkana watu /  
wakazengeya mapito / waGala kukimbiliya.

- 
- 23 And so upon the morrow's dawn,  
Liyongo to the trail set face,  
and swiftly on his way was borne,  
pressing along his road apace.
- 24 He girt himself with vigour sound,  
his noble weapons, trusted, sure,  
and three warhorns, enthonged around  
with cords to grip, Liyongo bore.

- 25 E'en for a traveller of renown,  
the night four times upon him falls  
along the track from Shaka's town  
until he enters Pate's walls.
- 26 But when Liyongo set his face  
t'ward Pate, manfully he strode,  
and in the span of two dawn's space  
he entered by the city's road.
- 27 So came Liyongo to the town,  
and horn to lip before the gate  
blew vast a blast as e'er was blown,  
the horn was rent with blast so great.
- 28 And as he blew that outcry vast,  
folk started 'yond the city wall  
with fear, and when the warhorn burst,  
the Galla heard it with appal.
- 29 'Who makes this fearful great outcry?',  
they ask, 'What fearful can this be?'  
the sultan yields them their reply,  
'He comes! Liyongo, it is he!'
- 30 Liyongo, brooking no delay,  
a second warhorn blew amain,  
again the trumpet failed to stay  
his vigour and was rent in twain.
- 31 His third warhorn Liyongo seized;  
seeking some alley of escape  
the townfold in confusion run;  
the Galla fled, with fear agape.

---

With the help of the sultan of Pate, the Galla chiefs arrange a marriage between Liyongo and a Galla maiden, and a male child is the fruit of this alliance. By the time the child had grown to manhood, the sultan had begun to fear Liyongo as a likely usurper of his throne.

- 49 Fitina zikamngiya / mfalume miya miya /  
kwa hila kakusudiya / kumuua fahamiya.
- 50 Na sulutani niseme / alikucha mwana mume /  
tampoka ufalume / kwa dhana alimdhaniya.
- 51 Liyongo akatambuwa / huzengeya kuuawa /  
pale Pate kayepuwa / barani akitembeya.
- 52 Mfalume changaliya / mwituni mekimbiliya /  
wasanye aliwazengeya / na wadahalo pamoya.

- 
- 49 And now unto the sultan's ears,  
there came a thousand rumours vile,  
till he determined from his fears,  
to slay Liyongo and by guile.
- 50 By then, the sultan, let me say,  
to dread this mighty man had grown,  
for in his mind suspicion lay  
that he would rob him of his throne.
- 51 Quick was Liyongo to perceive  
how they sought ways that he be slain,  
from Pate's walls he took his leave,  
and roamed the forests of the main.
- 52 And when the sultan thus beheld  
how to the forests he had fled,  
where Sanye and Dahalo dwelled,  
he called those tribesmen to his aid.

---

The sultan offers the Sanye and Dahalo tribesmen a reward for the head of Liyongo, and so back in the forests of the mainland they pretend to make Liyongo their overlord and comrade, eating and drinking out of a common store. Then follows the plot of the kikoa-feast:-

- 57 Siku moya wakanena / Na tuleni wa ungwana /  
kikowa ni tamu sana / karamu isotindikiya.
- 58 Kikowa tule makoma / kukuta hatutokoma /  
kula tukiiterema / kulla mtu siku moya.
- 59 Likisa shauri lawo / wakenenda kwa kikawo /  
mkoma waupatawo / hupanda mtu mmoya.
- 60 Nao ma'ana yawo / siku yeye apandawo /  
wamfume wote hawo / zembe kwa uwo umoya.
- 61 Wakalipa wote piya / Liyongo akasaliya /  
ni wewe wakamwambiya / tumetaka fahamiya.
- 62 Liyongo kanena hima / Uzengeeni mkoma /  
muyapendayo makoma / nipate kuwanguliya.
- 63 Wakitembeya kwa safu / kuuzengeya mrefu /  
hata wakaushufu / ni huno wakamwambiya.
- 64 Liyongo akiuona / ni mrefu mno sana /  
yakamweleya ma'ana / yale alowadhaniya.
- 65 Na yeye una hadhari / kilala huwa tayari /  
awayua wana shari / wote piya kwa umoya.
- 66 Akawambiya ngojani / akatowa mkobani /  
chembe katiya ngweni / makoma kiwanguliya.
- 67 Achangusha ngaa ndima / ngaa ni mengi makoma /  
kwa wote wakaatama / ajabu zikawangiya.
- 68 Wakanena kwa moyoni / Amuwezao ni nyani /  
hoyo hawezekani / ni kutaka kwangamiya.

- 
- 57 One day those tribesmen sly declare,  
'Like gentlefolk now let us eat,  
as in kikowa feasts, by share,  
a ready meal and passing sweet.
- 58 'And for our feast the dum-palm fruit  
will serve in plenty, endlessly;  
one man each day shall follow suit  
to pluck his share from off the tree'.

- 59 And thus their guileful plan is made.  
 To cull the fruit they go in quest  
 of dum-palms growing in the glade;  
 and each man scales the fruited crest.
- 60 For 'twas their plot upon the day  
 whereon Liyongo climbed for fruit,  
 with bows and arrows him to slay;  
 in one swift volley they would shoot.
- 61 When all of them their lots had made,  
 there yet remained Liyongo's share.  
 'Tis thou to find the fruit', they said,  
 'Tis what we need; thou knowst 'tis fair.
62. At once Liyongo answered them,  
 'Then choose a palm that pleaseth ye,  
 go ye and seek one! From its stem  
 I'll pluck the ripe fruit down for ye!
- 63 Thereat they walk in single line  
 to seek a palm exceeding high;  
 at last they see one tall and lank.  
 'This is the very tree!', they cry.
- 64 Liyongo gazed upon the palm,  
 a tree that was exceeding high.  
 'Twas plain that they to do him harm  
 had in their minds some plotting sly.
- 65 But he was always cautious, shrewd,  
 aye, even as he slept, alert.  
 In evil plot he understood  
 they were all joined to do him hurt.
- 66 'Wait ye! stand back!', he cried to them,  
 and from his quiver arrows drew.  
 Shaft to the bowstring he took aim  
 and down to them the dum-fruit threw.
- 67 The topmost cluster, high and ripe,  
 a bunch of many-fruited sprays,  
 his shaft shot down. Those men, agape,  
 were filled with wonder and amaze.
- 68 They murmured in their hearts, with dread,  
 'Who gainst this man can e'er compete?  
 Tis bringing death on one's own head,  
 for he would never brook defeat....

The Sanye and Dahalo tribesmen report to the sultan and he advises them to encourage Liyongo to return to Pate where secret plans are made to capture Liyongo at a dance-tourney. The following extract includes the Song to Saada, found also in other manuscripts as a separate poem, and the gungu-songs in measure of 20-mizani.

- 80 Liyongo nikwambiayo / shaha wa gungu na mwao /  
tena ni mkuu wao / huwashinda wote piya.
- 81 Sulutani kabayini / mashaha walo muini /  
kawambiya kwa sirini / pija gungu huwambiya.
- 82 Kwa wanaume na wake / na Liyongo mumwalike /  
naazima nimshike / ni siri nimewambiya.
- 83 Na khabari kisikiya / Liyongo akikimbiya /  
nanyi mumezomwambiya / tawauwa kwa umoya.
- 84 Naye hoyo sulutani / kuuwa hawezekani /  
akinena kwa yakini / hutimiza mara moya.
- 85 Mashaha wakaalika / Liyongo wakatamka /  
mwao tutaandika / sute tuwe kwa umoya.
- 86 Mwao wakaandika / kulla ada wakaweka /  
sulutani akapeka / majuma wapata miya.
- 87 Wakenenda kwa utungo / mafumo zembe zigongo /  
wakamshika Liyongo / gerezani akatiwa.
- 88 Akatiwa gerezani / kafungiwa kijumbani /  
asikari mlangoni / kwa zamu wachangaliya.
- 89 Kukifanywa mashauri / auwawe madhukuri /  
tulepuwe lake shari / Liyongo namcheleya.
- 90 Wanginewe wakanena / kumuwa siyo sana /  
hoyo nda mui zana / ni mwenye kututeteya.
- 91 Na tumfanye amiri / zikiya zita ni kheri /  
atakufa kwa uzuri / maana hatu kimbiya.

- 92 Kiuwawa ndiyo sana / kitouwawa ni zana /  
hayo wote wakanena / sulutani kaambiwa.
- 93 Sulutani kafikiri / kumuuwa ndiyo kheri /  
kumuata ni khataru / kwa hila tanizengeya.
- 94 Anipoke ufalume / kisa chanda nikiume /  
kheri yangu mwana mume / kumuuwa mara moya.
- 95 Jamaa kawamkuwa / kwa shauri la kuuwa /  
wakajibu ndiyo dawa / shauri letu ni moya.
- 96 Wakamtuma kitwana / kwa Liyongo akanena /  
kufa shaka hapana / menituma kukwambiya.
- 97 Watamani yambo gani / menituma sulutani /  
utapowa kwa yakini / ili uwage duniya.
- 98 Mekwambiya bwana wetu / menituma mimi mtu /  
muhula wa siku tatu / fahamu utauwawa.
- 99 Akajibu usikhini / kamwambiye sulutani /  
mwao nimetamani / na gungu liwe pamoya.
- 100 Musizipiye sanjali / yeo na siku ya pili /  
umwambiye tajamali / nimeomba nitendeya.
- 101 Na tumi wa sulutani / akitoka kijumbani /  
kaya tumi wa nyumbani / chakula akamweteya.
- 102 Na mamake kwa hakika / kuti kizuri kipeka /  
asikari humpoka / chakula wakailiya.
- 103 Chakula wakimweteya / asikari huikiya /  
siku hiyo kamwambiya / mama unisalimiya.
- 104 Kanena kwa ushayiri / enenda kamkhubiri /  
mama afanye tayari / haya nimezokwambiya.

Ewe kiyakazi nakutuma huyatumika /  
kamwambiye mama ni muinga hayařimuka.  
Afanye mukate pale kati tupa kaweka /  
nikeeze pingu na minyoo ikinyemuka.  
Nitatage kuta na madari yakiyekuka /  
niuwe rijali nao wakiwana hiteka.  
Ningie ondoni ninyepepe ja mwana nyoka /  
ningie mwituni ningurume ja simba buka.

Nali mti pweke nimeziye katika nyika /  
si nduu si mbasi nimeziye kukupuka.  
nduu ali mame awasiwe kinda kwitika.

105 Saada kabaleghesha / nyaka make kamuwasha /  
akaufanya wa wishwa / mukate kampekeya.

106 Mukate huo sikiya / kata mbili hutimiya /  
kati tupa akatiya / Liyongo kampokeya.

107 Asikari wakiona / ni wishwa wakatukana /  
wa wishwa hula watwana / impekee haya ngiya.

108 Ule Liyongo chumbani / kauvunda kwa sirini /  
tupa akaona ndani / furaha zikamngiya.

109 Mama tupa akitiya / kitambaa metatiya /  
kafurahi mno ghaya / sana kawafurahiya.

110 Hata usiku kufika / matezo wakayandika /  
kama ada wakaweka / tasa pembe siwa piya.

111 Na ngoma na nyingi kusi / kusalie unasi /  
ikawa kama harusi / watu wakiangaliya.

112 Wote wakakutanika / mahala pakatandika /  
na uzuri wakaweka / deuli na subahiya.

113 Wakatandika za zari / na nzuri za hariri /  
wakaimba mashairi / ngoma kusi kwa umoya.

114 Na mashairi ni haya / walokwimba kwa umoya /  
na watu wakipokeya / na Liyongo u pamoya.

i. Mringwari na taikha fuwanye ndooni hwitwa na Fumo Liyongo /  
ndooni hwitwa na Liyongo Fumo na nduguye Shaha Bwana  
Mwengo.

ii. Mukaketi yuu la uliliye wakusanye watenzi wa ringo /  
wakusanye watenzi khiyari wayuwao kutunga zifungo.

iii. Wayuwao kufuasa zina na kuteza kwa kuniya shingo /  
hwitwa hima inukani mwende watukufu wana wa zitengo.

iv. Kuna gungu nyemi za harusi humuoza umbule Liyongo /  
pindi sizo watu wasiyakaa ukumbini kukawa kisongo.

v. Na muchenda vaani lebasi mujifushe na ungi wa mengo /  
mujipake na tibu khiyari yalotuwa kwa zema ziungo.

- vi. Chochi ni maambari na udi fukizani nguo ziso ongo /  
fukizani nguo za hariri na zisutu zisizo zitango.
- vii. Patouri na zafarani na zabadi tahara ya fungo /  
na zito za karafuu tuliyani musitiwe kungo.
- viii. Na ambari na kafuri haya ndiyo mwisu wa tangu kiungo /  
mjipake mkajifukize muende kwenu mukita mwengo.
- ix. Watwaeni wari na upambo wapokee sabuka kwa mwango /  
na wapija wakusi na yio watwaeni wari kwa miyongo.
- x. Hima hima inukani mwitwa limekuwa yeo wazi lango /  
na zakupa tuzo zimewekwa tumbitumbi miyongo miyongo.
- xi. Fedhati na kowa za bar-hindi na mikufu ya kwawiya shingo /  
na makapu makapu ya nguo ukumbini kwa Fumo Liyongo.
- xii. Pindi sizo watu wakafika ukumbini kukawa kisongo /  
wenye zimo zimo zikakuwa wa wafupi wakinyoa shingo.
- xiii. Kulla mtu kuamba ni nyemi wenda wima na wenda zijongo /  
kwa kupata pato la tijara lisoshiba na mtangotango.
- xiv. Pindi sizo Liyongo akima akatuza moyo usi shingo /  
akatuza kimba wasichana na waume wakangiya ringo.
- xv. Wale watu wote wakanena ndiyo mtendi Fumo si muongo /  
ni mtendi Fumo ni mtendi ulijile mgunya na tango.
- xvi. Upijile mfupa na tanu wenye kula wakiramba bungo /  
wenye kula wakashiba mno wakashiba ya mtengotengo.
- xvii. Baitize 'arubaini pazidiye nami ni miyongo /  
pazidiye na nne nambao sahi sambe ni uwongo.
- xviii. Salaamu aleikum twaani hii twaani shaha mekuya mwaoni /  
shaha mekuya mwaoni hii mwaoni yote inukani niteze.
- 115 Kulla nyimbo zizidipo / na ngoma zitakatapo /  
alikipitinda hapo / pingu na minyoo piya.
- 116 Zalipo kikaza kusi / alikipata upesi /  
hata zikipoma basi / inukani kawambiya.
- 117 Wakainuka kuteza / Liyongo akatokeza /  
khaufu zaliwakaza / mbiyo zikawapoteya.

118 Kwa wote wakakimbiya / hapana alosaliya /  
 Liyongo kayitokeya / mabarani karejeya.

80 Liyongo, let me tell you now,  
 at gungu-tourneys was the shah  
 and leader of the dance, mwao,  
 all others he excelled by far.

81 The sultan, then, a council called  
 of all the nobles of the town,  
 in secret conclave they were told,  
 'Proclaim a gungu, make it known'.

82 'A dance for men, and women too,  
 invite Liyongo, mark ye well;  
 I scheme to seize him, and to you  
 this a secret that I tell.

83 But if so hap he comes to hear  
 ought news of this and hither flies,  
 and ye have warned him, then I swear  
 I'll slay ye all', the sultan cries.

84 And when this sultan sought to slay,  
 no man could e'er his word gainsay,  
 for when he spake 'twas e'er his way  
 to wreak his will without delay.

85 The elders to Liyongo sent  
 their due command; 'We do declare  
 a gungu-tourney, and 'tis meant  
 that thou and we foregather there.'

86 A tourney of mwao they made  
 with customed panoply full fair;  
 the sultan sent his cavalcade,  
 a hundred men-at-arms were there.

87 They marched in column fully armed  
 with bow and spear and battle-stave,  
 and seized Liyongo; him, unarmed,  
 unto the dungeon's keep they gave.

88 Into the dungeon he was cast,  
 shackled with chains in narrow cell,  
 and soldiery, the door made fast,  
 took turn at watch to guard him well.

- 89 Thereon was made a fierce debate.  
 'He must be slain', the sultan swears.  
 'Let us be rid his evil great;  
 on him, Liyongo, thrive my fears.
- 90 But others other words declare,  
 'To slay him 'tis nor just nor right;  
 He is the town's shield in warfare;  
 'Tis he who strives for us amight.'
- 91 'Make him commander of our men,  
 and if a war should come,' they state,  
 'ne'er would he flee from battle; then  
 his death would be a noble fate.
- 92 'Were he slain now 'twould bring us fame'.  
 'Not so, he's our defence', they say,  
 with no accord they all proclaim;  
 their lord is told of what they say.
- 93 The sultan pondered, and he thought,  
 'To slay him, aye, 'tis well, I deem,  
 to let him live, 'tis peril-fraught,  
 he will embroil me by some scheme'.
- 94 'If he deprives me of my throne  
 I'll gnaw the finger of repent.  
 Were he a son, my son, my own,  
 to slay him I would be intent'.
- 95 His kinsmen then he called to greet,  
 to plan with them the slayer's plot;  
 they answered, Yea, thy claim is meet,  
 we share thy plan in common lot.
- 96 They sent a messenger, a slave,  
 and to Liyongo bade him say,  
 'This is the message that they gave,  
 that thou must die, 'yond doubt's gainsay.
- 97 'Whate'er last thing thou dost desire,  
 our sultan chargeth me to state,  
 forsooth, thou shalt be granted e'er  
 thou leav'st this world to meet thy fate'.
- 98 'Our lord to thee doth make command,  
 and with that word sends me his man,  
 that at the space of three days' end,  
 know thee full well, thou shalt be slain'.

89  
99 Liyongo said, 'Fail not thy task,  
but tell thy sultan what I say;  
a minstrel's play is all I ask,  
with drums and music in one day.'

100 'Do not proclaim them one today  
and one tomorrow sequently;  
but tell the sultan what I say,  
do this for me, in courtesy.'

101 Then, as the herald took his leave  
and from the dungeon's cell outstrode,  
there came a serving-maid, a slave  
bringing Liyongo's daily food.

102 Liyongo's mother, in her care,  
good viands to Liyongo sent;  
the soldiers seized and ate the fare  
that for Liyongo's meal was meant.

103 Each day when they brought food to him,  
the soldiers seized it and they ate;  
but when, this day, the slave-girl came,  
Liyongo said, 'My mother greet'.

104 He sang to her in secret rime,  
'Go, to her these verses tell,  
and make these plans in all good time,  
that now I tell thee, list ye well'.

O thou, slave-maiden, I charge thee, fulfil my message's  
intent,  
Go, tell my lady, yet to guile she is unwise, she  
is too innocent.  
Let her bake bread for me and in its midst let a sharp  
rasp be pent,  
Then shall I cut these shackles and from off my  
limbs shall then these chains be fent;  
Then will I lay low my prison walls and then with holes  
shall roofs be rent,  
Then shall I slay lusty men and as they fight with  
me my laughter vent.  
Then shall I lurk amidst the marsh reeds high like a  
fierce snake on prey intent;  
Then shall I lurk within the forests wild, roaring  
like lion in fierce wrath's resent.  
As a lone tree am I, lone in the barren desert's bleak  
abandonment.  
Nor kinsmen nor yet friend have I; alone am I to  
my outlawry sent.

Only is left my mother to whose whelp's cry her answering  
call be lent.

- 105 Saada, wise, perceived his plan;  
his mother set the fires to bake  
a load of harsh maize-husk and bran;  
and that strange loaf to him they take.
- 106 And this same loaf, hear ye the while,  
a full two quarterns weight did make,  
and in its midst was hid a file;  
to this that they to him do take.
- 107 The soldiers see that 'tis indeed  
but coarse maize-bran, and loud they swear,  
'Take it within to him; this bread  
'tis bran and eke for slaves 'tis fare'.
- 108 But when Liyongo in his cell  
in secret broke the loaf apart,  
he saw within the hidden file  
and mighty gladness filled his heart.
- 109 His mother having sent the file,  
he tore his robes with joy; so glad  
was he. His heart did fill  
with joy for her and for her maid.
- 110 As soon as fell the dark of night  
they made all ready for the play;  
gongs, horns and trumpets, as was right  
by custom, set they in array.
- 111 No one was absent from the play.  
With drumming and handclapping loud,  
'Tis like a wedding-dance, they say,  
and people watch amidst the crowd.
- 112 And all the townsfolk gathered there.  
The dancing-floor was gaily spread  
with deuli and subahia,  
rare rugs of finely woven thread.
- 113 They spread out rugs of thread of gold  
with silken fabrics rich and rare;  
midst handclaps and with drumming bold  
the minstrels sang sweet ballads there.

114 These are the songs the people sang;  
Liyongo sang the air alone  
and then in chorus the whole throng  
of people joined in unison

i. Mringari, drummers and chorus, come! Ye are called by  
the Spearlord Liyongo.  
Come! Ye are called by Liyongo the Chief and his kinsman,  
Shah Lord Mwengo.

ii. Sit ye high on the ceremonial divan while they gather the  
swirling dancers,  
Let them assemble the dancers, expert, who are skilled in  
composing enigmas.

iii. Who know how to make rhymes and to dance with the straining  
of the neck,  
Ye are called, hurry, arise ye and go, ye noblemen born of  
high-place.

iv. There is a gungu ceremony, a nuptial dance, Liyongo's  
sister is being wed,  
What time people cannot pause in the hall because of the  
great crowding throng.

v. And when ye go don your fine robes and sprinkle yourselves  
with perfume,  
Perfume yourselves with choice tibu fine-ground with  
admixtures of perfuming powders.

vi. And with incense of ambergris and of fine aloe-wood cense  
ye your garments that are without flaw,  
Cense ye your garments of silk and cloths for your loins  
that are free from all blemish.

vii. Patchouli and saffron and musk newly cut from the glands  
of the spotted civet,  
And buds of the clove do ye mingle them in so that ye be  
put to no lacking.

viii. And ambergris and camphor, these are the last of the  
things of my philtre of perfumes,

Let ye perfume and cense yourselves and go ye to your  
place calling out for a minstrel.

ix. Take the young girls with great show and receive the  
young men with united chorus,  
And those who clap hands and sing, take the young girls  
in groups.

x. Haste, haste, rise up, ye are called; today the door is  
open wide,  
There are baskets and baskets of presents and gifts by  
the hundreds.

xi. Of silver and Indian crystal and chains for adorning  
the neck,  
And baskets and baskets of garments in the great hall of  
Spearlord Liyongo.

xii. No sooner the people arrive in the hall than there is a  
throng of throngs,  
With the tall folk standing on tiptoe and the short ones  
craning their necks.

xiii. And everyone says, This is joyful; both those who walk  
upright and they who are bent,  
For gaining the best of the matter without surfeit of  
strolling about.

xiv. At that moment Liyongo arose and calmed his heart and  
suppressed his rage,  
And he calmed himself as he sang while the maidens and  
youths danced around.

xv. And those people cried out altogether, 'Tis Liyongo the  
poet, of that there is no error,  
'Tis the poet chieftain, the poet who came to the coast-  
land with battle.

xvi. When he beat with a bone on the platter, they with food  
licked china bowls,

And they who had food feasted exceeding, the feast of  
sitting at leisure.

- xvii. His verses of song were forty, perhaps in excess of forty,  
They exceeded four tens and that is correct, for let me  
not state an error.
- xviii. By the Grace of Allah, take these, take these, for the  
Shah has come to the dancing,  
The Shah has come to the dance; Arise ye all and let me  
play.

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115 Now while the drumming loudly swelled  
and loudly rang the songs' refrains,  
Liyongo cut and hewed and filed  
his dungeon-shackles and his chains.

116 While the clapping swelled amain  
he quickly cut his shackles' ties,  
till freed at last from dungeon-chain,  
he cried to them, 'Lift up your eyes'.

117 Pausing, they stared amidst their play.  
Into their midst Liyongo strode; sight  
and fear fell on them; each his way  
fled in his terror, lost in fright.

118 The people fled in one wild rout,  
nor was there man who dared remain;  
Liyongo from his cell came out  
and roamed the mainland once again.....

Liyongo's son is feted by the Sultan of Shagga who offers the young man his daughter's hand provided that he can discover from his father what weapon can deal him a mortal blow. The son betrays his father and kills him with a copper dagger, the only weapon, according to Liyongo, which could destroy him. Steere wrote: 'The poem (of Liyongo) used often to be sung at feasts and then all would get very

much excited and cry like children when his death was related, and particularly at the point where his mother...finds him dead'.<sup>(1)</sup> This descriptive passage in Muhammad Abubakar's poem is certainly the most moving in the whole of Swahili literature.

- 165..Hwenda kiwaza ndiyani / na khaufu za moyoni /  
siku ya pili iyon / hata Shaka akangiya.
- 166 Kwa babake akangiya / baba kamfurahiya /  
kwa mno kamshashiya / akimnyoa na ziya.
- 167 Kimkanda maguuni / pamoya na muilini /  
kwa utofuwe ndiyani / maanaye kumtuya.
- 168 Kiyana kapumzika / kisa ndiyani katoka /  
kwa kunena na kuteka / na wendi akitembeya.
- 169 Na sindano kipindoni / ameisita nguoni /  
kamwe mtu haioni / akizengea ndiya.
- 170 Kulla siku humwendeya / Liyongo ameilaliya /  
kamwe haipata ndiya / kiyana kishawiriya.
- 171 Akimuona babake / hulipija yowe lake /  
ili baba ashutuke / hashutuki kumuuya.
- 172 Kimwamkua ghafula / huinuka kwa ajila /  
hujibu nipa chakula / nina ndaa humwambiya.
- 173 Kiyana kishawiriya / kwa khaufu kumngiya /  
illa yeye una niya / siku zikateketeya.
- 174 Siku zalipokithiri / bwana akamukhubiri /  
huku sisi ni tayari / kutengeza mambo piya.
- 175 Siku kupata waraka / na babake amechoka /  
kwa usindizi menyoka / fahamu amepoteya.

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(1) Steere, E., Swahili Tales, Preface, p. vi.

- 176 Nyono zake huzivuwa / kama gurumo za vuwa /  
kiyana akaelewa / kwa kweli ameilaliya.
- 177 Kayua hana fahamu / kiyana aliazimu /  
kwa ile yake hamamu / mke kenda kuzengeya.
- 178 Kantiya kitovuni / naye ulele kwa tani /  
achamka hamuoni / kiyana amekimbiya.
- 179 Babake akishutuka / chembe uta akishika /  
kwa haraka akatoka / nde mui kaendeya.
- 180 Akapija ondo lake / kapatika chembe chake /  
kama hayi ada yake / chembe utani katiya.
- 181 Na hapo nami tasema / ni karibu ya kisima /  
watu hawakusimama / kwa wote walikimbiya.
- 182 Watu mayi wasiteke / waume na wanawake /  
kwa pote habari yake / majimbo yakaeneya.
- 183 Kuwa Liyongo mekwima / uko nde ya kisima /  
sasa watu wamekoma / mayi hawapati ndiya.
- 184 Hapana ayapatawo / mtu mayi atekawo /  
kulla mtu uko kwawo / hapana wa kutokeya.
- 185 Wale watu muyini / mayi ya msikitini /  
huyateka birikani / ndiyo hayo kutimiya.
- 186 Yamekisa yote mayi / birikani mwa si mayi /  
na Liyongo hanyamayi / chembe ngeni metiya.
- 187 Kwa ndaa wakazika / wote wakasikitika /  
ukumbi wakauweka / kufanya shauri moya.
- 188 Shauri likawa moya / kheri mama kumwendeya /  
mamake kisikiliya / atamsikitikiya.
- 189 Mamake wakamwendeya / kwa liungo wote piya /  
mama kheri sikiliya / roho zimo hupoteya.
- 190 Mamake wakamwendeya / naye mama karidhiya /  
wakatoka kwa umoya / nde wakasikiliya.
- 191 Mamake akamwombowa / mashairi akitowa /  
kwa kasidi kumwongowa / Liyongo hayasikiya.

- 192 Na make kumuegema / alikicha tematema /  
kwa mbali kimtezama / na nasaha miyamiya.
- 193 Nao hayakueleya / Liyongo ameifiya /  
kwa khaufu kuwangiya / hawakumkurubiya.
- 194 Kulla siku kimwendeya / mama wake akiliya /  
hainuki saa moya ni hasira hudhaniya.
- 195 Warudipo nasahani / mama wake hubayini /  
siisi amedharani / ghadhabu zimemngiya.
- 196 Mwanangu meghadhibika / si ada kutopulika /  
ameiza kuinuka / siisi yetu khatiya.
- 197 Siyo yake mazoweya / kwa nasaha kimwendeya /  
husikia mara moya / sasa udhiya metiya.
- 198 Mamake kumkurubiya / khatari aicheleya /  
ghadhabu zikamngiya / yo yote huioleya.
- 199 Kuuwa hawezekani / kighadhibika haneni /  
huwa zitono za ndani / na kuingurumiya.
- 200 Mamake kitaajabu / akinena ni aibu /  
mara hini meharibu / ameiza kusikiya.
- 201 Kipata siku katiti / kaanguka ni maiti /  
wakatambua umati / Liyongo ameifiya.
- 202 Wote wakakurubiya / mamake na watu piya /  
sana wakimwangaliya / ni sindano ametiwa.
- 203 Ametiwa kitovuni / shaba sindano yuani /  
wakamtiya muyini / akazikwa kwa umoya.
- 204 Khabari ikaeneya / Pate ikasikiliya /  
mfalume kitayiwa / furaha zikamweneya

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165 And thus upon his way he thought  
until he came at evening late,  
his heart with dread and terror fraught,  
to ancient Shaka's city-gate.

166 Into his father's mansion, then,  
he went; his sire with glad embrace

- did greet him, and on the divan  
gave his tired limbs a resting-place.
- 167 His weary limbs the slave girls free  
with nimble fingers from the soil  
of his long journey; skilfully  
they soothe him of his travel's toil.
- 168 And when the youth had taken rest,  
he strolled along the city street,  
talking and laughing, quipping jest  
with every friend he chanced to meet.
- 169 Yet, in the folds of his attire  
was hid the dagger, craftily,  
while he sought means to kill his sire,  
so that no man that blade might see.
- 170 But, when each day Liyongo slept,  
that youth drew near to where he lay  
and slyly 'pon his father crept  
seeking a chance his sire to slay.
- 171 Then when he saw his sire asleep,  
the youth would call him loud and shrill;  
if he woke not from slumber deep,  
there was the chance, the chance to kill.
- 172 But he would always swiftly wake  
and rise and leap upon his feet.  
Some sly excuse the youth would make,  
'I hunger, sire, give me to eat'.
- 173 The youth was filled with sore dismay,  
in terror that Liyongo might suspect  
his plot; and so each day  
burned on, like dreaded fire, till night.
- 174 Now as the days sped by, the lord  
of Pate sent him news to say,  
'We here stand ready at thy word  
to celebrate thy nuptial day'.
- 175 Liyongo on that very day  
that news from Pate's sultan brought,  
full weary in deep slumber lay,  
wrapt fast in sleep and knowing naught.



- 186 Soon all the water came to end  
and none in that stone tank remained;  
Liyongo yet ceased not to stand  
with arrow 'gainst the bowstring strained.
- 187 With thirst hard-gripped the people all  
were sore-distressed and desperate  
and called within their city hall  
a common council on their fate.
- 188 They say, 'Twere well that to his home  
we send, and for his mother; she,  
if to our town she doth but come,  
will calm him with her sympathy'.
- 189 And so in deputation they  
sought out his mother, and they said,  
'Lady, to Shaka come, we pray,  
our souls are nigh to lost, we dread'.
- 190 Thus did they go to her, and she  
assented to their quest; they all  
to Shaka went, in company,  
and come to near the city wall.
- 191 And there her grief his mother cried;  
she sang sweet songs of sad lament,  
and thus to soothe Liyongo tried;  
but he no ear of heeding lent.
- 192 She trembled to draw very near  
to him; but from afar she gazed  
upon her son, and oft in fear  
her cry of sad appeal she raised.
- 193 As yet to none did it appear  
that, e'en then, had Liyongo died;  
for they were all o'ercome with fear  
and none dared venture to his side.
- 194 And so each day his mother cries  
to him from dawn till sunset hour;  
but yet Liyongo does not rise.  
She thought, 'Great wrath doth him devour'.
- 195 And when, her vigil o'er, she came  
into the city, she would say,  
'I know not what he holds to blame;  
but anger grips him in its sway'.

- 196 'My son is angered sore', she cries,  
       'tis not his custom not to heed  
           my pleas; but yet he will not rise;  
           I know not what is our misdeed'.
  
- 197 'For this is not his custom'd way  
       whene'er to him I make appeal,  
           swiftly he lists to all I say,  
           now he is gravely vexed, I feel'.
  
- 198 His mother nearer to him crept,  
       casting aside her fears and awe;  
           and mighty anger o'er her swept  
           at all she then so clearly saw.
  
- 199 There powerless to slay his foes  
       he knelt; 'twas not his wrath the sound  
           she heard, but that grim voice, the throes  
           of death that moaned in mortal wound.
  
- 200 His mother, stricken, gazed and cried,  
       'O shame, O cruel shame and drear;  
           All in this hour my son hath died,  
           hath died, nor e'er my voice can hear'.
  
- 201 And so within the span of day  
       to earth Liyongo lifeless fell.  
           'Liyongo, he has passed away',  
           the people whisper by the well.
  
- 202 Now all of them draw near to see,  
       the townsfolk and his mother, they  
           look down upon him wonderingly:  
           'A dagger! He was stabbed!', they say.
  
- 203 'He has been stabbed and mortally,  
       with a bronze dagger!', they relate.  
           They bore him to the town, and he  
           was buried there in noble state.
  
- 204 Soon o'er the land the news was spread  
       to Pate's court, and there the lord  
           was told, 'Liyongo now is dead',  
           and he rejoiced to hear the word.....

The poem ends with a description of Liyongo's son,  
ostracised and full of remorse, and he flees to the Galla  
country, his mother's original home.

Notes on the Hadithi ya Liyongo

- v. 6. kitakamali, subj. concord a- omitted, lit. he being complete; haiba, beauty of character; kaongeya, for ikaongeya, lit. it increased.
7. majimbo, for katika majimbo, in the districts; kawa, for akawa.
8. yumbe wa Pate, the palace of the sultan of Pate, informants give yumbe as meaning the house of government, cf. in mod Swah., jumbe, headman.
10. kiwatokeya, for akiwatokea, lit. he appearing unto you.
11. ni yani, for mod. Swah., ni nani, who is he?
13. una, subj. concord u- Cl. 1; zihi, splendour, fine appearance.
14. mkoyo hukupoteya, lit. you lose urine; tapo, shivering, trembling, cf. -tap- shiver, tremble; likakuiliya, it makes you shiver, -iliya, make to quiver, quake (with cold, pain).
15. mato kikukodoleya, for mod. Swah. akikukodolea macho, if he stares at you; khaufu, for khofu or hofu, fear; kukungiya, for kukuingia.
17. alikipeti, he used to dwell, note tense-sign -liki-in pre-radical position; i hoko yake bayiti, for iliko nyumba yake, where his house is; wangwana, freemen, noblemen; Mashaha, the old town still known as Kwa Mwana wa Mashah, it was on the mainland in the bushland of the Ozi river, and its ruins can still be seen, note the faulty rhyme on Mashaha.
- v. 23. ndiya, for njia, way, road; akaemeya, for akalemea, and he pressed on.
24. kaziwagaa, for akaziwagaa, and he fastened them together temporarily; panda, war-horn, it was made from an antelope horn and blown through an orifice in the side of the base.
25. alo, for aliye, he who is; sikiya, for hufikia, he arrives, and not the imperative of -siki- hear.

- 26. muini, for mjini, to the town; kivuzia, for akivuzia, blowing with his mouth, cf. in mod. Swah. akivuvia.
- 30. asimuhuli, not delaying, cf. muhula, time, period.
- 31. wakajujunkana, cf. in mod. Swah. wakadudumikana, and they got each other confused; wakazengeya mapito, lit. and they searched out places to pass.
- v. 51. huzengeya kuuawa, lit. they search for being killed, a typical example of cryptic style in Swahili verse, - in full this could be 'huzengeya njia apate kuuawa', looking for a way whereby he might be killed; kayepuwa, for akajiepua, and he withdrew himself.
- 52. changaliya, for akiangalia, he beholding; wasanye.... na wadhalo, the Sanye (or Boni) and Dahalo tribes of the Tana valley, see Prins, op cit.
- v. 57. kikowa, for the meaning of the kikoa-feast and the plot against Liyongo, see The Song of Shagga, p. ; isotindikiya, for isiyotindikia, which does come to an end.
- 58. makoma, fruits of the mkoma, the hyphaene or dwarf palm, also called mkoche and mwaa; hatutokoma, prob. a scribe's error here for hatutakoma, we shall not come to an end, i.e. of being satisfied (kukuta); tukiiterema, from -terema, come down from a height, in mod. Swah. -teremka, and distinct from mod. -terema, be at ease, - the objectival concord -i- relates to miti, trees, and so lit. we coming down from the trees; they climbed the trees to fetch the fruits of the dum-palm.
- 59. likisa, for likiisha, being finished; lawo, the Arabic letter wau is transliterated for the sake of the end-rhyme.
- 60. uwo, flight, of arrows, birds, etc.
- 62. muyapendayo, for mod. Swah. mpendayo, which you like; kuwanguliya, for kuwaangulia, to pluck down for you.
- 63. huno, Kiamu and Kimvita for huu, this one, Cl. 3.
- 64. alowadhaniya, for aliyowadhania, what he thought about them.

- 65. una, note concord u- 3rd. pers. sing.; hadhari, caution; kilala, for akilala.
- 66. ngweni, in the bowstring (ngwe).
- 67. ngaa ndima, for ngaa nzima, a whole cluster from the top of the tree; wakaatama, for wakaachama, and they gaped.
- 68. amuwezao, for mod. Swah. amwezaye; nyani, for nani, who?
  
- v. 80 gungu na mwao, for an account of the gungu-tourneys, see next chapter.
  
- 83. mumezomwambiya, lit. which you have told him, - the use of the relative concord with tense having pre-radical tense-sign -me- is obsolete; tawauwa, for nitawaua, I will kill you (pl.).
- 84. hawezekani, lit. he cannot, in mod. Swah. the phrase would read, kuuwa kumkataza hakuwezekani.
- 86. akapeka, for akapeleka, and he sent; majuma or majoma, company/ies of soldiery.
- 87. kwa utungo, in order, in column, cf. -tung- arrange; zembe, Cl. 8, arrows, chembe, arrow; zigongo, Cl. 8, pl. of kigongo, staff, rod.
- 89. madhukuri, the aforesaid (Liyongo); tulepuwe, for tuliepue, let us get away from it; namcheleya, I fear him.
- 90. sana, lawful, customary or polite act or conduct; nda, contraction for ni ya, he is of; zana, lit. weapons of war.
- 91. hatokimbiya, he will never run away, cf. hatutokoma, v. 58.
- 92. kitouwawa, obsolete tense, a - kito - uawa, lit. if he be not slain at all.
- 94. chanda nikiume, the normal word-order is reversed here, nikiume chanda, let me bite my finger, - to gnaw the knuckles is a customary expression of grief or remorse, note chanda for mod. Swah. kidole.
- 97. utapowa, obsolete passive of -pa, for mod. Swah. utapewa;

uwage, for uage, -ag- take leave.

- 100. sanjali, one following the other, in sequent order.
- 101. kaya, for akaja, and he came; akamweteya, for akamletea, and he brought him.
- 102. kuti, good food, cf. -kut- become satisfied with food; wakailiya, for wakajilia, and they ate for themselves, -ji- reflexive, -lia applied form of -la eat.

Ewe kiyakazi.....In some versions of this poem the first line appears as: Kiyakazi Saada nakutuma....., and this explains why the poem is usually referred to as The Song to/of Saada, cp. Werner, Fest Meinhof, p. 48. The ruse by which Liyongo intends to escape is so patent in these lines that nothing cryptic could be imputed to them. Hichens records a short poem and states that 'this song is much more likely to have been in the form of the original cryptic message to Saada'. But this is only one of many short Swahili poems which cannot be translated satisfactorily or even understood by the Swahili because of the difficult obsolete forms. There is nothing to identify it with the required context. As an example of the more obscure type of Swahili verse, the poem is given as follows:

Ai mama kunituwatuwa ni manana pana gogwe  
 sendi machache hapwewa sendi mangi koweza ngwe  
 sendi katoto adawa na wakumbizi wa kungwe  
 ndimi wa kamba na kowa ai lengwe mkokota lengwe  
 huoneka siku ya kuwiwa hiwafunga kwa kamba na nangwe  
 nisimbone wa kuwafunguwa hata nawo watwa wa Kiyongwe.

The Song to Saada

huyatumika, this occurs as uwatumika in the version incorporated in the prose story of Liyongo in Steere (Swahili Tales, idem, p. 440) and is translated 'you will be sent'; in mod. Swah. hujatumika may mean 'you have not yet been sent', but this does not fit the context.  
mama, or in other versions nana, both may mean 'lady'.  
hayalimuka, lit. she is not yet crafty.  
nikeeze, for mod. Swah. nikereze, let me cut through with a saw (rasp, file, etc.).  
minyoo, for mod. Swah. minyororo, shackles, chains.  
ikinyemuka, obs. -nyemuka or -nyemka, be broken.

nitatage, -tatag- get across, cross by holding on to something.  
yakiyekuka, cp. mod. Swah. -ekua dari, break through a ceiling,  
 -ekuka, be broken, as in boriti ya dari imeekuka, a rafter  
 of the ceiling has given way.

wakiwana, obsolete -wana, fight one another.

hiteka, for nikicheka, while I laugh.

ningie, for niingie, let me go in.

ondoni, the word ondo means a kind of high grass used for  
 thatching.

ninyepee, Krapf gives -nyapia, creep, stalk in hunting.

mwana nyoka, a fierce snake, and not a young snake, cp.

mwana simba, a fierce lion, in Takhmis ya Liyongo.

buka, uneasy, grieving, restless.

nimeziye, probably related as modified base to -mazia, finished  
 up, but could also be for nimezile, -mezile, swallowed up.

kukupuka, infinitive meaning to cower in fear.

mame, prob. for mamaye, his lady, his mother.

awasiwe, prob. for awadhiwe, lit. his disposer, his trustee.

- v. 105. nyaka, pl. of waka, a burning thing, a fire, cp. -ak-  
 burn; make, contraction of mamake, his mother; wishwa,  
 bran consisting of maize husks, and referred to in  
 another version of Saada's song as buruburosa, which,  
 according to a former sultan of Witu, 'Umar b. Hamadi,  
 is an old word for the husks of maize after pounding,  
 (cf. Werner, B.S.O.S., Vol. IV, p. 253 note); kampekeya,  
 for akampelekea, and sent to him.

106. kata mbili, a loaf of two kata would weigh 7-8 lbs.

107. mpekee, for mpelekee, send it in to him, take it to him;  
ngiya, for ingia, enter.

111. kusi, pl. of ukusi, handclapping, applause; kusisalie,  
 from -sali be left out; unasi, a man, a person.

112. deuli, a rug or cushion covering of silk; subahiya, a  
 veil, a wrap.

113. zari, brocade of gold thread.

### The Gungu Songs

- i. taikha, members of the dance-guild (Sheikh Mbarak Hinawy);  
fuwanye, the chorus-singers; Bwana Mwengo, this is the  
 name of a well-known Swahili poet of the late eighteenth

century, but the name may also apply to any minstrel as an honorific, meaning Mr. Echo, cp. mwengo, echo, answering voice.

- ii. uliliye, his ceremonial divan, also called kilili; watenzi, the actors; ringo, graceful gait, pirouetting, in mod. Swah. maringo, -ring- put on airs, walk with swagger; zifungo, verses of song with an enigma.
- iii. kufuasa, for kufuata, to follow; zina, rhymes; kumiya shingo, prob. for kumia shingo, to strain the neck; zitengo, seats of honour.
- iv. pindi sizo, for pindi hizo, at that time; wasiyakaa, for mod. Swah. hawajakaa; kisongo, a throng of people, cp. -song- throng, meet in a mass.
- v. mujifushe, sprinkle yourselves with perfume; mengo, or mwengo, a kind of scent; tibu, perfume made from sandalwood ground and mixed with rose-water and cloves; yalotuwa, which is rubbed on, applied, cp. -chu- rub, massage; ziungo, ingredients, cp. -ung- compound, combine, e.g. unga chakula, season food, unga dawa, compound medicine.
- vi. chochi, for mod. Swah. moshi, smoke; maambari, in mod. Swah. ambari, ambergris; udi, aromatic aloe wood, used for fumigation; ziso, for zisizo, which (Cl. 10) are not; ongo, dirt, stains, - in mod. Swah. this would read zisizo na taka; zisutu, for mod. Swah. vifutu, plain, rough clothes; zitango, patches, darnings.
- vii. patori, patchouli, the fragrant oil of the Indian plant, Pogostemon patchouli; zafarani, saffron; zabadi, civet, musk; tahara, excised glands; fungo, genet-cat *Viverra megaspila*; zito, Cl. 8, essential parts, essence; kungo, or kongo, defect, fault.
- viii. tangu, for changu, my (agreeing with kiungo); mukita, prob. for mukiita, as you call out, while you call out.
- ix. wari, for mod. Swah. waari, uninitiated girls, who at a traditional Swahili wedding were dressed up on the wedding-day to wait on the bridegroom and to fan him; sabuka, young men in the first flush of youth, also the general term for gungu-dancers of Pate; mwango, a united response, a chorus; wapija wakusi, hand-clappers; yio, for lio, prob. related to -li- cry out; kwa miyongo, in tens, i.e. in plenty.

- x. lango, for mlango, door, the reference here is to the door of Liyongo's cell, for in the oral tradition, Liyongo would not sing until the door was opened, cp. in Juma Mbwana's account to Taylor (op. cit.): 'Hatta zamani za kuimba yule Liyongo akaambiwa, Imba nawe, akasema, Mimi siwezi kuimba, mnifungulie mlango; ukafunguliwa', - 'When the time came for singing, Liyongo was told, Now, you can sing. And he said, I cannot sing. Open the door for me. And the door was opened'. Zakupa tuzo, 'zitu za kupa watu kuwatuza' (Mbarak), things to give to people from a store of gifts. Tumbitumbi, very many; miyongo-miyongo, lit. tens-tens, a great number.
- xi. kwawiya, for kuwawia, to irritate, cp. in mod. Swah. -waw- itch, irritate.
- xii. wenye zimo, people of stature, i.e. tall people, cp. in mod. Swah. kimo, stature; zikakuwa, cp. -ku- grow, increase in size; wakinyoa, for wakinyosha, -nyosh- stretch.
- xiii. wenda, for kwenda, -end- go; wima, standing; zijongo, the bent-backed; pato, something acquired, a gift; tijara, boldness, daring.
- xiv. akatuza, either from -tuz- make a present, or a contraction of -tuliz- comfort, and the second is preferred because -tuliza moyo is probably meant to be read together here, meaning 'comfort the heart'; kimba, for wakiimba.
- xv. ulijile, or ulejele, the radical is prob. -lej- or lij- and the meaning has to be guessed, but the construction is not related to -j- come; mgunya, a native of the coast district between Mombasa and the Juba river; tango, perhaps for mtango, a wanderer.
- xvi. upijile, etc., an obscure line, -pija mfupa might mean eat off the bone, but tanu is not known; bungo, edible fruit of the tree Landolphis florida, but the word might be read as pungo, leavings, scraps; mtengotengo, selections, i.e. prob. of food. Verses xii - xvii show discontinuity of context, and v. xvii indicates that an original poem of forty verses was added to by fourteen other verses. The verses in our text are corrupted, nor can one make sense of the context which is adjusted in the translation.

- xvii. pazidiye, there is an increase, -zidi, increase, become more; nambao, for na ambao, about whom; sahi, for sahihi, rightly, truly; sambe, for usiambe, do not say.
- v. 115 zitakatapo, -chakach- pound; alikipitinda, -liki- tense of past continuous, -tind- for -chinj- sever, slit.
116. zalipo kikaza, for zalipo zikikaza (obsolete tense), when the handclapping (kusi) was intensified.
117. mbiyo zikawapoteya, they were lost in running.
- v. 166. kamshashiya, -shashi- welcome with joy, dist. from -chachi- be bad-tempered about; akimyoa na ziya, for akimyoa na via, stretching out his joints.
167. akimkanda maguuni, while he massaged his legs, - it was Swahili custom to have the limbs rubbed and massaged after a journey; utofuwe, for uchovu wake, his weariness; kumtuya, for kumtua, to settle him, to calm him down, (the ending is modified for the sake of the rhyme).
168. wendi, for wenziwe, his friends.
170. haipata, obsolete negative for mod. Swah. haipati, cp. in v. 191, hayasikiya, he does not hear them; kishawiriya, subj. concord a- omitted, -shawiri- be put to shame or confusion.
176. nyono, the breathing of a person when asleep; huzivuwa, he sounds it loudly, -vu- blow with the breath; vuwa for mvua, rain.
178. ulele, for mod. Swah. amelala, he lies down; kwa tani, on his back.
180. ondo, knee-joint, kupiga ondo, to kneel on one knee.
183. uko, for mod Swah. yuko, the form in u- 3rd. pers. sing. is common in poetry.
186. mwa, prob. for the locative mwao, in their (tank); hanyamayi, lit. he does not leave off, be silent, -nyamaa.
187. kwa ndaa wakazika, lit. because of hunger they buried;

- ukumbi, a council, also the reception-chamber of a house.
189. kwa liungo, as a unit, cp. -ung- unite, join together, - the word liungo is now obsolete.
191. akamwombowa, -ombo- supplicate, entreat, cp. in mod. Swah. -ombolez-; kwa kasidi, for kwa kusudi, on purpose.
192. tematema, tremblingly, cp. -tem- shake, tremble, in mod. Swah. -tetem-; na nasaha miyamiya, with hundreds of requests.
195. siisi, I do not know; amedharani, prob. for amedhuru nini, what has mattered to him, lit. what he has caused injury to.
198. khatari aicheleya, lit. being apprehensive about the danger; huioleya, she sees/saw it, -ol- see.
199. zitono za ndani, lit. internal wounds; kuingurumiya, -ngurum- rumble, roar.
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While the Hadithi ya Liyongo by Muhammad b. Abubakar preserves in imaginative detail the Liyongo tradition, it cannot be regarded as an historical document. None of the poems so far examined can seriously be claimed as historical evidence of Liyongo's factual existence, though the possibility of his having been a real person is not completely ruled out.

Another poem, this time a love-song, is worthy of note as a literary curiosity in Swahili. This is a poem with the title Liyongo na Mmanga.<sup>(1)</sup> Hichens identifies the Arabian maiden, whose charms the poet eulogises in embarrassing detail, with Kundazi, the woman who betrayed Liyongo by removing his weapons as he slept,<sup>(2)</sup> but there is nothing to support this theory. The poem is likely to have been modelled on an Arabian original, and there is nothing but the title to connect it with Liyongo. As it is commonly, but mistakenly, attributed to Liyongo, we may include an extract of the poem here. The whole work has 49 verses, the last ten of which recount metaphorically the consummation of the poet's love.

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(1) Two scripts of Liyongo na Mmanga were collected by Professor Werner, and are in the Library of the SOAS, No. 47795, with this note by Werner, 'MS 1, in scroll, sent to me by Muhammad Kijuma, 1934; MS 2, in sheets, sent to me by the same, but some years ago'.

(2) See the Dream Song, p. 54.

Liyongo na Mmanga. (In part)

1. Pijiyani mpwasi / pembe ya janusi /  
kwa cha mtutusi / au mwanananga /
2. Upije na pembe / iliyayo jumbe /  
muwangi uwambe / kwa ya ndouukanga /
3. Vumi lende mbali / lamshe ahali /  
wake na wavuli / waye gangaganga /
4. Waye wakele ti / wambeja banati /  
tupani sauti / tumsifu mmanga /
5. Tupani bayiti / tukizitafiti /  
jema ziweke ti / mbi tukitenga /
6. Kisa kuziona / bayiti kufana /  
yatupwe kunena / zakwe mwanamanga /
7. Basi tuwakifu / yasiwe marefu /  
sifa tusanifu / zakeye miyanga /
8. Ta kwanda kitwani / nduza sikiyani /  
hariri layini / zakwe nyele singa /
9. Kitwache huramu / ni kama ruhamu /  
au jaizimu / taole kuzinga /
10. Yakwe mashikiyo / apulikiyao /  
yatendele tao / kama kombenanga /
11. Uso wake mwana / utengee sana /  
na pasiyaona / huota miyanga /
12. Nshize zifene / nta zilingene /  
shina lifungene / kama lalofunga /
13. Ni nyeusi mno / zizidiye wino /  
zitaliye kono / tando za mnga /
14. Mato avikapo / khasa avuwapo /  
mtu akiwepo / hutisha kuyenga /
15. Puwaye ajabu / zifungu huribu /  
nisita hesabu / mwenyi kuziwanga /

16. Sitaajabuni / kuliko Manani /  
hatta ishirini / zifungu hupanga /
17. Zakwe zitefute / zizidiye zote /  
ya mkatekate / mafuta yakinga /
18. Miyomo mwembamba / isipo ifumba /  
atakapo kamba / hwelewa myinga /
19. Kamba takambaye / tatungawa iye /  
ajabu menoye / humo yengayenga /
20. Si ya akhatharu / si ya shamaru /  
hufana na nuru / iwaayo Manga /
21. Si ya mkakasi / si rangi nyeusi /  
ni kufana basi / kuwa wanda Manga /
22. Kanwa huradidi / nyushi za mkadi /  
au za zabadi / yangawa nafunga /
23. Ulimi mpesi / wa kifanusi /  
khassa kidodosi / hudengemu yanga /
24. Shingoye ni refu / muwandi sharifu /  
ipambewe mkufu / kama za kutunga /
25. Ni hidaya jema / umbile karima /  
iyaliye nyama / yakwe mitulinga./..

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Liyongo and The Maid of Araby.

1. Beat the buffalo-horn  
out afar to yon strand,  
with the rod of buckthorn  
or the green-dove tree's wand.
2. Blow the ivory horn  
that cries to the palace,  
let the skies resound  
to the curved ivory horn.
3. Far and long be the blast  
that our kinsmen it call,  
the men and the ladies,  
to come hasting hither.

4. Let them come and be seated,  
the fair maids and daughters;  
in song lift your voices,  
to praise the Arab maiden.
5. Give forth ye your verses,  
as we choose them well,  
setting down the good ones  
and rejecting the bad.
6. And when we have seen  
that our verses scan well,  
be they flung forth to tell  
of the maid of Araby.
7. Thus may we arrange them  
that they be not o'er long,  
and sing we the praises  
of her glowing delights.
8. First, hearken, my kinsmen,  
her head, ah, 'tis fair  
with soft and most silken  
long tresses of hair.
9. The head of this maiden  
'tis marble's pure white,  
and e'en fleecy laden  
with twining curls dight.
10. Her ears, ah, the twain  
in the sweetest curves swell  
when a-listing they strain,  
like the cusps of a shell.
11. Elsewhere ne'er was seen  
in so fair a maid's face  
such blossom of sunshine  
and bloom of fair grace.
12. Her eyebrows, so neat  
are they matched, 'tis as though  
they join as they meet  
where the long brows grow.

- 13. They are black that would blanch  
       even ink's blackest steep,  
       and as tendrils that branch  
       from the mnga outswEEP.
- 14. From her drooping glance  
       if she lift up her gaze,  
       on whome'er it perchance  
       he would start in amaze.
- 15. Her nose, 'tis a wonder,  
       its arches sweep high;  
       who'd venture to count them,  
       to dare, I'd not try.
- 16. Yet be not amazed  
       if by Allah I swear,  
       her nostrils are raised  
       in a score arches fair.
- 17. Her cheeks are delight  
       far beyond all compare;  
       their beauty glows bright  
       with soft unguents rare.
- 18. Her lips when at rest  
       are a tender surprise;  
       e'en a fool shall attest  
       when she speaks, she is wise.
- 19. She speaks, and, ah, where  
       are my words to recite  
       of the pearls revealed there  
       in her teeth gleaming bright?
- 20. Not pearls of leaf-green,  
       nor flushed as a rose,  
       but bright with jet-sheen  
       that in Araby glows.
- 21. They are not rainbow-hued,  
       nor in colour dull brown,  
       but are evenly stained  
       with Arabian kohl.
- 22. Her open lips breathe forth  
       the perfume of pandamus,  
       and 'tis as sweet musk,  
       e'en when her lips are closed.

- 23. Her tongue is sprightly  
with witty epigram,  
and assuredly when she lisps  
it sounds clear to the skies.
- 24. Her neck is as slender  
as a noble bamboo,  
and 'tis adorned with chains,  
with gem-strung necklets.
- 25. 'Tis a thing of wonder,  
a creation of beauty,  
how it curves to the flesh  
of her shoulders.....



- v.1. mpwasi, distant coastline, (obsolete); jamusi, buffalo, Ar.; mtutusi, prickly tree bearing small edible plum-like fruits, Zizyphus Jujuba, also called mkunazi; kwa, probably a nominal, but the form is obscure, cf. also in v.2; mwanananga, the spiny tree, Zizyphus Spina Christi, also called mnga, the nuble of the Arabs.
- 2. jumbe, the sultan's house at Pate from whence permission formerly was obtained to blow the pembe or ivory horn, more usually known as siwa: muwangi, for mwangi, echo of sound; ndovukanga, a ceremonial horn.
- 3. vumi, sound of a drum, trumpet, horn, etc.: lende, for liende, let it go: lamshe, for liamshe, let it awaken; gangaganga, at the run.
- 4. wakele, modified base -kele of -kaa, sit; ti, on the ground; mmanga, a native of Manga (Arabia).
- 5. tukizitafiti, while we examine or criticise them, -tafiti, examine.
- 6. tuwakifu, the verbal is -wakifu, stand, stop, and not -kifu, suffice, satisfy, and the meaning is interpreted as 'let us pause', i.e. so that the verses may not be too long; zakeye, a double possessive, with enclitic -ye, 3rd. pers. sing., and zake, 3rd. pers. sing. agreeing with Cl.10 nominal sifa; miyanga, Cl.4, rays of the sun.

v.7. ta, for cha, possessive, Cl.7, concerning.

- 9. huramu, a woman, Ar.; ruhamu, marble, Ar.; jaizimu, curls, ringlets, Ar.; taole, lit. its curve, -le is a possessive enclitic, 3rd. pers. sing; kuzinga, to coiled, a coiling.
- 10. mashikiyo, for mod. Swah. masikio, ears; apulikiyao, for apulikiayo, with which she listens; yatendele tao, they spread in a curve, -tendal- spread, extend, and not from -tend- do; kombenanga, a bi-valve, shell-fish.
- 11. utengee, it (uso, face) is well arranged, i.e. she is pretty, -tenge- or -tengene-, be in good order; pasiyaona, for pasijaona, an obsolete form, nowhere has yet been seen.
- 12. nshize, her eyebrows, nshi, Cl.10; zifene, they match together, -fan-; zilingene, they are even, -lingan-; shina, root, Cl.5, probably referring to the line of the eyebrows; lalofunga, for mod. Swah. lililofunga, that which is fastened.
- 13. zitaliye, modified base -taliye or talile of -tal-, thrust out, put forth; kono, limbs, branches, Cl.10, ukono, Cl.11, tando, Cl.10 or 11, anything spread out, tapestry, a veil, a screen, a web, etc.
- 15. zifungu, Cl.8, zi- for vi-, arches of the nose; nisita hesabu, for nasita kuhesabu, I hesitate to count; kuziwanga, to count them, -wang- count (obsolete).
- 17. mkatekate, simsim oil, extra prefix ya agrees with mafuta; mafuta yakinga, for mafuta yakukinga, protective oil.
- 18. isipo ifumba, probably a scribe's error here, and it should read asipoifumba, unless she shuts them; kamba, -kamb- or -amb- speak, say (obsolete); hwelewa myinga, for huelewa mjinga, a fool understands.
- 19. takambaye, for nitakambaje, what shall I say?; tatungawa iye, probably a corruption here in the text, for as it stands it cannot be understood.
- 20. akhatharu, green, Ar.; shamaru, a rose, Ar.; iwaayo, which shines, -wa- shine, glitter.

- v. 21. mkakasi, lit. a vanity box, of many colours.
- 22. mkadi, a screw pine with a strongly scented flower, Pandanus Kirkii; yangawa nafunga, for yangawa anafunga, lit. even though they (the lips) be she is closing them.
- 23. ulimi .. wa kifanusu, a mouth like a lamp. i.e. shines with witty epigram, etc.; khasa kidodosi, lit. especially slight hesitation, -dodos- hesitate in speech, drawl, lisp; hudengemu, it sounds clearly; yanga, the air.
- 24. muwandi, for mod. Swah. mwanzi, bamboo.
- 25. umbile karima, for ambile karima, lit. God the Generous One made (her); iyaliye, for ijalile, in agreement with hidaya, and meaning 'which was granted'.

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This concludes the study of the Liyongo poems.

It will have become obvious that the poems provide practically no genuine historical evidence on the life of Liyongo. Linguistically, there is no fundamental difference in the difficulties of interpretation from those associated with poems known to have been written in the middle of the nineteenth century. It would be foolish to claim anything more for the Liyongo poems than that they preserve an interesting Swahili tradition of a national hero, and that the poems may have sprung from a much older oral tradition.

Cultural Verse-Forms

A general distinction can be made between Swahili literary compositions based on Arabian models and those inspired by the indigenous Bantu context. Both types of composition are foreign to traditional Bantu life, though the second type may be found incorporated into Swahili ritual. Marriage-songs, for instance, consist not only of the shorter utterances belonging to oral tradition, but also of poems written for the occasion. The latter may not follow any Arabian prosodic pattern, but nevertheless may be foreign to Bantu culture in being a literary composition. It is not always possible, of course, to draw a sharp dividing line between the oral or literate origin of some of these poems included in the performance of Swahili ritual, but generally the distinction is clear enough.

The mavugo wedding songs provide examples of non-metrical un-rhymed verse. These take their name from the vugo or buffalo-horn which, beaten with a wooden rod to make it resound, formed the musical accompaniment to the prose-poem and marked the pace of its rhythm. Verse of this type may be described as rhythmic prose, and may be the earliest type of Swahili verse, though no external evidence can be adduced to

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(1) The early poetical speech of all races originated in rhythmic prose of this type. As 'ari or unadorned prose (nathr) it was the prototype of the Arabian verse-form saj' and of the Persian musajja'.

establish this. No date can be assigned to mavugo songs in Arabic script, but Swahili informants aver that asili yao ni ya zamani za kale sana, their origin is in the very remote past. The following example begins with a conventional

(1)  
opening by the poet:-

Pani kiwanda niteze polepole mtu mweni /  
huno utumweni wangu si wenyeji wenu /  
mtu mweni utimbile kisima kuwanywasha wenyejiwe mayi /  
akima kupata mayi akapija panda aketa wana wanyema  
ndooni muole /  
wana wanyema wakiya wakima na kuliya ya kushindwa ndiyo  
ada ya waume.

Yield to me the minstrel's court that I, a stranger, may  
sing gently,  
For this my service is not as your citizenship.  
A stranger dug a well that he might give the citizens  
to drink,  
Having found water he stood and blew a horn and called the  
good people, Come, and see.  
And the good folk came and stood and cried, It is the lot  
of men to be left some hope.

kiwanda, for kiwanja, a courtyard; mweni, for mgeni,  
stranger, foreigner; utimbile, for aliyechimba; wana wanyema,  
lit. joyful children, cp. ukemi, pl. nyemi, joyful cry; muole,  
obsolete radical -ol- see; ya kushindwa, the passive of  
-shind- may mean be overcome, be defeated, but here the passive  
is read as being related to the phrase, maji yashinda kisimani,  
water is left in the well, i.e. there is still some left.

(2)

Hichens states that the mavugo songs are mostly free from Arabic borrowings and from this deduces 'their essentially Bantu origin', but any argument based on the relative content of Bantu or Arabic forms is invalid for the simple reason that modern verse can be written with no Arabic borrowings. It is

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(1) The mavugo songs given here are from Sheikh Mbarak's manuscripts.  
(2) 24 notes in library of SOAS.

enough merely to note that the mavugo songs are not so Arabicised as the more cultured verse-forms. Another vugo song is the following:-

Huyu yuwaya yuwaya mteleya nguu /  
 aya atukule pembe na pembe mwana nyema /  
 atukuziye akituwa mzigo kitwani.

---

This one comes, she comes swift of foot,  
 She comes carrying gleanings and the gleanings are a  
 lusty babe,  
 She carries it until she lowers the burden from her head.

---

mteleya nguu, from -tele- come or go down, run down a steep place, and nguu for mguu, foot, leg; atukule, for amechukua, she carries; mwana nyema, joyful child, more correctly mwana mnyema, cp. wana wanyema in previous poem.

Not all mavugo songs consist of un-rhymed, non-metrical verse, however, though none are identical with the formal quatrain to be observed later. The following example has both rhyme and a set measure of 11,12,11,12,12 mizani:

Kaenge kaenge pepo zavuma /  
 zavumiya shasha na mwana fatuma /  
 fatuma yu mbele shasha yu nyuma /  
 twende mti gani twendao kwegema /  
 mti mwenye tunda na maua mema.

---

Look, look, the winds do blow,  
 On Ayesha and on Fatuma too,  
 Fatuma is first and then Ayesha, I trow,  
 On which tree may we lean and to which do we go?  
 To the tree that with fruit and with flowers doth grow.

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It is possible that so-called mavugo songs in rhymed, metrical verse are not true mavugo songs, but are

called such only because of their association with a marriage festival. Certainly the dance-songs called gungu retain nothing but the name of what originally appear to have been enigma verses. Steere has recorded two so-called gungu songs,<sup>(1)</sup> and has given them the title of Gungu la Kufunda and Gungu la Kukwaa. These terms are translated respectively as The Pounding Figure and The Hesitation Dance, implying that the word gungu has special reference to a form of dance. Steere wrote, 'The names refer to the sort of steps in which the songs are danced'. His description of the performance is worthy of note:<sup>(2)</sup>

'It is the custom to meet about ten or eleven at night and dance on until daybreak. The men and slave women dance, the ladies sit a little retired and look on.....The first figure (la kufunda) is danced by a single couple, the second by two couples....Each piece takes a long time to sing, as most of the syllables have several notes and flourishes or little cadences to themselves'.

The two poems recorded by Steere, while being well-known from Lamu to Zanzibar, are not enigma verses. What Steere wrote about the musical accompaniment might apply to that given to other types of Swahili verse. A loose sheet in Taylor's manuscripts gives an extremely interesting text from Lamu concerning the gungu songs:<sup>(3)</sup>

'Huku Amu walipokwenda wakitaka fanya gungu hupelleka upatu kwa shaha na fedha ndani yakwe na tambuu nyingi na maji na sukari.

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(1) Steere, E., Swahili Tales, pp. 471-481.  
 (2) Steere, E., idem, Preface, p. xii.  
 (3) Taylor, W. E., in Vol. VII of *Reports*, the text is anonymous and undated.

Nalo gungu ni patu kubwa lapigwa. Nda asili lile patu latoka Shirazi. Na gungu shati nda harusi.

Basi shaha huweta wale washairi wenziwe walio tini yakwe, wakaja wakagawanya upatu. Wakisha gawanya, hutunga shairi. Shaha akafunga nyama. Maana ya kufunga nyama ni kufunga nyama kwa fumbo. Na lile shairi hawaambiwi maana yakwe lile fumbo, huwatajia tu.

Wakenda wakaaza ile jawabu yakwe majumbani mwao, hatta usiku ikiandikwa gungu kule hamsini.

Huyo shaha hutoka ule wimbo wake wa kufunga nyama, basi akafungua. Akatoka mtu kujibu. Basi akiwa anamfungua nyama shaha hupigapiga upanga, maana kumtambulisha kwamba nyama unamfungua wewe. Yule mwenyewe akajua nyama namfungua. Basi hutunga wimbo wa kujisifu.

Na akitomfungua, yule shaha humtungia wimbo wa kumvika guni, maana, kumtokoza, kumtahayarisha kwamba nyama hukumfungua, hukumjua nyama.

Basi huwa na huzuni sana, na wengine hulilia.'

'Here at Lamu when they went wishing to perform the gungu, a dish-shaped gong was sent to the Shah containing money, much betel (for chewing), water and sugar.

And the gungu is a big dish-shaped gong which is beaten. The gong with its gifts originates from Persia. For a gungu occasion there must be a wedding.

And so the Shah calls his friends the poets, who are his subjects, and they come and divide up the gifts in the gong. When they have shared them, a poem is composed. The Shah ties up an animal. The meaning of tying an animal is tying an animal by an enigma. They are not told the meaning of the enigma in that poem, the poem is just read out to them.

And they used to go and begin to solve the enigma in their houses, writing at night as many as fifty gungu songs.

The Shah gives out his 'tying the animal' song and then unties it (1). And there appears a man to answer (2). If he unties the animal (i.e. solves the enigma) the Shah beats a sword, this is to let him know that he has untied the animal (3). The man himself knows then that he has untied the animal. And so he composes a song to praise himself.

And if he does not untie it, the Shah composes a song kumvika guni (4), i.e. to tease him, to make him ashamed that he did not untie the animal and did not know the animal.

And so the man is very sorrowful, and some (even) cry.'

- (1) The reference to tying up and untying an animal is probably figurative for composing and solving an enigma in verse.
- (2) The Shah has not yet revealed to this man the solution.
- (3) The text here has direct speech, but is translated as indirect speech.
- (4) kumvika guni, the word guni has two meanings in mod. Swah., a matting-bag for packing dates, and an imperfection in verse, usually of rhyme. The literal translation here may be 'to dress him in a matting-bag', but it can mean 'to show him his mistake'.

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According to this text, which appears to be genuine, the gungu songs were originally enigma verses and not dance-songs. It is possible that these 'puzzle' songs were distinct from the topical verse in metaphor which abounds in manuscript form. By isolating the first consonant of alternate hemistichs or by numbering the initial consonant plus vowel in fixed positions within a verse and then placing them in numerical order it would be possible to decode an Arabic word or a short Swahili sentence. Hichens and Talbot-Smith have attempted this with a verse said to have been composed during the Pate-Lamu war of 1809, but their decoding is not altogether a success.<sup>(1)</sup> The fact is that no verses clearly recognisable as enigma verses appear to have survived. The difficulty of interpreting the more obscure poems, e.g. the ninety poems in MS. No. 47708 (S.O.A.S.), cannot be explained by supposing that they are enigma verses yet to be decyphered, but lies in the multiplicity of obsolete forms and obscure local and topical allusions.

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(1) Loose-sheet in Hichens' notes in Library of SOAS.

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The classification of Swahili metrical compositions has to be made with primary reference to the syllabic measure in a line, the division of the line into vipande (sing. kipande), called in Arabic misra, the number of lines to a verse, and the incidence of rhyme. The basis of each form is the baiti or verse, composed of two or more vipande or measures and containing neither more nor less than a set number of herufi or syllabic quantities.

The term mashairi (pl. of shairi) covers loosely any songs, poems or snatches of rhyme. Hichens<sup>(1)</sup> restricts the use of this term to certain long-measure poems and to the formal quatrain, but the term applies equally to tendi (sing. utendi), takhmisa and any other type of cultured composition. The utendi or epic, act or play is given by Hichens as the name of a regular form of metrical composition, but the name refers to the content rather than the form of such verse, though utendi verses are in fact different in form from, say, the quatrain or the takhmis. There are no Swahili names for the different prosodic forms, so that any attempt to classify them by Swahili names, as Hichens has done, is not justified. He distinguishes between mashairi and nyimbo (sing. uimbo), maintaining that the latter are popular songs as distinct from mashairi, the more cultured poetic composition. This distinction of content is sound

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(1) Hichens, Notes in manuscript on Swahili prosody in Library of SOAS.

enough, but its application to prosodic form, while convenient perhaps for the reader, is not according to any established practice by Swahili poets. They classify all verse, including nyimbo written for public performance, as mashairi. The difference of prosodic form has to be noted, but except in the case of the takhmis, a name and a prosodic form borrowed from Arabian poetry, no satisfactory classification by name of types of Swahili verse can be effected.

Conversely, the term uimbo (song) is never applied to the earlier verse showing definite Arabian influence, though it is likely that such earlier work was meant to be sung. Swahili poems are still sung to tunes of which the names correspond to the oriental maqamat, patterns of melody based, with a certain freedom, on one or other of the modal scales and characterised by stereotype turns, by mood and by pitch. The following ten maqamat are known on the Swahili coast in the present day:

- Rasit.<sup>(1)</sup> Jirka.<sup>(2)</sup> Rasidi.<sup>(3)</sup> Bayat.<sup>(4)</sup> Sika.<sup>(5)</sup>
- Hijaz.<sup>(6)</sup> Nawandi.<sup>(7)</sup> Hijaz Kar.<sup>(8)</sup> Duka.<sup>(9)</sup> Swaba.<sup>(10)</sup>

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(1) Ar. Rast, 'starting from the tonic, dignified in tempo and carriage and avoiding grace notes', Curt Sachs, The Rise of Music in the Ancient World, W. W. Norton & Co, Inc., N.Y., 1943, p.284; 'though generally known in musical circles, yet lives as a Persian art maqam only; the Arabian people just do not sing it', Curt Sachs, idem, quoting A. Z. Idelsohn, p.283.

(2) Ar. Djorka, 'the -djorka mode, cf. Aeolian mode of the Greeks (some authors call it the Grave Lydian), and

the 'seventh tone' of plain-song, having G for its base: grave and serious', Salvador-Daniel, Arab Music and Musical Instruments, ed. by Henry George Farmer, London, 1914, p.99.

- (3) Ar. Rasd, 'Of Rasd, there is no trace of the scale, says Rouanet, yet he mentions a Nouba Rasd and says the Touchiat Mezmoun is played with it, there being no Touchiat Rasd. From this it would appear that Rasd and Mezmoun had something like a common scale...There is a mode Rasd in the old Eastern Arabian and Persian systems, the first tetrachord of which resembles Mezmoun. Its scale is A,A sharp,C.D.E.F sharp,G.A.', Curt Sachs, *idem*, p.253.
- (4) Ar. Bayat, 'stresses the fourth', Curt Sachs, p.284, *idem*; 'two of the most popular oriental scales, Bayat and Isfahan are composed of a syntonon tetrachord and a ditoniaion pentachord', Curt Sachs, *idem*, p.214.
- (5) Ar. Sikah, 'the third below tonic', Curt Sachs, *idem*, p.284; 'the tritonic maqam Sika, which uses a B-scale without signature is more and more frequently given a perfect fifth by sharpening the note F', Curt Sachs, *idem*, p.305.
- (6) Ar. Hijaz, 'the most oriental scale of all, consists of a chromatic tetrachord and a diatonic pentachord', Curt Sachs, p.214, *idem*.
- (7) Ar. Nahawand, 'a true hypodorian on G', Curt Sachs, p.282, *idem*; 'Outstanding Egyptian virtuosos have been put to the test of measuring devices with the first pentachord of a melody in the maqam Nahawand', Alfred Berner, Studien zur arabischen Musik, Leipzig, 1937, p.15.
- (8) Lavignac in the article 'Musique Arabe' in the Encyclopedie de la Musique gives hijaz as 'one of the subdivisions of the fourth note of the Basic scale', and qarar-hijaz as 'the corresponding interval in the upper tetrachord'. (Information from Dr. A. A. Bake).
- (9) Lavignac, *idem*, gives dukahan, 'the second note of the Basic scale which could be the starting-point of a new maqam; the word is composed of the Persian du (two) plus the ending -kah common to all the original names of the notes of the Basic scale, e.g. yakah, sikah, etc.'. (From Dr. Bake).
- (10) Unidentified.

The modern tendency is for the Arab tune to be played without words on musical instruments, e.g., on the gramophone record Gallotone GB. 1245 T, Sika for small orchestra, and Gallotone GB. 1239 T, Nahawand, Violin Solo. No doubt the modern popularity of such Arab tunes is the result of modern Egyptian influence (it is significant that one orchestra which plays these tunes styles itself the Egyptian Musical Club, though all its players are Swahili), but it is generally held that poems with Arabian influence, especially the tendi, have always been sung to Arabian tunes. There is no manuscript evidence to support this. Curt Sachs has written of Arabian poetry that 'so important is maqam that every diwan, or collection of poems, is arranged according to the maqamat in which they are to be composed or sung'.<sup>(1)</sup> No such arrangement is made in Swahili manuscripts, nor have any musical directions been observed in them. It is likely that whereas the maqamat were never indicated in the script, the tunes employed were related to them, if not identical with them. Investigation by an expert musician into the tunes still employed for singing tendi and into their possible relationship with the Arabian modes would be of great interest, but is outside the scope of this present work even if we were capable of undertaking it.

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(1) Curt Sachs, op. cit., p.285.

Long-measure verse.

Long-measure is the characteristic metrical mould of some of the oldest known forms of Swahili verse. The long-measure baiti consists of a single line or strophe divided medially by a kituo or rest (caesura), which severs the strophe into two equal vipande or hemistichs (Ar. misra).

The Swahili poem written in A.D. 1749 by Sayyid Aidarus b. Athman al-Sheikh Ali and based upon the hamzated poem in Arabic, Umm al-Qura, by al-Busiriy<sup>(1)</sup> is an example of early long-measure. The interlinear version in Swahili, which is not just an exact translation of the Arabic, is a mimmiya poem, i.e. it rhymes in mimu.<sup>(2)</sup> Each Swahili baiti is divided into two vipande of 15-mizani each. Following Perso-Arabian rule, the two vipande of the first verse rhyme together, but the hemistichs of the succeeding verses do not rhyme together. The ajuzi (second kipande or hemistich) carries the terminal rhyme of every baiti in the composition. The Swahili poem is exceedingly difficult to interpret, containing as it does many obsolete forms and obscure constructions, but the following transliteration of four verses illustrates the text:

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(1) The Swahili MS is in Library of the SOAS.

(2) Hichens writes of this poem as though the Swahili poem is hamzated and not, or course, only the Arabic original.

v.1. Nanze kwa jinale bismillahi lenye athama / na ar-rahimani na muwawazi na ar-rahima.

I set first the name of Allah, and His exalted name  
The Merciful, the All-Wise, the Compassionate,  
I acclaim.

After 8 conventional verses of introduction the poem continues as follows:

v.9. Hali wakwelaye kukwelako mitume yonte / uwingu usio kulotewa ni moja sama.

v.10. Kawafani nawe rifaani pahajizile / nur<sup>u</sup> na rufaa kati kwenu kulu athima.

v.11. Walimithilile sifa zako kuliko wantu / ja maa yaliyo kumathili ndani nujuma.

How do they ascend to where all prophets ascend? /  
O heaven, than which no heaven is higher.  
They are not equal to Thee in thine exaltation /  
Thy light and brightness comes between you  
and them.  
They have reflected Thy praiseful virtues before men /  
Like as the stars are reflected in the water-pool.

v.9. wakwelaye, for wakwelaje, how do they ascend?; yonte, for mod. Swah. yote, note also in v.11 wantu for mod. Swah. watu; usio kulotewa, can mean 'which is not dreamed', but as with v.10 the construction is obscure and the translation follows the Arabic equivalent; sama, Ar. sama, heaven.

v.10. kawafani, etc., neither kawafani or rifaani have been identified in Swahili or Arabic dictionaries; rufaa, Ar. ruf'a, exaltation; pahajizile, prob. related to Ar. hajiz, to block; kulu athima, every great event, but again the text is obscure.

v.11. walimithilile...kumathili, cp. Ar. kamithl, like, and in mod. Swah. mithilisha, compare, also occurring as mithalisha, mathilisha, etc.; ja, Ar. like, as; maa, Ar. water; nujuma, Ar. stars.

In the Takhmis of Sayyid Abdallah (1) (c.A.D. 1720-1820) the final strophe of each verse is written as a single

(1) See p. 68 et seq. ante.

line. This strophe is in the same form of 15-mizani long-measure. When abstracted, the strophes can be set out as a separate poem, referred to as the Dungeon Song, but there is no certainty that these lines were in fact an earlier work forming the basis of a quinzaine redaction by Sayyid Abdallah. It is sufficient here to note the identity of form with the Swahili verses by Sayyid Aidarus.

Long-measure verse with 14-mizani to the kipande and with the kituo unrhymed is rare, but an example may be noted in the Bathing Song.<sup>(1)</sup> The most popular form of long-measure of this type is that with a baiti disposed in two vipande each of 10-mizani. Among the poems in this measure may be mentioned Utumbuizi wa Mananazi (Serenade to my Gentle Lady)<sup>(2)</sup>, Sifa za Mnazi (Praises of the Coconut Palm), Shairi la Kuowa (The Marriage Song), the serenade beginning Ewe mwana nyamaa silie ukalize wako walimbezi, O lady, be thou calm and cry not, but list to thy suitors patiently,<sup>(3)</sup> Shairi la Mjemje (Song to the Sweet-lote Tree)<sup>(4)</sup>, Utumbuizi wa Mwana Hejazi (Serenade to the Hejazian Maid)<sup>(5)</sup>, etc.

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(1) See p. 57 ante.

(2) Steere, Swahili Tales, p.

(3) Harre's, Africa, Swahili Verse in the Popular Tradition, for these three poems

(4) In Kichewa papers.

(5) In Taylor's Vol III.

Long-measure linked verses.

Besides the long-measure one-rhymed poems noted, which can be said to be related to the Arabian gasida in form, there are some early compositions in which the verses become linked together contextually in pairs, thus assuming the form of a couplet-verse with two rhyming lines. Whether this is in direct imitation of the Perso-Arabian mathnawi or doubly-rhymed couplet poem is uncertain, but the correspondence may be noted. The Wine Song on p. is an example of this type of verse, and the 10-mizani verses mentioned in the previous paragraph also have linked verses.

Long-measure triplet verse.

This form is uncommon with the sadri unrhymed, but in later verse with rhymed sadri it is often employed. Note the following example with a slight unrhymed kituo on the eighth herufi; the syllabic measure is 8-mizani to the kipande:

Howe wapigaje howe / nyama usijamfuma,  
Howe akali mwituni / na maguuye mazima,  
Howe nda mwenye kufuma / wewe una howe gani.

---

Howe! How dost thou cry Howe when thou hast not yet  
pierced a beast!  
Howe! while it is yet in the forest and its legs are whole!  
Howe! is the bowman's cry! Thou - what Howe cans't thou  
claim'.

---

usijamfuma, for mod. Swah. hujamchoma, the double negative elements -si- and -ja- are not employed in a single tense form in mod. Swah.



a MS. in the Taylor Papers and preserves the metric pattern of 9, 3, 9 mizani to the line. pambato, Steere gives patoto, but this is meaningless, - pambato, highly adorned or decorated; vitinde na kama, lit. bracelets and collars; saufu, for sarufu, amulets; mikiyi, Steere gives mikili, and equates this with tamvua, anything teased out, fringe, lappet, etc. Note also wavete, for mod. Swah. waliovaa.

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Long-measure couplets with vituo rhymes.

In the above forms of long-measure the verses are severed medially by vituo or rests at the end of the sadri, but the kituo is unrhymed. Examples occur of verse in which an internal rhyme upon the kituo is designed to respond to the kina or terminal rhyme of the baiti. The single strophe is thus a rhymed couplet, e.g. in the Song to Saada, p. 84, all the lines rhyme in -ka, but the rhymes upon huyatumika, kaweka, yakiyekuka, nyoka and nyika are internal rhymes upon the vituo.

Another example, with 14-mizani to the kipande, is the poem referred to as Fragment, on p. 51.

By gracing the vituo of the long-measure couplet with a rhyme responding to that already gracing the linked strophes, the couplet was broken into what to the ear is a four-rhymed verse of quatrain. The vituo-rhymes then throw into emphasis as new secondary vituo what were slight medial pauses in each hemistich, e.g. <sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Taylor Papers, No 47754

Mama poseleza mke mwenye cheo na nasabu /  
 kupe nguo za kashani za hariri na kasabu.  
 Kupe za ngandu mbaliya na pete za kiarabu /  
 kupe zitinde zanao na mivazi ya dhahabu.

---

Wed me to a maiden, mother, noble-born of lineage old,  
 From they treasure-chest, silk fabrics, golden  
 broideries unfold.  
 Give her rings of Arab silver, gems in settings golden-  
 scrolled,  
 Give her fringelets pearly-threaded and rare jewels  
 of fine gold.

---

kupe, prob. for akupe, let her (the mother) give thee (the maiden); mivazi, joint or string in a necklet, but also used generally of personal jewelry (obsolete), cp. Pete wa lulu muvazi, a pearl ring is her jewel, (Chuo cha Diriji, No.9, v.19).

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This poem is really a couplet of two long-measure verses, but the rhymed vituo throw into emphasis secondary vituo after the words mke, kashani, mbaliya and zanao. By dividing each hemistich into two measures these secondary vituo bestow upon it the verisimilitude of a self-standing line. The couplet thus appears to be a quatrain.

By the rules of Perso-Arabian prosody it was held that the terminal rhymes of all verses in a poem, however long the composition might be, must rhyme together. Therefore in the false quatrain, the vina or terminal rhymes of the linked verses must rhyme not only in pairs, as couplets, but throughout all the couplets. Furthermore, where the primary hemistichs of the couplets bore vituo-rhymes, those

also must respond to the vina. In other words, all 'four lines' of the false quatrain must rhyme together, and that being so, all 'lines' of a poem must carry the same rhyme. Once the poet had committed himself to a rhyme in his first 'line', he was bound by it throughout his poem. This is similar to the Arabian rajaz. It is not surprising, perhaps, that few poems of this type have survived in Swahili, even if many were composed. A few poems exist in which the vituo are rhymed without disturbing the vina rhymes of the verse, e.g.

Niwene nyama mkuu / katika anga kukaa,  
 Hana bawa hana guu / wendowe si kutambaa.  
 Makazi yakwe si juu / wala si katika pwaa,  
 Nguo zakwe ni bunguu / mafutaye ni chokaa.

A largish beast I chanced to see, which sometime lived up  
 in the air;  
 But neither wings nor paws had he, nor crept like snake from  
 here to there.  
 Not on the shore beside the sea, nor in the sky I saw his  
 lair;  
 But, on a platter, tastefully, its flesh lay white as chalk,  
 I swear.

Another example, this time of religious verse, is as follows: (1)

Yallah mwenyi ezi / mola wa kadimu,  
 Mjaye mjazi / zipungue hamu.  
 Sina usingizi / wala tabasamu,  
 Kwa nyingi simanzi / pamoya na ghamu.  
 Niondolea muwawazi / nitakao jamii yatumu,  
 Yote siri ni wewe mjuzi / ulotakamali nirehemu.

(1) In Sheikh Nbaraki's manuscript.



b. Haji Al-Ghassany (c. A.D. 1776-1840), for instance, are all written in quatrain form with rhymed vituo.<sup>(1)</sup>

~~(157)~~ The defective quatrain.

Comparatively few quatrain verses exist with unrhymed vituo, e.g. out of the 90 quatrain poems in MS.No. in the Library of the SOAS only six are of this type. Where they do exist they were, and still are, regarded by Swahili poets as guni, defective verse, or, in recent times, as mashairi ya kutupa vina, i.e. verses discarding rhyme. The following is an example of this type of guni verse.<sup>(2)</sup>

Kizazi cha bwana mji / na cha bwana bwanshoka,  
Kamwe hakipatikana / wa miji mungakitaka.  
Huku ni kujihatiki / na kujikusa mashaka,  
Misiki mungajipaka / illa huka hamunayo.

The birthright of the city-lord and of Bwanshoka, lord of state,  
Ye townsmen, though ye seek it, 'tis now and for aye inviolate.  
And so, annoyed and in dismay, 'tis ye yourselves ye aggravate!  
Nobles, with musk ye'd emulate, but that ye lack the civet-gland!

bwana mji, this might be a proper name, but it is unlikely; bwanshoka, prob. a proper name, the translation is adjusted to make the rhyme; kujihatiki, to trouble or annoy oneself; kujikusa mashaka, to involve oneself in doubts.

Note that each kipande is of 8-mizani, the entire verse containing 64 herufi. The sadri of the final line

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(1) *Duwani ya Dnyaka, Nkurakurand Pwani*  
(2) In Sheikh Obaidi's manuscripts.

rhymes with the ajuzi of the first three lines, an important feature of the regular Swahili quatrain. The kina of the final ajuzi, in -yo in the above example, must be repeated as the terminal kina of all successive verses of the poem, thus retaining a rule of Arabian prosody.

The regular quatrain.

The regular quatrain, with rhymed vituo and of 64 herufi in 8-mizani, can be typified by the first two verses of an early work referred to as Ukuti wa Arafaji (The Frond of Pandanus)<sup>(1)</sup>:

Ukuti wa arafaji / kwa maua ya huzama,  
Iwapo barafusaji / hainuki vumba jema.  
Asiliye ni wenyeji / kulitea weni-dama,  
Ndipo dahari kuwama / iso hadi na mwanya.

Dahari huitauzi / ulimbwengu hwenda pepe.  
Weupe hwinwa ja kuzi / wiu huzia weupe.  
Nia kumbukapo mwazi / si usindizi si lepe,  
Usiku hupea kope / sapati mato kufinya.

---

O pandanus-frond, sweet-scented, thou wert fairest 'midst  
the flowers,  
Till the violet, royal-tinted, reft from thee thy fragrant  
hours.  
Thus, when nation ill-contented, homage pays to stranger  
powers,  
In that hour her valour cowers, blessed nor by escape nor  
honour.

Through this age, this age ill-chosen, life as chaff is  
strewn away.  
O'er our light, the darkness fallen, cometh night to end  
our day.  
When upon our fate dost reason, sleep nor rest they fears  
allay,  
Through the long dark night dost stay, wide-eyed in thy  
vain endeavour.

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(1) In Sheikh Mbarak's manuscript.

The literal translation of the first two ajuzi is, 'Amongst the fairest flowers, it does not smell sweetly', iwapo barafusaji, where there is the violet; asiliye, lit. its origin, meaning 'because', 'for the reason that'; kulitea, for kulichea, with taifa understood, so that the whole kipande in full would be kulichea taifa la wenye-dama, being apprehensive about the nation of proud-strangers; weni-dama, or wenye-dama, proud strangers, cp. dama, pride; ndipo, etc... lit. 'then always stooping'; iso, for isiyo, and agrees with arafaji, as also hainuki, meaning 'not having'; hadi na mwanja, lit. honour and/or a gap. huitauzi, from -tauzi (obsolete), be ill-favoured, lit. it is ill-favoured; ulimbwengu, for ulimwengu, the world; hwenda pepe, lit. goes (like) an empty husk of grain; weupe, whiteness, but here is translated 'light'; hwinwa ja kuzi, lit. is drunk up like (as from) a jug; wiu huzia weupe, lit. blackness abhors whiteness; kumbukapo, for akumbukapo, the kipande then lit. means 'when a thinker (mwazi) remembers (his) intention; usindizi, for usingizi, sleep; lepe, drowsiness; hupea kope, the eye-lids are over-stimulated or extended, radical -pe- (obsolete), but cp. upeo wa macho, as far as the eye can see; sapati, for hapati (s for h is common in verse), hapati mato kufinya, he does not get the eyes to close.

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While not departing from this accepted form of the quatrain, Swahili poets have experimented with many variations and adornments of it. The chief of these have been the addition of refrains or choruses, the inclusion of proverbs, invocations and topical 'saws', the exposition of dialogue and such fanciful devices as the repetition or reversal of lines. Some of the latter appear to have been patterned upon Perso-Arabian models. The following examples are typical of the acknowledged forms of the quatrain shairi:



Gongwa, an old name for Mombasa (properly Mambasa), and so also Kongoweya (see Taylor, African Aphorisms, nos. 68,156, 164,359,360), Taylor identified Kongoweya as the old city on the island shore opposite Kisauni, the N.E. mainland shore of the creek at Mombasa where Freretown was founded, 'its ruins are still remaining, and the tombs of its sultans witness to its ancient fame'; alotungwa, for mod. Swah. aliyechungwa, who is cared for; kiyini, for kijini, a little fairy or spirit; ametakata mwanangwa, lit. she is purified the nobly born; kombo, defect, fault.

maninga, eyes, Cl.5, ninga, (obsolete); akiyavuwa, if he opens them, -vuwa mato, -vuwa maninga, open the eyes (obsolete); hana budi, etc. lit. he must be deceived, while he is satisfied; hana alipo punguwa, lit. she has nothing where she is wanting or defective.

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(b) Refrains of two vipande.

These are carried throughout the final line of each verse, e.g. <sup>(1)</sup>:

Nalipawa ulimwengu / nanywi mkiangaliya,  
 Hikosa sina matungu / ndivyo ulivyo duniya.  
 Mja hwondolewa fungu / naye alihitajiya.  
 Amuri ikinijiya / hifuata tatendaje.

---

Kwani amuri ni nzito / ukiiza hukujiya,  
 Kukukosa we ni pato / kiumbe huzingatiya,  
 Ulimwengu ni utoto / hau mwanzo ukasiya,  
 Amuri ikinijiya / hifuata tatendaje.

---

I was bestowed of mortal life, and when I die, do ye behold,  
 'Twill fill me with no bitter grief, for 'tis the custom  
 of this world.  
 From out life's throng each man must life be taken when his  
 hour is told.  
 Shall I not, then, when I am called, gladly obey life's  
 last command?

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(1) In Sheikh Nbarah's manuscripts.

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nalipawa ulimwengu, lit. I received the present world; hikosa, for nikikosa, if I fail, cf. hifuata for nikifuata; alihitajiya, lit. he needed, and one might expect the passive here, but more likely the script should be read as ali hitajiya, he needs (to depart, unexpressed), cf. ahitajiya kupigwa, he needs to be beaten; amuri, etc. lit. if the command comes to me (and) if I follow, what shall I do?; tatendaje, for nitatendaje.

ukiiza hukujiya, lit. if you reject it, it comes to you; kukukosa we, for you to fail; kiumbe huzingatiya, lit. a created being bears it in mind; hau, demonstrative agreeing with mwanzo, Cl.3; ukasiya, and it comes to an end.

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(c) Refrains in Arabic.

That the use of a refrain is borrowed from Arabic is shown by the occurrence of a refrain in Arabic, especially in religious Swahili verse. "Arabs always favoured a line that vividly and compactly expressed a moral or an axiom in a proverbial way. In their oratory, in their moments of exaltation and in situations that needed some laconic and effective remark, they usually resorted to such lines. An argument could triumphantly be brought to an end, and an adversary made to feel himself at a loss by the simple means of the rival throwing in one of these disarming lines at the right moment. Naturally a poet who supplied his community with such gems was very much esteemed and his name often praised<sup>(1)</sup>". Refrains in Arabic included

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(1) Elkott, A., Arab Conception of Poetry as illustrated in Kitab Al-muwazanah bayna Abi Tammam wal-Buhturi, p.146, (Thesis for Ph.D. London Un.).

in Swahili verse are usually based upon a Quranic or other holy passage. Such refrains were either of one or two vipande, e.g.

(1)  
(i) Arabic refrain of one kipande:

Ukata na ushataki / illahi nimeonawo,  
Hujua situnumuki / na kazi nizatendawo.  
Uso wangu sifumuki / kwa wivu nilio nawo.  
Ya Rabbi nipa kikawo / Ewe kun fayakun.

Rabbi kikao unipe / iyongoke kazi yangu,  
Na madeni niyalipe / ufurahi moyo wangu,  
Na cha mtu nisikope / linitoshe langu fungu,  
Yajae makasha yangu / Ewe kun fayakun.

---

This penury with hardship fraught, that I, O Lord, have  
suffered long,  
Thou know'st 'twas not upon me wrought by mine own deeds  
of wilful wrong.  
I veil my face; for e'er with thought of envy sad my  
heart is wrung.  
Grant me good dwelling midst Thy throng, O thou who art  
th'Eternal one!

O Lord, good dwelling grant, I pray, that all my tasks may  
prosper well,  
That all my debts I may repay, and may my heart with joy  
be full,  
Nor let me beg of any - nay! My lot, may it suffice me all,  
And may my chests with riches fill, O thou who art  
th'Eternal one!

---

ushataki, for ushtaki, accusation; nimeonawo, which I see, note that wau is included for the sake of the rhyme, whereas it need not be written if the word is in medial position; hujua, (people) know, the habitual; situnumuki, an obscure form, so the meaning has to be guessed in this line; sifumuki, I do not reveal; nipa, for nipe, give me; in the refrain ewe is Swahili and means 'O thou'. iyongoke, let it prosper, the verbal is -ongok-, the rest of the verse needs no comment. *Kun fayakun, Ar. Be said it is*

---

(1) Sheikh Ibrahim's manuscripts.

(1)  
(ii) Arabic refrain of two vipande:

Moyo huati faza'a / vishindo na kakakaka,  
 Usiandame buta'a / ghururi ikakushika.  
 Siyaoni manufa'a / ni kheri ukayepuka.  
 La takathiru hamaka / ma kadara yakunu.

Ambapo wanisikiya / yangu naliyotamuka,  
 Maneno yangu nda ndiya / hayakutupa mipaka.  
 Nami nakuhurumiya / kheri uondoe shaka,  
 La takathiru hamaka / ma kadara yakunu.

---

O soul, why dost not cast aside thine ostentatious vain  
 array?  
 Abandon thy ambitious pride whose false allure shalt thee  
 betray.  
 No worth therein may be descried, 'twere best to cast that  
 life away.  
 Of wealth make thou no false display lest penury become  
 thy lot.

And if, O soul, thou wilt but heed this counsel wise that  
 now I pray,  
 Along the virtuous road 'twill lead, nor, from its bounds  
 e'er let thee stray.  
 In pity t'ward thee do I plead, 'twere well thou cast all  
 doubts away.  
 Of wealth make thou no vain display lest penury become thy  
 lot.

---

huati, for huachi, thou dost not leave; faza'a, trouble,  
 disquiet (fadhaa in mod. Swah.); kakakaka, used adverbially  
 in mod. Swah. meaning 'in a rush, in a hurry', also kikaka,  
 hastiness, bustle; usiandame buta'a, lit. do not accompany  
 or follow astonishment, i.e. do not be a seven day's wonder;  
ghururi ikakushika, and let deceit or false pride get hold  
 of you; siyaoni manufaa, lit. I do not see the use or  
 advantage. The refrain in Arabic is: Wa takathiru (ahad) hamaka / ma  
 kadara yakunu, Do not try to be more proud than anyone else / what He decrees will be.

---

(d) Refrains of four vipande,

This is a very uncommon form, as follows.<sup>(1)</sup>

Ule dari ukandika / hata tone lisitone,  
Dongo likaporomoka / linti ligendemene,  
Ungeshika kuteteka / mbele yakwe ni mavune,  
Bandika ukibandua / ukibandika vingine.

Wahadaula sharika / ni yeye hako mwingine.  
Mkuu ni rama nyoka / hapazwa tusimuone.  
Ungeshika kuteteka / mbele yakwe ni mavune,  
Bandika ukibandua / ukibandika vingine.

---

That roof was mortared well with lime, that ner'er could  
drip a drop of rain,  
Yet did the mortar crack e'er time was granted it to hold  
the strain.  
So, when ye quarrel, 'tis a crime whose future harvest is  
but pain,  
As though, roofing thy house with care, thou broke thy roof  
to roof again.

By God, I swear, who is alone, 'tis he unrivalled in His  
fame.  
Steadfast, great, and quick to condone, lifted high 'bove  
mortal domain,  
So, when ye quarrel,...(Repeat).

---

ukandika, verbal -kandik-, cover the wooden framework of a hut with prepared clay; dongo, for udongo, earth, clay, note that it is in Cl.5 and not Cl.14; linti ligendemene, the text is probably corrupt here, because linti cannot be identified and ligendemene is from -gandaman-, be set, be firm (as of plaster); mbele yakwe ni mavune, lit. its future is consequences; bandika, fasten on; bandua, take off. wahadaula sharika, Ar. Wahdahu la sharika lahu; hako, for mod. Swah. hayuko, there is no one; ni rama nyoka, this could be read, 'it is rama the snake', but this is meaningless, so it is better to take rama as contraction of rahama, the compassionate one, and nyoka for aliyenyo, who is steadfast; hapazwa, for akapazwa, and he is/was lifted up.

---

(1) Hicken's Papers, 53502.

Note, from the rhyme, that in this poem the true sadri and ajuzi of the last line in each verse are transposed. The poet has found difficulty in making the sense correspond to the required rhyme. The poem has to be classified as guni, defective verse, for this reason. The sadri of the last line should rhyme with each ajuzi of the first three lines. This applies even in verse with a fixed refrain of sadri and ajuzi in the last line, so that in verse of this type the rhyme of the ajuzi is fixed for each verse throughout the poem. In a great deal of modern verse this convention is broken, e.g.<sup>(1)</sup>

Kweli yataka hodari / aseme ikimpinga,  
 Ni chungu kama shubiri / wengi uwongo hutunga  
 Iwazingapo hatari / wengi kweli huikenga,  
 Hawi mkweli mkenga / kweli zama za hatari.

Hawi mkweli mkenga / akengaye hako shwari,  
 Hawi shwari kuikinga / wala si njema hadhari.  
 Si hadhari kuipinga / kweli inapodhihiri.  
 Hawi mkweli mkenga / kweli zama za hatari.

The first verse is in regular quatrain form, but the second verse is guni, because the fourth sadri does not rhyme with the first three ajuzi.

Truthfulness needs man's courage, let him speak if it  
 thwarts him,  
 Bitter as herbs is truth; many fabricate a lie  
 When danger surrounds them; they play tricks with truth.  
 The true man is no deceiver, ah, truth in times of danger.

---

(1) By Kaluta Amri b. Abedi (in manuscript).

The true man is no deceiver, he who deceives is not at peace,  
 He is not calm to check the lie, nor (for him) is caution  
 It is not prudent (for him) to contradict it, when truth welcome,  
 The true man, etc.... is made evident,

Poems with Linked Verses.

Poems in which successive verses are linked together by the repetition in each successive verse of a terminal measure of the preceding verse were popular especially in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The device was adopted earlier by Swahili poets and bears out the fancy that verses are like strings of pearls in a necklet, graced with clusters of larger pearls, the rhymes, at intervals, e.g.:

Makusudi yangu ya kudhamiri, /  
 nda kutunga koja kilidawiri.  
 Mivazi ya duri ikinawiri /  
 mikinda ya lulu nyuma nitiye.

For, 'tis my purpose and my heart's design,  
 a rosary's pure circlet to entwine,  
 That wisdom's pearl adorning it may shine,  
 and, to its end, thought's cluster'd pearls enchain.  
 (Al-Inkishafi, v.7).

The linking is of two types, the simple, mashairi ya nyoka, or 'continued' verses, and the reversed, mashairi ya mapinde, or 'turned line' verses.

Mashairi ya nyoka.

- (a) Linking by repetition of the final sadri.

This is the most common expedient and it is usually combined with the grace of a refrain in the final ajuzi, e.g. (1)

Kusumbuani si kwema / ewe mzuri tausi,  
Mwenye cheo cha heshima / ndoo hima kwa upesi,  
Tuambiane kalima / zitue zetu nafusi,  
Wajua sina kiasi / jinsi nikupendawo.

Wajua sina kiasi / hali yangu waijuwa,  
Nakupenda we khalisi / unishize moyo ngowa,  
Hiwa nina wasiwasi / ni wewe wa kunituwa,  
Nda nini kunisumbuwa / jinsi nikupendawo.

---

To annoy you is not good, O you lovely peacock!  
O, most nobly ranked, come quickly,  
Let us speak to one another and so comfort ourselves.  
You know that I have no limit in my love for you.

You know that I have no moderation, you know my state,  
I love you truly, so solace my passion,  
While I am in this state of disquiet, 'tis you who can  
pacify me.  
Why do you leave me thus distressed, in my love for you.  
Why do you leave me thus distressed, increasing my  
sorrow, etc..

---

ndoo hima, for njoo hima, come quickly, with kwa upesi a redundancy; kalima, lit. a voice, is also redundant after tuambiane, let us tell one another; jinsi nikupendawo, more correctly should read jinsi nikupendayo, the way I love you; hiwa, for nikiwa, if I am, while I am; nda for ni ya.

---

(b) Linking by repetition of the final ajuzi.

This is a rare device, but it is exemplified by the verses quoted on p. 100, post.

---

(1) Hichewe's *Yapana*, in roman script.

Mashairi ya mapinde.

In these 'turned line' verses, usually graced by a refrain, the final sadri of each verse is carried over to form the initial sadri of the succeeding verse, with the difference that the sadri is reversed or turned over, e.g.<sup>(1)</sup>

Simba ndume na wambuji / sikizani tatongowa,  
Niketetele vitongoji / na safari za mashuwa,  
Leo nakumbuka mbiji / ya kutweka na kutuwa,  
Ai pato na mpewa / litakapo kukutana.

Ai mpewa na pato / lipalo mtu kukuwa,  
Angawa mwana mtoto / wa kutishika kachewa,  
Akiwa na upasito / wa kutamani ukiwa,  
Ai ndwele na afuwa / itakapo kukutana.

Ai afuwa na ndwele, etc...

---

Lionhearts and ladies gentle, list, while I my lay declare.  
I have dwelled in many a hamlet, many a good ship bore me  
there,  
But today, alone, I think me of one barque, in foul or fair.  
Ah! the blessing and the blessed, when, perchance the  
twain do meet!

Ah! the blessed and the blessing! What doth fill man's  
soul with power?  
Though he be but puling infant frightened by the dawn's hour,  
If he but acquires life's riches, then he wishes to be poor.  
Ah! the sickness and the healing, when, perchance the  
twain do meet!

Ah! the healing and the sickness, etc...

---

niketele, for mod. Swah. nimekaa, I have dwelled in; safari za mashua, lit. journeys by boat; ya kutweka na kutuwa, cf.

---

(1) *Hidden papers, 4th volume, 2nd page*

kutweka tanga, to hoist sail, and kutua tanga, to lower sail; litakapo, the subjectival concord of this word in each of the other 18 verses of the poem is irregular, agreeing in most cases with the first nominal of the sadri, whereas a plural concord, Cl.11, would be expected. lipalo mtu kukuwa, lit. which gives a man to grow; kuchewa, to be overtaken by the dawn; upasito, cf. mtu mpasi, one who acquires things, the enclitic -to is used, so that the meaning is 'much acquisition of power, riches, etc'...

---

The best known exponent of the linked-verse style was Muhammad bin Abubakar (c. A.D.1790-1857), and a very good example of his work called Mashairi ya Kupambana is in a transliteration by Sheikh Mbarak of Mombasa.<sup>(1)</sup> Su'ud bin Sa'id (c. A.D.1800-78), Muhammad bin Ahamed (c. 1870) and Khalfan bin Abdallah al-Mazrui (c. 1870) have all written poems in the linked-verse style.

#### Poems with repeated segments.

Poems in which one or more lines, or the whole or a part of a word are repeated within each verse are termed mashairi ya takiriri. The device takes several forms which may be regarded as a kind of poetic acrobatics indulged in by the poet to show his skill in designing verse. As with the linked verses a kipande may be repeated either simply or reversed. Of similar type are songs with a 'turned over' rhyming word, or rhyming syllables, ending the sadri and initiating the succeeding ajuzi, or ending the ajuzi and initiating the succeeding sadri.

---

(1) In roman script, collection by Sheikh Mbarak. (SOAS, unclassified).

Type 1. The first sadri is repeated simply as the final  
ajuji.<sup>(1)</sup>

Nenda na ukiwa wangu / nikaapo hakumbukwa,  
Mema na maovu yangu / yalipo yakamulikwa,  
Yakakusanywa vitungu / kulla nyumba pakapekwa  
Sirudi nyuma hatekwa / nenda na ukiwa wangu.

Nenda na ukiwa wangu / na kungi kufurahiwa, etc.

---

In solitude I walk alone, yet, as a well-remembered guest,  
Where'er I dwell, all I have done of good or ill, is put  
to test,  
And gathered for comparison in every home; but fearing  
lest  
They mock me there if there I rest, - in solitude I walk  
alone.

In solitude I walk alone, and life is filled with happiness,  
etc.

---

yakamulikwa, let them be shone down upon; vitungu, things  
arranged together, for vitungo, in mod. Swah. mitungo;  
pakapekwa, where search is made, from -pekua, be prying,  
search diligently; sirudi nyuma hatekwa, lit. I do not go  
back to be laughed at.

---

Type 2. The third ajuji is repeated, simply, as the fourth  
sabri, e.g.<sup>(2)</sup>

Kisimbo cha mkunazi / nigongea kwacho pembe,  
Na upatu wa Hejazi / uliyokama uwambe,  
Uneteye wapokezi / wambeja wema wapambe,  
Wambeja wema wapambe / wenye urembo na shani.

---

With rod from out the sidr's glades, O beat the buffalo-  
horn, I pray,  
The cymbals, taut with silken braids, from far Hejaz, our  
homeland, play!

---

(1) Hichens papers, no 53504.  
(2) Taylor papers, Vol III.

And bring to me the chorus-maids, the pretty maids in  
 The pretty maids in garments gay, so fairly garbed, so  
 garments gay,  
 beautiful!

---

kisimbo, for kifimbo, a small stick; mkunazi, the Arabian sidr, the tree zizyphus Spina-Christi; nigongea kwacho pembe, lit. beat the horn with it for me; upatu, a gong, but translated here 'cymbals'; uliyokama uwambe, could be either ulio kama uwambe or uliokama uwambe, probably the first, meaning 'it is as something covered with an overlay', i.e. the gong or cymbal, and not from -kam- squeeze out; uneteye, for unilettee, bring to/for me; wapokezi, chorus-maids; urembo, adornment; shani, for nguo za shani, fine clothes.

---

Type 3. The first three sadri are repeated, in reverse, as the first three ajuzi. This type is termed shairi la takiriri na pindo, e.g.<sup>(1)</sup>

Lakutenda situuze / situuze lakutenda,  
 Metufunda wanamize / wanamize metufunda,  
 Kuwa punda tuyizize / tuyizize kuwa punda,  
 Kwandikwa tapo tutenda / hilo halipatikani.

---

To do this thing let him not ask us; let him not ask to  
 do this thing!  
 He has crushed us like shore-crabs; like shore-crabs he has  
 crushed us!  
 To be pack-donkeys we refuse; we refuse to be pack-donkeys!  
 To be saddled in packs for work, that is what will not be  
 achieved!

---

situuze, for usituuze, do not ask us, -uz- ask, in mod. Swah. -uliz-; wanamize, for wanamizi, a hermit-crab, the suffix

---

(1) From Sheikh Nizami's papers. This type may be compared with the Persian form known as tard u 'aks, 'thrust and inversion' (Browne, Edward G., A. Literary History of Persia, p.75).

is read as: -e for the sake of the rhyme, both -e and -i being represented by kisra in the text; tuyizize, for tuizize, -iziz- absolutely refuse; kwandikwa, lit. to be arranged; tapo, a troop, number of men or animals; hilo halipatikani, lit. that is not obtainable.

Type 4. Another type of repetitive and 'turned-line' verse in which the first sadri is repeated in reverse as the fourth ajuzi, and the third ajuzi is repeated, simply, as the fourth sadri. This may be compared with the Persian pattern known as raddu'l - 'ajuz 'ala 's-sadr<sup>(1)</sup>, in which the last ajuzi is thrown back to the first sadri. The following is an example:<sup>(2)</sup>

Kalizani watapamba / mukilingana mishindo,  
Na nziu yungile mwamba / irurume kama nundo,  
Nina yambo tawafumba / na pasiwe mwenye kondo,  
Na pasiwe mwenye kondo / watapamba kalizani.

Ye gay-robed maids, strike up your song, and to our music  
join your cries,  
And beat the silken-corded gong reverberating to the skies!  
Secrets I'll tell to ye in song, such things as no one may  
despise!  
Such things as no one may despise! Strike up your song, ye  
gay-robed maids!

kalizani, for mkalizani, from -li- cry out; watapamba, a compound nominal, the form mta (pl. wata) means 'one who wears, or puts on', and so in old verse wata-ziyemba, wearers of turbans, and here means 'finely dressed people', usually

(1) Browne, Edward G., idem, p.60.  
(2) In Scheffé, Obarak's manuscripts.

referring to women; nziu, lit. the sound of the gong or of the horn; yungile mwamba, lit. let it reach the vault of the heavens; irurume kama nundo, let it reverberate like a hammer; tawafumba, for nitawafumba, I will puzzle you; pasiwe mwenye kondo, lit. without there being a man of war, i.e. the things to be told will not rouse anyone's anger.

---

Type 5. The last two herufi (syllables) of the ajuzi are turned over to become the initial herufi of the succeeding sadri, so to form a self-standing word, e.g.<sup>(1)</sup>

Penda kukwambia neno / ambalo la kuwajibu,  
 Jibu, basi, mundi muno / kwa pole na taratibu,  
 Tibu huipenda muno / harufuye nda ajabu,  
 Jabu si yetu haribu / Usambe sikukwambiya.

---

I wish to tell you something, which is in reply to you,  
 Answer, then, with due accord, with care and neatness,  
 It likes perfume very much, its smell is wonderful,  
 Is not the lion our destruction? Don't say I didn't tell  
 you.

---

This is a modern enigma-verse or fumbo, the point of which turns on the word jabu, Ar. jab, a lion, a term not much in use either in Swahili or in Arabic. The word may to the writer have had two meanings, but the second one has not been identified. As it stands the poem is no puzzle at all. mundi, prob. for mungi, in which case jibu mungi would have meant 'answer well'; muno, for mno, very much: usambe, for usiambe, do not say.

---

Type 6. This form of turned verse amplifies the preceding by turning over the last two herufi of both the sadri and the

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(1) Hickey's collection.

ajuzi to become self-standing words initiating the respective hemistichs, e.g.<sup>(1)</sup>

Napenda kusema nawe / nawe usiwe khiyana,  
Yana nalikutaka we / kawe mfano wa nana,  
Nana nituza nituwe / tuwe wa kusikizana,  
Zana ya juzi na jana / jana nalikupa wewe.

---

I love to speak with thee, and thou, be not scornful,  
Yesterday I wanted thee, that thou shouldst be as a bride,  
O bride, soothe me that I may be calm, let us be in full  
accord,  
As to the thought of yesterday or the day before, I give you  
yesterday.

---

khiyana, mean-spirited person; zana, for dhana, thought, notion, idea, and not zana, fittings, apparatus, which takes concord of Cl.10.

---

This jingling of rhyme gave rise to a popular device of making up a quatrain to express different meanings of identical syllables, or to begin or end the first three lines with identical syllables, e.g.<sup>(2)</sup>

Nipakiya ni kivuko / nivuke ng'ambo ya pili,  
Nipa kiya kifuniko / kifunikiwacho wali,  
Nipakiya ni kipako / kile kitiwacho kili,  
Nipa kiya cha muili / cha guu au mukono.

---

'Put me on board', it is a ferry, that I may cross to the  
other side,  
Give me something for a lid, a covering, that covers rice,  
'Dye it for me', it is a dye, that which is used for  
plaited matting strips,  
Give me a joint of the body, of the leg or the hand.

---

(1) *Hickson's collection.*  
(2) In Taylor's complete collection of aphorisms, microfilm of MS in Witwatersrand University.

nipakiya, verbal -paki- put on board a vessel; kiya, for mod. Swah. kia, anything used as a lid; nipakiya, verbal -pak- smear, paint on, dye; kitiwacho, which is put on, -ti- put; kili, Cl.10, ukili, Cl.14, the strips of plaited matting may be dyed in different colours and are known as kili za karafuu, gongo, kito cha pete, nzi, dema, puleki nyekundu, koja la mbe, etc.; kiya, for kia, joint of the body.

Note the repetition of ziwa in the following example:<sup>(1)</sup>

Kiya wa kule mashamba / nilikutana na ziwa,  
 Kilinda yuwa kipumba / kutululu wenye ziwa,  
 Kikutwa niwene komba / wajile katika ziwa,  
 Wenyewe wakamba ziwa / nda kwetu liko mbele.

'Step over', concerning there, the fields, I came across  
 a pond,  
 While waiting, know ye, (I threw) a small clod to disturb  
 the dwellers in the pond,  
 At sunset I saw some galago, who had come into the pond,  
 And they said, The pond belongs to our home, it is there  
 in front.

kiya, verbal -ki- step over; kilinda, for nikilinda, while waiting or guarding (the crops); kikutwa, for likikuchwa, in mod. Swah. likichwa, while setting (of the sun), this could be read nikikutwa, while being met, but the context favours the version adopted above.

This play on words owes very little to Arabian influence, but is closely akin to other types of 'catchwords'

(1) In Sheikh Mbarak's manuscripts, (roman script), -  
~~unclassified materials~~

play in the oral tradition of Bantu peoples. It results in poor verse, but has to be included in any general survey of Swahili literature.

Regular three-line verse.

This may be compared to long-measure triplet verse<sup>(1)</sup> and to verse in which the sadri and the ajuzi each has its own rhyme throughout the poem.<sup>(2)</sup> The distinctive feature of regular three-line verse is that the last sadri of each verse rhymes with the two previous ajuzi. Poems of this type are peculiar to the poets of Manda island, and are of rare occurrence. They owe their form to the multiple-poem called by the Persians musammāt and by the Arabs muwashshah.<sup>(3)</sup> The following is an example<sup>(4)</sup>.

Nali na wajawa kenda / wali taa watiile,  
Katika siku chenenda / ghafula nijikuile,  
Nambiwa walikimbile / waka wenye taathimu.

Walikimbile kwa wote / waja wema msharafu,  
Moyo ndani mtotote / kilia kita asafu,  
Wapi waja maarufu / wakele ja wana amu.

---

I had ten slaves, ten maids so fair, who would my slightest  
whim obey.  
One day I stroll to take the air when, suddenly, to my  
dismay,  
I'm told, Thy slaves have run away! Thy pretty maids are  
fled from you!

---

(1) See p. 131 ante.

(2) See p. 135

(3) See Browne, Edward G., idem p. 41.

(4) See Dickens papers

And all of them had fled away, my pretty maids so debonair!  
 My heart stood still and, in dismay, aloud I cried in my  
despair,  
 'Where are my lovely slaves, O where, who dwelled like  
ladies of Lamu!'

wali taa, for wali na taa, they had obedience, the same meaning as watiile, they obeyed, -tii, obey, with old perfect ending; chenenda, for nikienenda, while I was going about; nijikuile, things became too much for me, cf. in mod. Swah. neni hili limemkulia kubwa, this thing has grown too much for him, the verbal is -kuli- and the second consonant is elided in the text; nambiwa, for naambiwa, I am told; walikimbile, lit. they ran away, remote past, with tense infix -li- and perfect ending; waka wenye taathimu, women having respect, honoured ladies; waja wema msharafu, lit. the good women, O noble one, msharafu is Cl.1 and so does not apply to the women; kilia kita, for nikilia nikiita, (I) crying and calling out; wakele, for mod. Swah. waliokaa, who lived; ja, like.

Regular six-line verse.

In this type again the verse is disposed in lines of 16-mizani with a rhymed kituo and the last sadri rhymes with the preceding five ajuzi. This is a rare form, e.g.<sup>(1)</sup>

Niliketi siku moya / kweleza katika muji,  
 Bwene yakanijiliya / mashairi ya kimiji,  
 Yakiya yakinambiya / na amali bwana haji,  
 Afuwate walikiya / shariati menihuji,  
 Mke akivumiliya / naye ali msubiji,  
 Asi nguo asi uji / bali akajitamali.

One day I sat me down to give advice in the village way,  
 I saw the minstrels of the town coming to greet me and  
they say,  
 'In law's disputes thou hast renown, tell us if Bwana  
Haji, (he  
 Doth follow after us as well,)hath acted lawfully or nay.

(1) In Hambley manuscript.

His wife all patiently hath borne much trouble uncomplainingly,  
Of lack of clothes, of food, yet she hath held herself apart  
from blame.

---

kweleza, lit. to explain; bwene, for niliona, I saw; na amali bwana haji, lit., and the business, Bwana Haji; afuwate walikiya, lit. let him follow, they used to come (-liki- tense of -ja or -ya), the meaning here being interpreted as 'they, the minstrels, used to come for advice and Haji used to come with them', shariati, sharia, the law; menihuji, for wamenihoji, they have asked me; msubiji, for mod. Swah. msubiri, a patient person; asi nguo asi uji, for asiye na nguo asiye na uji, who is without clothes or gruel; akajitamili, and she ruled herself, cf. in mod. Swah. akajitamalaki.

---

Regular seven-line verse.

The verse is disposed in seven lines of 16-mizani each severed medially by rhyming vituo; the sadri of the first three lines rhyme together, as also, with a different rhyme, do those of the next three lines. Once again, the last sadri rhymes with the preceding ajuzi. The following is an example of this rare verse-form:<sup>(1)</sup>

Taire mzyele wangu / baba nakwambia heko,  
Kunitaya kwa matungu / pamoya na sikitiko,  
Kufariki ulimwengu / hakutafuta uliko,  
Mwenda kuzimu kauya / wala hana matamko,  
Visivyokuwa nambiya / kwani mimi sikuwako,  
Ewe mwana saudiya / watuonyesha vituko,  
Heko baba yangu heko / kuzimu ulirudiye.

---

Hail, O my father, revered sire! Hail, I salute thee,  
noble head!  
Men told me, to my sorrow dire, and bitter grief, that  
thou wert dead,

---

(1) In collection No 63200.

That thou had left this earth, and I sought thee if 'twere  
truly said;  
He makes no sound, the departed spirit who to the tomb is led.  
They tell me falsely, things that I myself had not witness-ed,  
O Prince of Saud, thou showest us things to make us  
terrorised,  
Hail, father mine, well done and hail, for thou art risen  
from the dead!

---

taire and heko, Hail, well done, hooray!; kunitaya, for  
kunitaja, (they) telling me; hakutafuta, for nikakutafuta,  
and I looked for you; kauya, for akauya, and he left /leaves;  
ulirudiye, past tense of -rudi, return, with -li- tense-infix  
and modified base.

---

Verse of Four Hemistichs.

In the quatrain a single verse in the Swahili-  
Arabic script is usually disposed in two lines with the  
customary symbol (usually of triangular shape) to mark not  
only the vituo but also the end of a line. Verse of four  
hemistichs is written either as a single line (especially if  
the syllabic measure is a short one) or as two lines. This  
is an important verse-form, because it is employed for  
writing tendi, romantic epics, and hadithi or hadisi, cir-  
cumstantial accounts of real or legendary historical episodes.  
It has also been used for writing homiletic and didactic  
monologues.

The baiti of this form, whatever its measure, is  
disposed in four hemistichs, each containing the same number

of mizani. The first three hemistichs rhyme together, and the fourth carries a kina rhyme which is repeated as the terminal rhyme of every verse in the poem.

The most popular measure is in 8-mizani, and most of the long tendi are written in it. The earliest known work in this measure is the Utendi wa Herkali<sup>(1)</sup> (also called Tambuka), composed in the first half of the eighteenth century at the command of the sultan of Pate. The following typical verses are from Hadithi ya Mikidadi na Mayasa<sup>(2)</sup>

Sana akaghadhibika / mno akasikitika /  
moyoni akikumbuka / yaliyompitikiya.  
  
Hasira zikamngiya / kinya kainyamaliya /  
asinene hatta moya / hatta akaitokeya.

---

She was exceeding angry,  
And full sore she grieved.  
In her heart brooding over  
The things which had befallen her.

Wrath so entered into her,  
That she fell quite silent,  
She spake not, even one word,  
Until she withdrew from the banquet.

---

Among the well-known tendi composed in this measure are Utendi wa Amuri, wa Ayubu, wa Isipani, wa Shufaka, wa Sufiyani, wa Ayesha, wa Isa, wa Al-Akida, wa Mwana Kupona,

---

(1) Meinhof, C., 'Chuo cha Herkal • Das Buch von Herkal'.  
Z. für Kolonial-sprachen. Jahrg. 11. S. 1ff.  
(2) Werner, A., 'The Story of Mikdad and Mayasa.' 1932.

wa Mkonumbi, wa Nasra wa-Arabu, and the Hadithi ya Ngamia na Paa, ya Hasina, ya Barasisi, ya Sheikh Ali, ya Liyongo, etc.

Examples of the same type of verse, but in 6-mizani, are the Dream Song and the poem Liyongo na Mmanga<sup>(1)</sup>, also the Warrior Song.<sup>(2)</sup> This is a popular form for short monologues, e.g. Ukata<sup>(3)</sup>, Awali ni mwanzo<sup>(4)</sup>, etc.

A few examples are found in 9 and 10-mizani, but next to the 8-mizani verse 11-mizani have the greatest popularity, and this was a favourite measure as a medium for poetic homilies, prayers and exhortations of a religious nature. The acrostic poem, Ya Dura Mandhuma<sup>(5)</sup>, by Sayyid 'Umar bin Amin, Kadhi of Siu, c. A.D. 1856, was written in this measure; also the Mukhtasar by Sayyid Mansab bin Abdurrahman on the Maulidi ya Barzanji<sup>(6)</sup>, and the prayer, Naomba Fadhili Kwake Rahimu<sup>(7)</sup> (I crave a boon of God), by Sheikh Khamis bin Mwenye Kombo al-Mudhafay, Governor of Mtwapa, near Mombasa, in 1895. Unlike the popular tendi or hadithi in short<sup>(6)</sup> Library of SOAS. ~~MS~~ photostat copy of Sheikh Dbarak MS 3,  
<sup>(7)</sup> Taylor papers.

- 
- (1) See pp. ante.  
 (2) See p. ante. Kijuma's collection, published in Africa,  
 (3) From Muhammad Ki Harries, L., 'Swahili Verse of the Popular Tradition'.  
 (4) Taylor papers.  
 (5) Harries, L., 'Stringed Pearls', Bulletin of SOAS, 1953 XV/1.  
 (6) Library of SOAS. ~~MS~~ photostat copy of Sheikh Dbarak MS.  
 (7) Taylor papers.

are designedly cast in a style with heavier Arabic content. Hichens expressed the opinion<sup>(1)</sup> that the verse-form with four rhyming hemistichs was adopted from the form of verse 'known to the Arabs' as tasmit, and from this he deduces the early existence of Swahili poems of this type. But this verse-form was not used by the Arabian poets of the classical period. Although Freytag gives an early date for the appearance of the tasmit, it is generally considered that examples of poetry in the tasmit-form reputed to belong to the early classical period are not genuine.<sup>(2)</sup> In any case, since no direct Swahili sources go back farther than the eighteenth century, it is not possible to speculate on the period when this form was first adopted by Swahili poets.

Verses of this type, but with more than 11 mizani, do not maintain the same division of hemistichs, because the hemistich becomes too long to dispense with additional vituo. Even in some verses of 11-mizani the maintenance of the 4-hemistich division becomes a strain. The following interesting example in 11-mizani shows the appearance of vituo, unmarked in the text however, within each hemistich. In the first verse they are unrhymed, in the second partly rhymed and in the third verse they are rhymed in the first three hemistichs, as follows:<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) In manuscript notes. Library of SOAS

(2) Communicated by Professor Tritton.

(3) In Hichens papers.

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Nali mtembezi hitembejeka / jua mtikati moyo u shaka /  
chingia nyumbani chipumuzika / mbwene ndiwa ali dakani.

Alina shungile la miujiza / likimemetuka katika chiza /  
alifunguzile na kuloteza / nyoshi na mavumba yali angani.

Vyomo katiti kama kasiba / na meno ya kete ndakwe haiba /  
ndiye mche siti mwenye mahaba / atiaye watu mutaharani.

---

I was strolling abroad, and 'twas idle my quest,  
And aweary of soul, by noon's ardour oppressed,  
I repaired to my chamber to soothe me with rest,  
And, lo! I beheld, in the alcove, a dove!

Her plumage entrancing and wondrous to see,  
Amidst the dark shadows shone radiantly,  
Escaped from a snare she was captured by me,  
And the air was perfumed with the fragrance of love!

Her lips pout delight; in the smile of embrace  
Flash her teeth pearly-white, - they illumine her face,  
And love's ardours invite this fair flower of her race,  
Till men dream of her grace like the houris above!

---

hitembejeka, for nikitembejeka, (I) strolling about; mtikati, noon; chingia, chipumuzika, for nikiatingia, nikipumzika. shungile, lit. her crest, plumage, -le is possessive enclitic; chiza, for giza, darkness; alifunguzile, she was set free; kuloteza, unidentified word, so that the translation has been adapted accordingly; nyoshi, for mod. Swah. moshi, smoke; mavumba, odoriferous gums used for perfume and incense, but in mod. Swah. the same word is used only for the stinking smell of fish.

vyomo, for midomo, lips, - the word is trisyllabic in the poem; in mod. Swah. mdomo kama kasiba, small-round mouth (a point of beauty), kasiba is the barrel of a gun; meno ya kete, teeth like cowries (a point of beauty), the rhyme in the Arabic script remains, of course, in tei with kisra; ndakwe, for ni yake, and ndakwe haiba, it is her countenance; ndiye mche, she is indeed a young plant; siti mwenye mahaba, lit. a lady having love; atiaye watu mutaharani, lit. who puts men in ceremonial cleanliness.

---



Placing the vituo.

The device of introducing vituo rhymes at different positions in the line was employed in the nineteenth century in short poems, usually of three lines to the verse. There are of course, some poems in which the copyist has obviously placed the vituo in wrong positions, but the following examples illustrate the conscious arrangement of vituo rhymes in different positions:<sup>(1)</sup>

4, 6 mizani.

Kujipinda / na kujitahidi,  
Kuyatenda / yasiyo muradi,  
Muchenenda / sisi tumerudi.

For display ye are ever straining,  
To array your deeds that have no meaning.  
Go your way! We are homeward wending.

4, 8 mizani.

Mashauri / ya mtu usiyashike,  
Taghururi / na mwishowe akutuke.  
Mtu siri / husema na moyo wake.

To man's advice, list' not, whome'er doth it impart.  
In avarice, he'll make of thee an ill report.  
Of artifice, the wise takes commune with his heart.

8, 5 mizani.

Wandi wa siri wafiye / wako mavani,  
Na ambao wasaliye / siwaamini.  
Sina mwenye kwamba nayo / nambe ni nyani.

---

(1) From Sheikh Ubayd's manuscript (photostat)

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Nisikia nikwambiye / mtakalumi,  
Na ambao wasaliye / wizi wa ndimi,  
Huna mwenye kwamba naye / amba na mimi.

---

My bosom friends have passed away to sleep within the grave.  
I trust not those who live today, each one of them a knave.  
I have no one to talk with, nay! With whom may I conclave?

Now hearken friend to what I say, O man of words so free!  
If all the men who live today, would steal thy tongue from  
thee,  
And thou hast none to speak with, nay! Well then, speak  
thou with me!

---

An interesting example of double vituo within  
the same line is in a poem by Khalfan b. Abdallah b. Rashid,<sup>(1)</sup>  
as follows:

Yujile risala / na suwali ngumu / ajabu,  
Yana masiala / mazuri athimu / taibu,  
Hayana illa / nimeyafahamu / sahibu.

---

Your courier has come with a problem most hard and amazing!  
There are enigmas, some, most divertingly phrased and  
amusing!  
Yet few that become 'yond solving by me and rusing!

---

### Verse of three lines without vituo.

Light inconsequential and sentimental songs have  
been composed in three lines without vituo to sever the  
hemistich, e.g.<sup>(2)</sup>

### 6, 6, 8 mizani.

Bwene dura pende,  
Yuu la mtende,  
Nipatiani na winde.

---

(1) Sheikh Nbarak's manuscript (photocopy)

(2) From collection of verse by Andrews, v. No. 53504.

I beheld a love-bird fair,  
High in the date-palm there,  
Yet how may I that bird ensnare!

---

8 mizani.

Enda urudi salama,  
Shada langu la heshima,  
Utakuja nanga nyima.

---

Go thou and in safety return,  
O my flower of chaste renown.  
Thou'lt come, how'er much Fortune frown!

---

10 mizani.

Moyo wangu wanambia mema,  
Wanambia sala na kusoma,  
Na shetani yunendeme nyuma.

---

My heart, speaking of virtue, oft doth say,  
Doth say, Read thou the Holy Book and pray.  
Yet Satan, at my heels, e'er treads my way!

Verse of four lines without vituo.

The following are examples: <sup>(1)</sup>

6 mizani.

Tukenda katiti,  
Sote tu maiti,  
Twangoja wakati,  
Na saa kungesi.

---

We go our little way,  
Till death shall end our day;  
We wait our time's delay,  
For the last hour to call.

---

(1) In Shaka's *Mwaka's* examples (Mwaka's)

10 mizani.

Sikubali mpenda kawanda,  
Sinwi sili kwa hamu ya nyonda,  
Na akili siwi nayo kwanda,  
Mambo haya ndiyo nimetunda.

---

That a lover grows fat, I can't agree!  
I drink not, I eat not, pining for thee!  
As for sense, I'd none, e'en at first, you see!  
So these are the things love has gained for me!

---

In this type of four-line verse the rhymes may alternate. The following example in 8-mizani has a short choral call of two syllables in the third line where the rhyme falls on the sixth syllable.<sup>(1)</sup>

Msidhani ni tausi,  
Kaani mkifahamu,  
Tumewalabisi o-o,  
Watu wa hara kadimu.

Peani ndia peani,  
Kwataka pishwa warembo,  
Wazuri wa shani o-o,  
Ni leo siku ya mambo.

---

Think not that she's a peacock gay,  
But wait, for we, ye'll understand,  
Bedeck the maids today! O-oh!  
The foremost ladies of our land!

Make clear the road, ho! make it clean!  
The lovely ladies pass this way,  
Gay-robed as e'er was seen! O-oh!  
Today's the festival - today!

---

(1) In Arabic papers.

Five-line verse without vituo.

This is a rare form which seems confined to Zanzibar and the adjacent coast, though five line verse with vituo is common enough all along the coast, especially for sea-shanties, wedding-songs and lullabies. It is difficult to say whether the latter were first written for performance or were written down after they had been popularised in oral tradition, but the first alternative is the more likely one. The following example of five-line verse without vituo gives a rhyme for the first and second lines, another rhyme for the next two lines, and a terminal kina rhyme on the fifth line.<sup>(1)</sup>

10 mizani.

Kamkuta apwaya mtele,  
Kamwomba asinichotele,  
Kanipa kalala mavani,  
Kamkuta shetani wa pwani,  
Mchukule simche kuninga.

---

I met her husking rice,  
I begged some but she would not offer me any.  
She gave answer, 'Go and sleep in the graveyard!'  
I met a sea-shore devil.  
'Garry her away and don't fear to seduce her!'

e/

---

Another example in the same measure is the dying song of the minstrel Mnga in Taylor's African Aphorisms, pp. 48 - 49.

---

(1) In Hicken's papers.

The Takhmis verse-form.

The takhmis verse-form was adopted by Swahili writers from Arabian poets. In Arabian prosody, takhmis is the form of poetical composition in which a poet composes verses of five lines, the first three of which are his own composition while the remaining two are lines adopted from the work of an earlier poet. The first three lines usually serve as a contemporary frame for the older piece and as a gloss or exposition of its theme. In manuscripts, both Arabian and Swahili, the last two lines are invariably written as one strophe, medially divided by a kikomo or stop. In Swahili takhmisa there is no evidence to show that this final strophe can be identified with an earlier work by a different author, though the possibility is not altogether ruled out.

The takhmis of Sayyid Abdallah b. Nasir upon the Dungeon Song of Liyongo is given on pp. 42 - 44 ante. An example of takhmisa with vituo rhymes is the Duwa ya Kuombea Mvuwa (Prayer of Intercession for Rain) by Sheikh Muhy-ed-din b. Sheikh b. Kahtan.<sup>(1)</sup> Some poets have adopted the Arabian device of composing verses in such a manner that one, or more, of the lines in each verse begins with a

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(1) Harries, L., 'A Swahili Takhmis', African Studies 11 (2) 59 - 67.

sequent letter of the Arabic alphabet. This poet 'Umar b. Amin b. 'Umar b. Amin b. Nadhir al-Ahdal was particularly fond of this practice, e.g. in his poem, Waji-waji, he begins the fourth line of each verse with a sequent letter.<sup>(1)</sup>

Among other well-known takhmisa is that of Muhammad b. Abdul-Aziz al-Warraki<sup>(2)</sup> upon a poem in praise of the Prophet by Muhammad b. Abubakar al-Witri, and this takhmis is called Madini by the Swahili people; another is the takhmis of Abd-ul-Baki al-Faruki,<sup>(3)</sup> based upon the Hamziya of Muhammad b. Sa'id al-Busiriy. An acrostic takhmis is by Sheikh Abdallah b. Sogoro in his prayer Ai Rabbi, nipo mlangoni<sup>(4)</sup> (O Lord, I wait at thy portal), in which he begins the first line of each verse with the sequent letter, and prefaces his poem with five verses of divine eulogy, commencing the alphabetical arrangement in the seventh verse.



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(1) Harries, L., 'A Poem from Siu', Bulletin of SOAS Vol.XIII, Part 3. 1950.

(2) Brockelmann, op.cit. p. 250, Swahili version in 78-110-53500.

(3) Reported by Sheikh Mbarak, but not seen by me.

(4) Mentioned by Hichens, but not seen by me.

The Themes of Swahili Verse

While the regular quatrain became the most popular form for writing Swahili verse, especially in the nineteenth century, this verse-form owes considerably less to Arabian sources for its subject-matter than either the takhmis or the verse-form used for writing tendi. It was the popular medium for expressing themes that were original in the sense that they were not borrowed from Arabian sources. Almost every subject within the orbit of Swahili experience has been used, at one time or another, as a theme for poems in quatrain form. Even so, the Swahilis recognise by name certain types of theme; in some anthologies (diwani) of Swahili verse prepared by Swahili writers the poems are grouped under the name of the type which they exemplify.<sup>(1)</sup> The following types of theme may be noted: Mashairi ya ushujaa (heroic verse).

Courage and heroism have been favoured themes.

(2)

The first two verses of a poem by Muyaka b. Haji al-Ghassaniy typify the best of such works:

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(1) Not in modern Swahili verse, but in manuscripts, e.g. a diwani in Sheikh Mbarak's collection, photostat copy in Library of S.O.A.S.  
 (2) Published without translation or notes by Hichens in Diwani ya Muyaka, Johannesburg, 1940.

Simba wa Maji

Ndimi tazo nembetele / majini ndimi mbuaji,  
Nishikapo nishikile / nyama ndimi mshikaji,  
Ndipo nami wasinile / nimewashinda walaji,  
Kiwiji simba wa maji / msonijua juani.

Maji yakijaa tele / huandama maleleji,  
Pepo za nyuma na mbele / hawinda wangu windaji,  
Huzamia maji male / male yasofika mbiji,  
Kiwiji simba wa maji / msonijua juani.

---

The Lion of the Seas

I roam the seas, a hunter bold! In the waters deep I slay,  
And in my fearless grip I hold, relentlessly, my prey!  
My foes would rend my flesh - behold! 'Tis them I hold at  
bay!  
A valiant beast and fierce am I! The lion of the seas!

When high the surging rollers leap and squalls toss white  
the spray,  
When back and forth the wild winds sweep, I hunt my hunter's  
way!  
I plunge me in the waters deep where no brave ship dare stay!  
A valiant beast and fierce am I! The lion of the seas!

---

tazo, the sucker-fish, which is the subject of the poem;  
nembetele, for nimeambata, I cling fast to; mbuaji, for  
muuaji, a killer; nishikapo nishikile, lit. when I hold fast,  
I hold fast; ndipo nami wasinile, lit. And so that they may  
not eat me; nimewashinda walaji, lit. I have overcome the  
eaters; msonijua juani, lit. you who do not know me, know!

huandama maleleji, lit. There follows the season of uncertain  
and changing winds (between the monsoons); hawinda, for  
nikawinda, and I hunt; maji male, deep waters; yasofika  
mbiji, for yasiyofika mbiji, where no vessel has reached.



Of musk and desert aloe-bloom, clothing thy scented body  
sweet!  
 But I, alas, must e'er entreat - My heart doth break,  
O flower of mine!

---

waridi, a rose; lifadhilie maua, lit. it (the rose) has placed the flowers under an obligation i.e., it is superior to them; litotetote, it droops down; riha, an odour; hili limepapatua, lit. this one (waridi) has lost its petals, -papatua, remove petals, husk or shell.

shani ni ya mti wakwe, lit. a wonder it is of its tree; ndiani, in the way, the word is trisyllabic; nikumbuka masikini, lit. remember me a poor man; mtima na ua langu, lit. the heart and my flower.

---

Mashairi ya malalamiko (Verse in lament)

Laments are of two types, (a) mashairi ya masikitiko, songs of grief, bewailing the loss of a friend or a relative or couched in terms of condolence, and (b) mashairi ya khasara, songs of misfortune, which usually lament the faithlessness or ingratitude of a wife or the fickleness of a maiden loved. Within the first type must be included laments for the passing of the hey-day of Swahili life in the eighteenth century, a theme often incorporated into a poem which finds its initial inspiration in some personal loss. This applies to perhaps the best known of the grief-poems, Ayuha al-Maghururi. This is the lament occasioned by the death of the young son of Bwana Yasini, Kadhi of Rasini near Faza, c. A.D. 1856-70, while on

a visit to Zanzibar. The following four verses from this  
(1)  
poem illustrate the theme:

Ai kilio shadidi / kwangu kimezokithiri,  
Mwanangu kufa baidi / tusandikane nathari,  
Liliwele hali budi / illa ni lenye kujiri.  
Ayuha al-maghururi / ina khadda duniya.

Lipi lakuninyamaza / mato matozi kujiri,  
Na moyo likanituza / ikatulia sadiri,  
Kete imenivuwaza / na mengi nayafikiri.  
Ayuha al-maghururi / ina khadaa duniya.

Ai duniya duniya / haidumu na bashari,  
Akhi ya kutosha haya / kutawafu mukhutari.  
Nami taisuburiya / ni amuri ya jabari,  
Ayuha al-maghururi / ina khadaa duniya.

Tapanda mataya wangu / pasina kutaakhari,  
Nenende kapate fungu / madina li anuwari,  
Mato yasitende kungu / laili wala nahari,  
Ayuha al-maghururi / ina khadaa duniya.

Ah! sad the weeping in my home today,  
and sadder and yet sadder doth it grow,  
That my dear son should die - and far away,  
and 'tween us passed no word that I might know  
How death befell - till, 'yond all man might say,  
came grievous tidings of this mortal blow.  
Ah! Vanity of life on earth below!  
Alas! Thou mortal world of vain conceit!

- 
- (1) Three texts of poems with the refrain Ayuha al-maghururi are given without translation or notes in Appendix D to Hichens' edition of Al-Inkishafi. The opinion is expressed there that the first, of 27 verses, was written prior to Bwana Yasini's loss of his son in 1870, that the second, of five verses and from which the above text is taken, was by Bwana Yasini, and the third, of 9 verses, was written in condolence to Bwana Yasini by Kaim bin Ahmad (also known as Bwana Ngasho) of Siu. The conclusions as to variant authorship are made from internal evidence.

Whence shall come solace now to stay my tears  
 that from my stricken eyes do grievous flow?  
 Whence shall come solace for this grief that sears  
 my heart? What peace shall my reft bosom know?  
 Sorrow enshrouds me - and throughout the years  
 upon my son my thoughts will dwell - O woe  
 Ah! Vanity ...(Refrain).

Ah! Worthless, worthless is this mortal state  
 which nought of human happiness would know!  
 Ah! Is't not enough that perils great  
 surround us as upon life's road we go?  
 Yet, 'tis the Lord's command: and to my fate  
 must I with patience bow my head in woe.  
 Ah! Vanity ...(Refrain).

With saddled camels will I ride my way,  
 and with the throng of faithful will I go  
 To Mekka the Illustrious, nor will delay;  
 and there 'fore Allah will I bow me low  
 To pray that ne'er again by night and day  
 from out my eyes grief's bitter rheum shall flow.  
 Ah! Vanity ...(Refrain).

---

shadidi kwangu, direct my home, hold influence over it, an imperative, but can be read as a verbal of the simple aspect; kimezokithiri, lit. which has increased (kilio, cry of mourning); baidi, separate, apart; tusandikane nathari, without our arranging our choice (as to time and place of death); liliwele, etc. for mod. Swah. lilikuwa halina budi, it had to be; ni lenye kujiri, lit. it is something which had to happen, -jiri, come to pass, take effect; kete, severe blow, cf. -ket- knock down and hurt; imeniyuwaza, it has given me pain; bashari, news, usually unknown; taisuburiya, for nitaisuburia, I will patiently wait for it. tapanda, for nitapanda, I will mount; mataya, bridled animals; pasina, for mod. Swah. pasipo na; kutaakhari, to delay; nenende, for nienende, and in mod. Swah. niende, and let me go; li anuwari, the faithful; kungu, or kongo, rheumy, weak, aged; laili wala nahari, night or day.

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An early example of the mashairi ya khasara is a poem beginning Nanzize tanzo na mwao,<sup>(1)</sup> of seven verses.

This work is associated with the name of Sayyid Muhammad al-Mudhaffa, but nothing appears to be known of him or of his time. The most polished example from the last century is probably Muyaka bin Haji's Nalisafiria mbiji<sup>(2)</sup> (I sailed

a ship across the seas). Another good example is an anonymous seven-verse poem of which the opening verses are<sup>(3)</sup> :

Nalipanda busitani / hatulia kulla tunda,  
Waridi na yasimini / kulla mti ukawanda;  
Siku moya hatamani / haazimia kwenenda,  
Nenda nimuwene yonda / yungizile kulishani.

Niwene tunda mwituni / nalo lali komamanga,  
Moyo ukalitamani / kwa kono kulianganga,  
Hilitia mkononi / mabombwe wamelanyanga,  
Sirudi nyuma hazinga / nizingapo kumbushani.

I planted a garden e'er so neat, with many a fruit tree  
growing,  
With red, red rose and jasmine sweet and fragrant blossom  
blowing;  
Anon, thought I, in pleased conceit, I'll wend, to my garden  
going,  
And lo! I go, and there I meet a baboon his feast enjoying.

I saw a fruit in the forest's waste, like a pomegranate  
ripening.  
I thought, How sweet 'twould be to taste, my fingers round it  
tightening;  
But as I plucked in eager haste, a worm o'er its bloom came  
creeping,  
And I walked no more in the forest's waste, but wended my way  
a-weeping.

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(1) In No. 53491, Library of S.O.A.S.  
(2) Diwani ya Muyaka, *op. cit.*, p. 61  
(3) In Hichens collection, Library of S.O.A.S.

ukawanda, grew large; ha- for nika- in verbals; yonda, Cl.5, a baboon, an ape; yungizile, for mod. Swah. ameingia. lali, for mod. Swah. lilikuwa, it was; kwa kono, for kwa mkono; kulianganga, to grasp it in the hand, -angang-; mabombwe, maggots; wamelanyanga, they have eaten into it; hazinga, for nikazinga, and walk about; nizingapo kumbushani, when I stroll (there) (it is) in remembering.

In this, as in other laments of the kind, the real subject of the poem is referred to by metaphor. The garden and the fruit represent the poet's ungrateful and unfaithful wife upon whom he had lavished unrequited affection and care.

Mashairi ya Nasaha na Waadhi (Admonitory verse)

There are a number of poems of an advisory or admonitory nature, dealing with all phases of mortal defection - pride, drunkenness, avarice, adultery, vanity, ostentation and so on. The following example is Muyaka b. Haji's reproof to certain political aspirants who sought to betray Mombasa to Zanzibar:

Kumbifu lambile witi / kimbelembele waume,  
 Kiunbe mwanzo hajuti / majuto huya kinyume.  
 Mvundati ni mwanati / mgeni mzo mpime,  
 Yu utukuni mgwame / huza kapu kwa miyaa.

(1) Diwani ya Muyaka, op. cit. pp. 29-31, the poem is given without translation or grammatical notes, but the circumstances of its composition are described in Swahili; Mgwame, one time Sultan of Tundwa on the island of Pate, was deposed by Erei, and thereafter sat in the marketplace selling baskets. Arabic-Swahili version of the poem is

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The withered palm-frond spake to the green ones, saying,  
Sway on, sway on, ye braves, so bravely swaying,  
The years of youth reck not regret's betraying,  
Regrets come late, ah, late, when age is greying.  
'Tis the son-of-the-land who doth encompass its slaying!  
Who taketh in toll from the stranger his treachery's  
paying.  
Think ye of Mgwame, who sits in the market displaying  
Baskets for sale made from dried strips of palm.

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lambile, for mod. Swah. liliambia; mvundati ni mwanati, lit. the breaker-up is a son of the land, a reference to the way Mgwame, like a green palm-frond, broke up his kingdom and allowed Erei, a stranger, to take it over; mgeni mzo mpime, lit. the stranger a measure he is measured/let him be measured out (for umpime); the reference here is explained in Muyaka's history (Diwani ya Muyaka, op. cit. p. 30), that Erei taxed the people 60 pishi (350-60 lb.) of maize to provide food for a guest at Tundwa, and used to tell people scornfully that if they wanted a basket for putting the maize into they could buy one from Mgwame, who was formerly their king; huza, for huzuza, he sells; kapu kwa miyaa, baskets of palm-strips, but this could also mean that he sells baskets in exchange for palm-strips.

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Quatrains dealing with abstract themes such as silence, solitude, poverty, ambition, etc. come under the category of Mashairi ya maneno ya hekima (Wisdom poems). Then there are Mashairi ya kuomba Mungu (Poems of petition to the Deity), in which the writer asks for some special blessing, e.g. for a calm sea-voyage, for recovery from sickness, for a child, etc. A very interesting category is that of Mashairi ya kujibizana (Dialogue verse); these include a dialogue of 35 verses, in which Sheikh Ali bin Saada

of Lamu writes to Bakari Mwengo of Pate, seeking legal advice for a mother of children who has been neglected by her husband. Another poem of 15 verses is a dialogue between one Maalim Musa and Ali Koti, in which they jocularly accuse one another of pretending not to know the conditions of prayer in a mosque where water is unobtainable for washing the feet; another of 18 verses, between Mohamed bin Ahmed el-Mombassy and Sood bin Said el-Maamiry discusses the legal status of a Zigua family who have come to live in Mombasa; and in contrast to these is a dialogue-poem of 10 verses in which Muhamad wa Tubwa of Wasini talks with and listens to his cat. These dialogue poems, representative of others, await annotation and editing. <sup>(1)</sup> Finally, another category, Mashairi ya kulaumiana (Poems of mutual reproof), can be noted, but these are not in dialogue, and can hardly be distinguished from Admonitory verse. The link-verse poem <sup>(2)</sup> of Muhammad bin Mataka, of 21 verses, reproves contemporaries for not following the religious way of life of their forefathers.

Nearly all of the Swahili manuscripts edited by European scholars have been of the longer poems dealing with

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- (1) In ~~unclassified~~ <sup>literature manuscript</sup> ~~id/3~~ from Sheikh Mbarak, ~~to be included~~  
in ~~Library of S.O.A.S.~~
- (2) Idem

(1)  
 Arabian themes, especially the tendi or hadithi. The themes of Swahili tendi are common to all national epic literature, - bravery, romance, tragedy and history. The Swahili have names for the different types of utendi, viz. utendi wa ushujaa (the epic) and utendi wa hekima (religious verse). The former is the popular epic in verse of four hemistichs, usually of 8-mizani, and the latter is shorter religious poetry of the same form, but usually of 11-mizani. Both types have a deep religious inspiration, strongly Islamic, of course, and they begin with verses praising God and His Prophet. Hichens has fully described the manner of the conventional prologue, and also the materials used for writing.  
 (2)

Most of the popular epics, of more than 600 verses each, have no real historical basis, but are concerned with romantic legends in which real characters from Islamic history (usually the immediate relatives and followers of the Prophet) are the principal characters. Hichens attempted  
 (3)  
 the difficult task of trying to find the origin of the Swahili popular epic, but his conclusions are not very reliable.

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- (1) Dammann has recorded some of the shorter poems in 'Suaheli-Lieder aus Lamu', Z. fur Eingeb.-Sprachen, Vol. XXXI, 1940, pp. 161-287.  
 (2) In Al-Inkishafi, Appendix C.  
 (3) In his notes in Library of S.O.A.S.

He suggests that the themes were borrowed from Arabic works read or intoned in the mosques at Maulidi, the birthday celebrations of the Prophet. This in itself is unlikely, because on the night of Maulidi only the the Praises of the Prophet are sung. But it can definitely be established that religious verse, some in the category of utendi wa hekima, were sung then. The chief of these is the Mukhtasar of Sheikh Mansab on the Maulud Barzanji, mentioned later.

The source-material for the Swahili popular epic in Arabian literature is so extensive that it is difficult to identify a single Arabian work as the original of the Swahili poem. This search for originals is further complicated by the fact that the Swahili writer exercises considerable freedom in his treatment of the subject. Werner, for example, writes of the Swahili poem Hadithi ya Mikidadi  
 (1)  
na Mayasa:

'There are various romantic legends connected with Miqdad, extant both in poetry and prose. Paret has made an extensive examination of the manuscripts preserved at Berlin and others ...Not one corresponds with the Swahili poem. It may therefore be accepted as an original composition based on traditional matter which has no doubt undergone considerable modification in the transit between the Hejaz and the Swahili coast'.

Werner noted that some Swahili popular epics have

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(1) Werner, A. , 'The Story of Miqdad and Mayasa', edtd. by, Azania Press, 1932, p. 7.

been taken from the Arabian prose romances, of which a great many have been catalogued and summarised by Ahlwardt, but in no case can the matter of any one Swahili poem of this type be identified with that of a particular prose romance. (1)  
 Of the Swahili Utendi wa Ayubu, Werner wrote as follows:

'Of the prose romances catalogued by Ahlwardt, there are several dealing with the history of Job which may have been utilized in the Swahili poem, Utendi wa Ayubu ...'

(2) Of another Swahili poem of the same type, Werner wrote:

'Ahlwardt's catalogue mentions four prose romances on the life of Mary (Nos. 8974-8977) on any or all of which the Swahili poem with the title, Qissat Sayyid na Isa, may be founded'.

Reference is sometimes made in popular Swahili epics to the Arabian traditionalist from whom the Swahili author claims to have taken the general theme for his poem, but in no case can the matter of the epic be traced to a specific Arabian source. (3) In the Utendi wa Abdurrahman, for instance, the author claims to have seen the story in a collection by the Arabian traditionalist Anas Ibn Malik

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(1) Werner, A., in The Moslem World, Vol. 10, 1920, p. 26.  
 (2) Werner, A., idem, p.  
 (3) Dammann, E., Dichtungen in Der Lamu-Mundart des Suaheli, pp. 141-214.



upon this basis were free to write as they wished. The source of the tradition is important, but it cannot often be precisely traced, for in poems of this type there is no conscious effort to make a parallel Swahili version. But with poems of an exclusively religious purpose, tendi za hekima, the Swahili author usually cites the title and author of the original Arabic work and seldom departs from the sense of the original. Such poems include prayers and praises, instructions in practical and moral theology, and homilies to the faithful. In some instances the Arabic original is included in the text, alternating verse by verse with the Swahili version, the latter corresponds exactly with the Arabian work.

*It should not be taken for granted, however, that all texts with an introduction in Swahili*

Collections of popular Arabic works on religion, from which Swahili poems have been written, are in circulation along the East African coast, especially in Zanzibar and Mombasa. It is worth mentioning that the popular romantic epics are little known in Zanzibar, for they are pre-eminently the work of the poets of Lamu. In Zanzibar the appeal of traditional Swahili literature has always been to the shorter religious poems. Significantly, the Arabic originals of such work are printed in Egypt at the expense of leading Muslims in Zanzibar, e.g. Sheikh Ibrahim, Mullah Karimjee (an Indian businessman), etc. The printed editions

in Arabic usually have no date of publication, but the editions are modern and easily obtainable.

One such collection obtainable in Zanzibar, contains three Arabic works, each of which has been the basis of a Swahili poem by Sayyid Mansab b. Abdurrahman, who was born at Lamu, c. A.D. 1828-9, studied law and theology at Mekka as a pupil of Sayyid Ahmad Dahlan, Sheikh-al-Islam at Mekka, and who continued his studies in the Hadramaut, and subsequently became Kadhi at Zanzibar under Sayyid Barghash. He died at Lamu in 1922. The first is a Swahili poem based upon al-Witriyāt wama 'din al-anwārāt, by Muhammad ibn Abdul Aziz al-Warraḡ, (interlinear version), the second Swahili poem is based on a prose treatise in three parts, theology, fikri and tasulf, called Risāla al-gāmia wat-tadkira an-nāfila, by Ali ibn Zain al-Habshi, and the third is based upon Aqidat al-Awamm, by Ahmad al-Marzuqi. The first of these Swahili works is known to the Swahili as Madini, the second as Arrisalatul Jamia, and the third as Akidatul Awam.

Care has to be taken to establish that the Swahili

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- (1) The Swahili versions are in Library of S.O.A.S., in manuscript.
- (2) Brockelmann, Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur, G.1.250.
- (3) Brockelmann, idem., Suppl. 11, p. 814 (no. 40).
- (4) Brockelmann, idem., Suppl. 11, p. 990 (no. 14).
- (5) This Swahili poem is in Takhmis form.

religious poem is related in substance to the Arabic original, e.g. the Swahili utendi Kishamia<sup>(1)</sup> bears an obvious relationship to the well-known Arabian work al-Burdah by al-Busiry, yet it is doubtful if al-Busiry's work was in fact the inspiration for the Swahili poem. Similarly, the Swahili Maulidi ya Barzanji,<sup>(2)</sup> also by Sayyid Mansab, professes to be a mukhtasar (abridgment) based on an earlier mukhtasar of al-Barzanji's longer maulud, but is not directly relateable to any known mukhtasar in Arabic of the same work. The Swahili people relate it traditionally to a mukhtasar by the grandson of al-Barzanji, but there appears to be no reference to this work in the library catalogues. In such a case it is possible that the Swahili version was made from an Arabian version not widely used.

There is no reason to suppose that Swahili writers were familiar with classical Arabic literatures. The Arabian sources which provided the impetus for writing Swahili verse were secondary. They were found in the religious tradition of the Arabic diaspora. Poems of the types already mentioned had an exclusively religious purpose, and it was with the idea of making available such works for Swahili-speaking Muslims that the Arabian poems were given a Swahili form. The greater part of Arabic literature

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(1) Damman, E., Dichtungen in Der Lamu-Mundart des Suaheli, pp. 276-285.  
 (2) Brockelmann, Suppl.11. pp. 517-518.

remained unknown to the Swahili people, but the little that was borrowed was enough to establish for a time at least a literary cult in the Bantu context. If at times the cultures became almost pseudo-literary, for example, in the 'catch-word' verse, this was because the borrowing from Arabian sources was limited in range, and where this could not be increased in depth, it was subject to traditional Bantu influences.

It will have become clear from the texts provided that though Swahili writers achieved some little success in adapting their own language to foreign literary forms, yet they were never really at home in the adopted medium. In order to suit the prosodic measure the natural grammatical behavior of the language was subordinated, and whereas the reader may find much interest in the arrangements of syllables, yet the student must conclude that this is the Swahili language in fetters. Linguistically the result of our investigation is disappointing for the reasons already mentioned, and while the historical side of our research has been hampered by the lack of indisputable historical evidence, the general result has been to throw into prominence the limitations of this Bantu incursion into the Arabian world of letters.

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14. Risala. Religious verse by Sayyid Mansab.
15. Tabaraka Dhul-Ulaa, by Sayyid Mansab b. Abdurrahman.

Unclassified:

- i. Collection of short poems (135) from Malindi.
- ii. Poem on religious duties, also from Malindi.

The following Swahili manuscripts are in Germany, from information kindly provided by Dr. E. Dammann:

a) Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg.

Utendi wa Herkali eine späte, wenig sorgfältige Abschrift eines unbekanntenen Abschreibers (45 Strophen).

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b) Seminar für Afrikanische Sprachen der Universität Hamburg.

- i. Utendi wa Herkali.
- ii. Utendi wa Yakobo na Yusufu.
- iii. Mwana Kuponu.
- iv. Khabari ya Mkunumbi.
- v. Teilabschrift des Utendi wa Herkali.
- vi. Mashairi ya watu wa Amu; abschreiber, Muhammad Kijuma.
- vii. Einzelne Lieder.

c) Professor Dr. E. Dammann - Pinneberg.

- i. Utendi wa Muhamadi na Aisha.
- ii. Utendi wa kufa kwa Muhammadi.
- iii. Utendi wa safari.
- iv. Utendi wa Yusufu.
- v. AJU kwa maneno ya kucha Mungu.
- vi. Zwei handschriften des Inkishafi.

d) Collected by Ruth Dammann in 1936 at Lamu.

- i. Utendi wa kadhi na mwizi.
- ii. Utendi wa Herkali.
- iii. Inkishafi.
- iv. Waji-waji.

The Swahili manuscripts known to have existed in the Library of Berlin University were destroyed during the last war. At Halle (Bibliothek der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft), there are two copies of Utendi wa Herkal, one a complete copy and the other beginning at verse 395.

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