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Some 20th Century Developments in Swahili Prose,
1900-1950

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① Introduction: Here doing research on 2nd volume and I want to present to you an overview of the Swahili lit. history, in special regards to prose, in a 50 year period, that I see occurring from 1900-1950.

② First, let me say that my studies are genre studies and do not necessarily proceed chronologically. Rather they are studies in the development of form, prose types or genres that, ^{I see as} ~~are~~ the ~~are~~ subtle extensions, manifestations of cultural proclamations of ethnic or community (in the larger sense) identity, value. When one shifts there is a Royle ^{concomitant} shift in the other.
- Over -

③ Thus one cannot, I think, discuss Form apart from various historical, socio-cultural aspects of a milieu's history in which a literature or literatures is/are produced.

④ And thus what I present to you ^{this} ~~afternoon~~ is, one might argue, only part of the equation - the historical publishing record of this period. But in so describing this

As Royce and others have shown

a. NO ethnic group can maintain a viable identity without signs & symbols that point to a distinctive identity.

b. Indeed, the very ability of an ethnic group to maintain boundaries depends on its ability to marshal an array of symbols such as genre.

But we all know what problems are involved in discussing wasivakili as an ethnic group.

○ At the end of the 19th century one could find in use at least 10 different terms, all slightly different from another as types, for prose literature: Kisa, Uadithi, hekaya, masimulizi, simu, ngano, riwa, wasifu, and so on. These, for the most part, have literary histories in Oriental literatures and have been seen to have come into E.A. by way of Islamic literatures, developing in Swahili in both oral and written forms. I have ^{already} discussed ^{them} in ^{Part One} of my study. ^{historical} Shifts in ethnic identity ^{amongst the Swahili} resulted in the uneven development of some types as cultural markers as symbols more favored at different times than others.

○ Also in the 19th century, I see something very significant happening that was to have an enormous effect on the ^{later} development of Swahili prose types: ^{in the 20th century} the introduction of European translated ^{and authored in Swahili} works, at first Biblical and church related literature, and ^{then} later school texts.

○ These ^{in large measure} began in 1844 in earnest with Krapp and were realized in the great translations known as the Mombasa, Zanzibar, Roehl, and Union versions of the Bible.

○ What developed very early in the 20th cent, and indeed in the latter part of the 19th, was a split between a literature that was a reflection of Uswahili as a culturally marked ethnicity and a language and a 'culture' that did not manifestly ^{at all} embrace Uswahili. Rather the latter was a language & and an attendant literature that was deliberately de-ethnicized, a language that deliberately did not demarcate cultural boundaries. This is the single most important ^{development of a Swahili prose types} event in the 20th century.

○ Thus what one had was a language & literature that did away with ethnic bonds in favor of nationalistic ties and thus preventing the situation that would call for a simultaneous expression of loyalty to both a ^{specific} ethnic group and a nation comprised of many different ethnic groups. There were in fact two Swahili literatures: an ethnic & a non-ethnic. This has caused in-excusable confusion over the years - but it is very obvious.

Seen in this light, anthropologists would have to argue that the Swahili ethnic culture had to remain different from the nat'l Swahili culture than for obvious reasons: One could not be ethnic & national at the same time, although the two phenomena share many common features. But this is a matter more for anthropologists than a literary historian.

O With these ^{religious} translations - some good, some bad - came an inevitable consequence, which occurs in all contact literatures and languages and to which there should be no values attached (good or bad), and that is ^{the phenomenon of} borrowing - ~~from a~~ ~~text~~

In the case of these ^{Christian} religious texts - and I will name some here on my chart -

→ one finds, because of the unique nature of the works translated - a borrowing

of more than just a few words or concepts: Because the Bible is a unique

prose narrative arranged in a narrative sequence unlike any other prose work and

because of its wide circulation in Swahili during the latter part of the 19th and

early part of the 20th centuries, it, I feel, significantly affected the development of

a line of ^{Swahili} ~~development~~ prose types not previously known in Swahili - what I would describe

as ^{the} _^ de-ethnitized Swahili prose ^{tradition} ~~genres~~.

(2)

○ This ^{de-emphasized emphasis} of course was due to missionaries desire to find: one suitable dialect

- a. to produce one Bible acceptable
- b. to all - coastal & upcountry
- c. to rid Swahili of Arabic assoc. too closely allied to Islam
(Roehl especially)
- d. Gov't too wanted to issue documents in a standard language. Kiswahili Scientific.

○ All of these texts - mention them - developed in a narrative fashion unlike Traditional narratives of the 19th century. Let me give you an example -

Tippu Tip

Flat character - horizontal narrative - ^{overall} no narrative strategy - Begins & ends by chronology - wa fiha Arabic chronicles. NO clear western sense of causality things just happen.

This is not BAD - just another way of telling a story. He lingers, repeats himself, jumps around...

View of causality - Tippu Tip ~~is~~ takes the world as it ~~is~~ ^{is} given. It is not put in order by him

Bible + other texts
(over here)

Narrative strategy - plan - narrator knows the outcome at beginning - idea & illustration. U-shaped narrative. View of causality different. Attempt to sort out all cause & effect - This is why these things happen before hand.

And this of course is the fundamental structure of the novel in all languages. Indeed

Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative

New York: Basic Books, 1983

Northrop Frye, The Great Code N.Y.

Harcourt Brace & Jovanovich, 1982.

Features found in narrative structure of Bible

① Unity of design where each part belonged in a particular place to secure some unity of thesis.

② Material was clearly manipulated to illustrate writer's central idea.

3. General Headings

③ Conception of narrative - set out like an essay
what effects 1st was had in community - everything illustrates it.

④ arrangement of materials - U-shaped narrative
materials manipulated to reinforce this.

⑤ technique of expression - inverted speech,
direct speech to reveal character - Tippi Tib - gratuitous
heighten credibility - use of dreams - Birth of Homio filius
verbation repetition - mechanical time as artificial means of
imposing order.

The Bible is called the father of the novel

○ Now when one considers this literary fact and notices the other ^{many} translations of English novels into Swahili, one may apprehend this line as my graf.

○ Between the years 1900 - 1950 there were some 359 works of prose published in Swahili and 346 of them were written by Europeans. — look at chart

- a. Unidiomatic Swahili Read them
- b. English syntax hiki kitabu ni kibaya
yote mtu
- c. Interlanguage dialogue - Eastman Not Kiswahili kasa
lang used by 2 non-native speakers
~~most native speakers understand~~ native speakers understand

○ With the introduction of the EASO and the EALB, the institutionalized use of a de-ethnicized Swahili came into its own.

This is clearly & firmly established and this is the line it comes from.

○ Now I maintain that there are two different currents in Swahili prose - one coming from this de-ethnicized tradition from the English Bible and another down here which is still Ethnic Swahili literature

Ethnic Swahili lit.

This is a literature that always existed throughout this period but in lesser known ~~genres~~ expressions.

I'm talking about little books like Maisina Nabii Muhammad, or too many

translations of ~~Haditha~~ ~~to~~ Suras from the Quran & Hadith. like these ; EXAMPLES

Use of language as a cultural marker - an ethnic boundary
A people embracing Uswahili in language.

Haji Mohamed & Miliu

Also oral lit. written down as Ethnic
HeKaya za Abunurus, 1001 Nights, Steeres Tales
System of causality - Islamic - oral formulae
Arrangement of materials Themes
structure more like Quran than Bible

Also during this time, Sahoza, Kayamba, mbotela, Diva, Shaaban - I put them here because of their combinations of ~~the~~ use of Sw. & narr. structure - (ethnic in some cases)

(9)

○ Thus I see this period as perhaps the most critical in the development of this very important body of literature, for the seeds of these two traditions - ethnic and de-ethnic Swahili prose - were sown and grown in it.

○ Whether one will ^{be} subsumed by the other or whether they will continue to exist side by side remains to be seen. I have heard people express both views, I'd like to know what you think.

○ I ^{wt.} see signs that the ethnic Sw. will always exist on this small scale as long as there are people who continue to see this literature as a symbol, a sign of their ethnicity, who hold on to their distinctive use of Kiswahili as a barrier of cultural identity that separates them from other groups of

Specific ethnic

(10)

Speakers who attack no [^] culture to
the ~~the~~ language, but may refer only to
national ^{non-ethnic} symbols in the language.

Ethnic Lit

Not just Islamic - any ethnic group must marshal signs + symbols like genre. genre is diff in narrative structure, in topoi, in theme, and in means of expression.

So I find ethnicity here in structure
stuff
and means of expression

= Genre

de-ethnic lit

All western lit.

Hadith:

Ambae hawasitahi wata, huya hamsitahi

Allah

inwenyezi Mungu

He who does not respect people

Miss L. A. Gwiyu
Permanent Secretary
Office of the President
Republic of Kenya

... toward the writing
of the next volume of
A History of Sw. Pros

The enclosed represent notes taken in
this short 6 week period of research. I fear
that you will find them disorganized since the
~~overall~~ gaps I needed filled were scattered
throughout my plan for the second volume.
These notes are, however, faithful reproductions
of the ~~interviews~~ discussions I had here
with the people noted on them. ~~to~~

I have included a general schema of
the book ~~with~~ indicating where I think certain
works belong. ~~These belong~~ This plan I have
discussed with everyone I spoke with and indeed
it was used as a basis for my informal
presentation ^{of my research} at the University which was
given on the 13th of July.

I shall send to you a draft of the book as soon as it is done - probably in December - and then - when it is published, the required three copies. Naturally I will have it in mind to acknowledge the cooperation I received from you and your office in the Preface.

Should you wish to contact me in any regard, please write to me at: