

Shani Omari and Method Samuel (eds.). *Fasihi, Lugha na Utamaduni wa Kiswahili na Kiafrika. Kwa Heshima ya Prof. M. M. Mulokozi*. Dar es Salaam: TUKI, University of Dar es Salaam: 2018. Pages 633. ISBN 9789976531619.

This volume, entitled in English *Swahili and African Literature, Language and Culture* and edited by Shani Omari and Method Samuel in the Institute of Swahili Studies (*Taasisi ya Taaluma za Kiswahili*, hereafter TATAKI in short) at the university of Dar es Salaam, is an anthology of essays written in honour of Prof. Mugyabuso Mlinzi Mulokozi, outstanding scholar, poet and playwright who has recently retired after more than thirty years of academic career in the same Institute.

In order to pay tribute to the contribution of M. M. Mulokozi in the developments of Swahili creative and academic writing, as well as in the teaching, research and criticism related to Swahili and African literature (with a focus on East African oral literatures and cultures), the editors of the book have collected a great number of contributions by former students and/or colleagues. The authors of the essays, all written in Swahili, are specialists in different branches of Swahili studies (literature, linguistics, culture, translation etc.). They mostly come from Tanzanian and Kenyan universities, but also from other countries where Swahili is taught at the university level, such as Italy, Rwanda and Zimbabwe, whose institutions have often exchange programmes with the TATAKI (for instance the University of Naples “L’Orientale”; Roberto Gaudio, one of the contributors to this anthology, was a student of Prof. Mulokozi during the academic year spent at the university of Dar es Salaam). This large participation is not only a tangible homage to Mulokozi’s commitment to the strengthening of the Swahili language as national and transnational medium of communication, but also testifies to the scholarly impact of his work, which continues to stir the imagination and critical thinking of various generations of researchers.

The opening section of the book includes the notes on the authors, the acknowledgments and a short preface by the editors, and a rich introduction by a very close friend and colleague of Mulokozi, Kulikoyela K. Kahigi, retired professor of linguistics at TATAKI and poet who co-authored three collections of free-verse Swahili poetry with him: *Mashairi ya Kisasa* (“Modern poems”, 1973), *Malenga wa Bara* (“The up-country bards”, 1976) and *Kunga za Ushairi na Diwani yetu* (“Initiation to poetry and our anthology”, 1979/1982).

The academic contributions are grouped together in seven parts, the first of which is entitled “*Wasifu wa Mulokozi*” (“The biography of Mulokozi”) and presents a contribution by Edith Lyimo, presently head of the Literature, Communication and Publishing Department at the University of Dar

es Salaam, who retraces the life of Mulokozi (born in 1950 in the village of Katendaguro, Kagera province) by emphasising his uniqueness as an academic (teacher, scholar, critic, translator) and as a social activist. Though not politicised in the strictest sense (after taking part in the activities of the TANU Youth League he never got any party membership), Mulokozi indeed constantly participated in the local intellectual and political debates, not only at the university but also in the newspapers and within the associations or committees of writers, educators and language planners (such as the National Swahili Council, *Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa*). Furthermore, he was involved in numerous national projects, amongst which the CBP (Children's Book Project, 1990-2010), financed by the Canadian Organisation for Development through Education and other institutions, whose mission was to improve literacy skills amongst schoolchildren and foster a reading culture in Tanzania.

The second section includes essays which explore Mulokozi's work with regard to two genres, i.e. children's literature and poetry. In his contribution, Leonard Bakize explores his role in the development of Swahili literature for children and youth, by participating - as counsellor, tutor, translator and writer - to the CBP (which has printed over 250 children's titles, mostly in Swahili) and other initiatives (workshops for writers, teacher training, book prizes etc.). Pendo Mwashota considers the contribution of Mulokozi to the Swahili poetry, as creator, teacher, researcher, critic, editor, tutor of thesis, together with committing himself to the preparation of new university courses and to the organisation of conferences and poetry prizes.

The third part of the volume is devoted to the philosophical and theoretical aspects of Swahili literary works. In their essays, Shani Omari and Tumanini Sanga discuss the relevance of Black Aesthetics as a theoretical framework to read, respectively, Mulokozi's historical narratives and the works of selected Swahili poets (Shaaban Robert, Mathias Mnyampala, Charles Mloka and Abdalla Hancha), with a particular reference to language use, setting and topics. Rose Mbijima devotes her contribution to the developments of the narrative discourse in Swahili literature, with a focus on the interconnections between oral and written prose genres, as exemplified in the analysis of *Nagona* (1990) and *Mzingile* ("Labyrinth", 1991) by Euphrase Kezilahabi. Anna Nicholas Kyamba, by drawing from the scholarly literature on Bantu Ontology, examines the literary devices (names, language, songs, *ngoma*, lamentations, spirit cults etc.) employed by Penina Muhando in the play *Tambueni haki zetu* ("Recognise our rights", 1973) which can be related to African philosophy. Gaudioso reconstructs how the publication of the first Swahili free verse collections, Mulokozi and Kahigi's *Mashairi ya Kisasa* (1973) and Kezilahabi's *Kichomi* ("Tearing pain", 1974) triggered an intense debate between the *wanamapokeo* (traditionalists) and *wanamapinduzi* (reformists) in East Africa, still alive to some extent. By comparing the poetry of Mulokozi and Kezilahabi, the author also investigates the multiplicity of

philosophical views amongst the reformist poets. Felix K. Sosoo devotes his essay to Shaaban Robert (1909-1962), a writer who is commonly considered as “the father” of Swahili modern literature and was thoroughly studied by Mulokozi (he also edited his Letters, *Barua za Shaaban Robert*, 2003). He investigates, in particular, the intertextuality in *Kusadikika* (published with the English subheading “A country in the sky”, 1951) and *Kufikirika* (“The thinkable world”, 1967), two short novels which, as observed by Mulokozi, are profoundly influenced by oral literature. Ombito E Khalili, being inspired by the theories on creativity of the psychologist Lev Vygotsky and by Bakhtin’s notion of dialogic imagination, focuses the analysis on *Siri sirini* (“The secret in the secret”, 2013-2014), a series of three novels written by Rocha Chimera, who re-elaborated the contents of two famous Swahili *tenzi* (narrative poems) in prose form: *Utenzi wa Mwanakupona* (“Mwanakupona’s poem”) composed by Mwana Kupona Binti Mshamu (1858) and *Utenzi wa Fumo Liyongo* (“The poem about Fumo Liyongo”) written by Muhammad Kijumwa (1913).<sup>1</sup> Murithi J. Jessee, Richard M. Wafula and Geoffrey K. King’ei devote their contribution to the entanglements between ideology and literature with reference to ideological (and stylistic) developments in the novels of the Zanzibari writer Said Ahmed Mohamed, from *Asali chungu* (“Bitter Honey”, 1977) to *Mhanga nafsi yangu* (“I sacrificed my soul”, 2013).

The fourth section focuses on issues related to literature and culture. Athumani S. Ponera investigates the concept of *ujadi* (traditional knowledge), which derives from the word *jadi* (lineage, ancestry, origin) in the Mulokozi’s historical novelettes which depict the resistance of the Wahehe against the Germans (1891-1898), and particularly in *Ngome ya Mianzi* (“Bamboo fortress”, 1990). According to the author, in these works the bamboo stands as a metaphor of *ujadi* for being a central element of the material and spiritual culture of the populations inhabiting the Iringa area, a function which becomes explicit when the bamboo woods are described as “traditional weapon” (a place where the combatants can hide, a “fortress”) in contrast to the iron, modern weapons of the Germans. In his essay, Wallace Mlaga exposes how the question of defining the Swahili identity has profoundly influenced the cultural and literary debates in East Africa starting from the 1970s, while Aldin K. Mutembei tackles the works of Shaaban Robert from another perspective, i.e. the moral and social commitment of this author so cherished by Mulokozi, by exploring the concept of *maadili* (ethics, morality, virtues) as expressed in *Kusadikika* and *Adili na nduguze* (“Adili and his brothers”, 1952). The contribution of Neema B. Sway is devoted to the *Utendi wa Rukiza* (“The poem about Rukiza”), an oral epic of the Wahaya about the hero Rukiza, traditionally accompanied by *enanga*

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<sup>1</sup> These two long poems, together with *Al-Inkishafi* (The soul’s awakening, translated and edited by W. Hichens, 1972) by Abdallah bin Nasir, were edited anew by Mulokozi in *Tenzi tatu za kale* (Three old tenzi, 1999).

music, whose performance by Habibu Selemani was recorded, annotated and published in Swahili translation by Mulokozi (1974); the author analyses, in particular, the traditional lexicon of this poem, which was preserved by Mulokozi in the Swahili edition. Clara Momanyi and Joseph Maitaria contribute to the volume with a critical study, based on a corpus ranging from traditional to modern poems (a.o. Kezilahabi, Mberia and Mohamed), which views Swahili poetry as an arena where authors can voice their opposition to women's discrimination and the defense of women's rights and social position.

The fifth part of the book pays attention to the writing, editing and publishing or broadcasting in Swahili language. The essays highlight several issues related to the publishing of Swahili books in Tanzania, such as editing, proof-reading and the protection of copyrights (Timothy T. Mapunda), to the process of editing Swahili school texts adopted as further reading (*vitabu vya kiada*) in Tanzanian primary schools (Festo N. Joster), and to the writing in Swahili language for academic and journalistic texts (Titus Mpemba). The following section regards language history and policies, lexical research and dialectology. Pamela M. Y. Ngugi in her contribution analyses the developments of the status of Swahili language in Kenya, by comparing it with the situation in Uganda and Tanzania, and by also taking into account the positions expressed by political leaders on this matter. The essay of Stanley Adika Kevogo, Mwenda Mukuthuria and James Omari Ontieri is devoted to the use of the Swahili language in the media, and highlights the challenges faced by journalists (and their solutions) in translating the lexicon of specific domains. Mussa H. Hans presents a comparative analysis of the Makunduchi dialect (*Kimakunduchi*), which is spoken in the southern part of Zanzibar island, and the standard Swahili (*Kiswahili sanifu*). Alex Umbima Kevogo, Mwenda Mukuthuria and Ayub Mikhwama discuss the role of religions (Islam and Christianity) in the spreading of Swahili, also paying attention to the contemporary developments of the Swahili language in the context of globalization.

The last part of the volume is devoted to literary translation, another practice dear to Mulokozi, who translated a number of works into Swahili, especially children's books and oral literature (from English and Kihaya). Edson Z. Thomas focuses on translating strategies adopted by translators of foreign literature into Swahili, with a particular reference to the translation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* by Julius Nyerere, first published in 1963 and then in 1969 after a considerable revision. Hadojia Jilala emphasises the importance of translation in world literature, and shows the main linguistic and cultural challenges faced by post-independence East African translators when translating literary works (usually Western or African Anglophone texts) into Swahili.

To conclude, this anthology is a recommended reading for scholars and students of Swahili literature, on account of the richness and variety of the collected works, which deal with various

aspects of Mulokozi's intellectual and artistic life, or with the domains of interest that he developed scholarly and creatively.

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