

# Modern Swahili: the integration of Arabic culture into Swahili literature

**Hanah Chaga Mwaliwa**

Hanah Chaga Mwaliwa is a lecturer of Swahili language and linguistics in the Department of Kiswahili, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya.

Email: mwaliwach@gmail.com

DOI: [dx.doi.org/10.17159/2309-9070/tv1.v.55i2.1631](https://doi.org/10.17159/2309-9070/tv1.v.55i2.1631)

## **Modern Swahili: the integration of Arabic culture into Swahili literature**

Due to her geographical position, the African continent has for many centuries hosted visitors from other continents such as Asia and Europe. Such visitors came to Africa as explorers, missionaries, traders and colonialists. Over the years, the continent has played host to the Chinese, Portuguese, Persians, Indians, Arabs and Europeans. Arabs have had a particularly long history of interaction with East African people, and have therefore made a significant contribution to the development of the Swahili language. Swahili is an African native language of Bantu origin which had been in existence before the arrival of Arabs in East Africa. The long period of interaction between Arabs and the locals led to linguistic borrowing mainly from Arabic to Swahili. The presence of loanwords in Swahili is evidence of cultural interaction between the Swahili and Arabic people. The Arabic words are borrowed from diverse registers of the language. Hence, Swahili literature is loaded with Arabic cultural aspects through Arabic loanwords. Many literary works are examples of Swahili literature that contains such words. As a result, there is evidence of Swahili integrating Arabic culture in its literature, an aspect that this paper seeks to highlight. **Keywords:** Arabic, cultural integration, linguistic borrowing, Swahili literature.

### **Introduction**

Swahili is a term used to refer to a society of people living along the coast of East Africa whose native language is Kiswahili, a Bantu language spoken mainly in East Africa and beyond. It is spoken by well over 200 million people within Africa in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi (Massamba et al. 2). Swahili functions as the official language in Kenya, Tanzania and Burundi. It is also used as the national language in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. Mazrui and Mazrui state that Swahili functions as a medium of trade, religion, education, civil administration, practical politics and collective bargaining throughout the East African region (160). In other words, Swahili is the lingua franca of the entire region East and Central Africa. Choge states: "Kiswahili is a regional language in East Africa countries where it wears several hats as a vernacular, national and official language, lingua franca and a vehicular in various spheres of life" (172). Prior to the arrival of foreigners on the East African coast, the Swahili led their life with their own religion, beliefs, economic activities, language and social activities as their culture. They had their name as a people before it was changed by the Arabs to Swahili. "[T]he name 'Swahili' is derived

from Arabic denoting ‘language of the coastal people’” (Mazrui and Mazrui 170).

Arabic, on the other hand, is a Semitic language spoken by 350–400 million people in the Arab world and beyond. Akidah states that Modern Standard Arabic is the standard Arabic dialect that is spoken beyond geographical boundaries (2). In this article, “Arabic” refers to Modern Standard Arabic. The word Arab refers to a society of people with Asiatic origin speaking a Semitic group language called Arabic. The Arabs travelled to the East African coast by sea and settled, where they met and mingled with the Swahili people. When Arabs came to the East African coast, they also had their own way of life. They came to Africa mainly to do trade. As the Arabs traded in East Africa, they intermarried with the Swahili people. The Arabs also introduced their religion to the Swahili people that led to the majority of Swahili converting to Islam. In the long period of interaction between the Arabs and Swahili people, many Arabic words were borrowed into Swahili, thanks to cultural integration.

Prior to the arrival of Arabs to the East African coast, in Swahili culture, children belonged to their mother and not father; a kind of matriarchal system. In addition, spirits were given feminine names such as *Mwana Chambi*, *Mwana Mkisi* and *Mwana Mtwapa* (Chiraghdin and Mnyampala x). The Arabs came to East Africa with a culture that differed from that of the Swahili. One of the major differences between Arabic and Swahili culture was religion. Arabs came with their Islamic religion which they introduced to the Swahili people. Another cultural aspect is the language; over a period of contact between Arabs and Swahili, intermarriage took place, trade expanded, and Islam rapidly spread along the coast of East Africa, resulting in cultural integration. The Swahili people adopted much of Arabic cultural aspects such as their cuisine, manner of dress, religion, education, trade and art. In the process, Arabic words also found their way into Swahili through linguistic borrowing. As Boesch says, “culture has the potential to change rapidly if a new social model becomes available” (83). This is what happened to Swahili culture; as a result of social integration between the Swahili and Arabs, Swahili culture has changed by adopting Arabic cultural aspects. These borrowed cultural aspects are reflected in Swahili literature through loanwords from Arabic.

In this study, I used purposive sampling of select Swahili literary works from two genres, that is, poetry and prose. The two genres were selected on the basis that they are more readily available in print form compared to other genres such as drama. The criteria used to select these works was the use of loanwords in the texts, as well as the time of their publication. I wished to investigate both classical and modern literary works in Swahili to show how loanwords have featured in these works. In poetry, I selected *Inkishafi* (1980) by Sayyid Abdalla A. Nassir, and *Sikate Tamaa* (1980) by Said A. Mohamed to represent classical authors; while *Bara Jingine* (2001) by Kithaka wa Mberia represents modern authors. I also selected the novel *Adili na Nduguze* by Shaaban Robert (1952) representing classical authors and *Siku*

*Njema* (1996) by Ken Walibora representing modern authors. *Sikate Tamaa* (Said A. Mohamed) and *Adili na Nduguze* (Robert) are Tanzanian Swahili texts (see Wamitila 123), whereas the rest of the texts are Kenyan texts.

I identified loanwords from Arabic used in the selected works. I then categorized the loanwords according to their respective registers, that is, religion, economy, administration, education, literature and social culture. The identified sample of loanwords selected from the mentioned literary works are attached in the appendix to this paper.

### **Linguistic borrowing from Arabic to Swahili**

Swahili and Arabic came into contact in the early years of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, when Arabs travelled and settled along the coast of East Africa between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries (Harries 224–5). According to Chiraghdin and Mnyampala, one of the reasons Arabic loanwords are more prevalent in Swahili, as compared to loanwords from other languages such as Portuguese, Persian, French, English and German, is that the Arabian Gulf is the closest to the coast of East Africa. Due to this proximity, Arabs made frequent journeys to and from Africa and, therefore, its speakers interacted most with the Bantu people (mostly Swahili) along the East African coast (1). The Arabs' and Swahilis' long history of contact led to inter-marriage and borrowing of words mainly from Arabic to Swahili. Mazrui and Mazrui state that the contact between Swahili and Arabs was not merely religious and cultural, but also economic (126). Polome alludes to the fact that the Swahili people shared the faith and culture of Arabs (10). According to Chiraghdin and Mnyampala, the second reason why Swahili borrowed from Arabic is that many Arabic words were used in the teaching of the Islamic religion (5). From this, one can see that the learning of Islam by the Swahili contributed to cultural contact and therefore, to linguistic borrowing largely of religious terms from Arabic to Swahili. Examples of loanwords borrowed in the domain of religion include: *dini* (religion), *dhambi* (sin) and *jahanam* (hell). Apart from religion, the Arab-Swahili interaction in trade also contributed to linguistic borrowing of words such as *bidhaa* (products), *dhahabu* (gold), *fedha* (silver) and *khasara* (loss). Cultural integration between the two groups of people led to borrowed words such as *dunia* (world), *amani* (peace), *taji* (crown) and *rafiki* (friend). There are also words related to the arts that were borrowed from Arabic to Swahili; for instance, *fasihi* (literature), *sanaa* (art), *utenzi* (long poem), *ubeti* (stanza) and *hadithi* (story).

Indigenous African languages have borrowed from other languages, especially English, French and Swahili. Thus, linguistic borrowing does not reduce the status of a language; rather it helps the language to expand its vocabulary and therefore its functional dimension. There are two main reasons as to why linguistic borrowing occurs; these are need and prestige (Anttila 155). Mwaliwa asserts this about Swahili

by stating that Swahili borrowed items from Arabic to meet certain functional needs (50). This applies especially to words found in the domain of religion (Islam) as stated by Mazrui and Mazrui, "Swahili developed within Islamic culture and borrowed many Arabic words of Islamic religion" (174). Examples of words borrowed from Arabic to Swahili to cater for new religious concepts include: *Ramadhan* (holy month of Muslim fast), *Idd* (Muslim festival) and *Madrassa* (Islamic religious school). These were borrowed into Swahili to represent new concepts that hitherto were not present in Swahili. Some words were borrowed into Swahili to cater for concepts that are not new to the community, for instance: *Mola* (God), *Harusi* (wedding) and *Maradhi* (diseases). These words were borrowed into Swahili for the reason of prestige, given that there are indigenous words that represented them prior to the arrival of Arabs. The Bantu Swahili words for *Mola*, *Harusi* and *Maradhi* are *Mungu* (God), *ndoa* (wedding) and *magonjwa* (diseases), respectively.

When words are borrowed into a certain language, they either get adapted or adopted in terms of their structure. Mwaliwa affirms that most of the Arabic words were adapted to conform to the linguistic structure of Swahili (285). This means that the loanwords were structurally changed to fit into the structure of Swahili. Words that hitherto had Arabic syllable structures were modified to conform to Swahili syllable orientation especially CV (consonant and vowel). For instance, the words *birika* (kettle), *askofu* (bishop) and *adhuhuri* (noon) have been changed to adapt to the Swahili structure. Yet, a few words have been rendered into Swahili as they were in Arabic having closed syllables, for example: *maktaba* (library), *labda* (perhaps) and *maalum* (special). In addition, Swahili adopted three Arabic sound segments through borrowed words; the sound segments /gh/, /dh/ and /th/ in words such as *ghadhabu* (wrath), *ghafila* (suddenly), *dhiki* (distress), *dhambi* (sin), *thawabu* (reward) and *thibitisha* (confirm) have now become part of Swahili phonology. Such borrowed words are used by the authors of Swahili literature under study.

### **Overview of Swahili literature**

Swahili has been used as a medium of communication in written texts including literary works. Educational books are available for teaching Swahili as a language to pupils and students in primary and secondary levels, respectively. In addition, literary works in poetry, drama, short stories and novels are also available in large numbers. Several authors from around the region have produced literary works using Swahili, such as Shaaban Robert, Said Ahmed Mohamed, Abdilatif Abdalla, Mohamed Suleiman Mohamed, Zainab Burhani, Shafi Adam Shafi, Alamin Mazrui, Euphrase Kezilahabi, Katama Mkangi, Emmanuel Mbogo, Kithaka wa Mberia, Mwendah Mbatia, John Habwe, Kyallo Wadi Wamitila, Ken Walibora and many more. These literary works have been read widely across the region particularly in schools, colleges and universities offering Swahili and its literature as subjects. Even though

English literature is also prevalent in the East Africa region, Swahili literature is making its presence felt in the contemporary period. This is an indication that Swahili literature is thriving in East Africa particularly in Kenya and Tanzania (Choge 183).

Evidence of written literature in Swahili dates as far as the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the oldest surviving manuscript called *Hamziya* that was written in 1652 (Amidu 114). Authors of both traditional and modern Swahili literature have contributed immensely to the development of Swahili literature in the region. First, they have contributed towards the widespread use of Swahili in the region. More so, the use of literary expressions such as idioms, proverbs, vocabulary and so on, has been inherited by the community through Swahili literature. Swahili culture has also been well explained and understood by the readership in this region thanks to Swahili literature written by scholars. The Swahili way of life and especially how modernity is infiltrating Swahili culture is well captured in many of the literary works in the region.

### **Analysis of the selected Swahili literary works**

*Inkishafi* (1980), which literally means soul-searching, was authored by Sayyid Abdalla A. Nasiri. This is a long poem consisting of seventy-nine stanzas believed to have been composed by the author between 1810 and 1820 A. D. (wa Mberia 92). It describes Swahili life on Pate Island. This text revolves around the theme of mortal life in which the author advises us to live according to God's will and shun earthly glory that is only temporary. The poem depicts the world as a dangerous place, unclean and deceptive to man, which promises man water, only for man to realize that there was no water, but a mirage. He contends that if man does not shun evil and live according to the will of God, he will end up in hell. The poet artistically paints three pictures to drive home his message. In the first part, the poet paints a picture of Pate Island basking in wealth and glory. Here, we see a picture of great men living in prosperity as is characterised by gold and silver, riches and power, living in splendid houses, and being full of joy and merriment daily (wa Mberia 93). The second part of the poem depicts Pate Island in ruins and desolation. The wealth and glory are no more to be found on the island. Instead it is depicted that bats, spiders, owls, vultures, doves, cockroaches and crickets have taken over the place (wa Mberia 94). According to the poet, Pate Island's downfall was because of pride that was exhibited by the inhabitants during the earlier days of glory. Since they did not take heed to God's way of life, they ended up in punishment through death. The third part of the poem gives a picture of hell, where the poet describes the various stages of hell with its horrors and agonies (wa Mberia 95). According to the poet, those who refuse to live in line with God's will, end up in hell where there is torture by fire after death. The poem is influenced by Islamic teachings, the author being an Islamic scholar and in line with teachings as indicated in the Islamic Holy book, the Quran.

*Inkishafi* makes use of loanwords in the religious register such as *bismillahi* and *dhambi*. The poet introduces the name of God by using an Arabic loanword at the start of his poem. This tradition is common in many epics; being Muslim, the poets always began their compositions in this religious manner, for instance, *Utenzi wa Fumo Liyongo* also begins in the same way. The effect of *bismillahi*, which contains the name of God (Allah), is that it gives God the first and lofty place in the poem. The poet acknowledges God as the one who gives him inspiration in the creation of the poem. This loanword is used in the first stanza; in fact, it is the first word of the whole epic. This shows the importance given to God by the poet. There is no equivalent of this loanword in Swahili, given that Allah is the God of Muslims who was introduced to the Swahili by the Arabs. This tradition was then passed over to generations that followed to date. The loanword *dhambi* (sin) is used in stanza 71 of the epic where the poet talks of an oppressor who in the end is punished. In line 3 of the verse, the poet says that the oppressor will be punished with all the sins committed by those he oppressed. In other words, evil people will finally pay for their sins. In this poem, the poet equates any form of injustice with sin, which is punishable on earth and in the afterlife by God. Given that the author of *Inkishafi* is Muslim, he makes use of these words knowing that his audience, which was initially Muslim, understands them. These loanwords are frequently used in the religious domain to represent Islamic concepts that bring together people from the two communities, in this case Arabs and the Swahili. An equivalent word for *dhambi* in Swahili is *kosa*, which means a mistake or violation. However, the author chooses to use the Arabic loanword *dhambi* instead of *kosa*. In my view, the reason for this choice is the intensity of the word *dhambi*—the mistake connoted by *dhambi* is graver compared to the one connoted by *kosa*. Moreover, the loanword *dhambi* has a religious connotation, as it means breaking of the laws of God, which leads to certain consequences. The author aimed at depicting how the oppressor violated God's law through injustice, and the appropriate word was *dhambi*.

Loanwords in an economic register such as *fedha* and *dhahabu* are used in *Inkishafi*. Although the text centers around religious themes, it also contains words that are commonly used in trade among Arabs and the Swahili people. In stanza 34, the word *wakwasi* refers to the rich or affluent, who possess a lot of wealth. The poet has used this Swahili word to paint a picture of very rich people who lived in Pate Island in those days of glory. The loanwords *fedha* and *dhahabu* are used in the last line of the verse, referring to gold and silver respectively: precious goods possessed only by rich people. This shows how wealthy the people of Pate Island were. Without mentioning the gold and silver, and their luxurious lifestyle, it would be difficult to understand the extent of their wealth. The loanwords *fedha* and *dhahabu* do not have their equivalents in Swahili, given that these concepts were newly introduced to the Swahili people by the Arabs. For this reason, the loanwords have an element of

prestige. In the administration register, *Inkishafi* has a loanword *mawaziri* (*waziri* in singular form) in stanza 61. Here, the poet narrates that there once lived lords and ministers in the government who were always accompanied by a security detail. However, they are no longer alive, but buried in tiny, dusty and darkened graves. A government official of the position of minister is a powerful person who can have whatsoever he commands to be done. Ironically, death does not have respect even for the most powerful people. According to the poet, all the then powerful people of Pate, just like renowned scholars, jurists and prophets like King Solomon, are dead and buried in their graves. In Swahili, a minister or any person occupying a leadership position is referred to as *kiongozi* or *msimamizi*. The author chooses to use the loanword *waziri* because it is more prestigious compared to the Swahili words which are ordinary. Apart from prestige, the loanword *waziri* bears more weight in terms of the responsibility and power vested therein and has a specific connotation that is in tandem with the changed system of governance in Swahili society after the arrival of Arabs.

*Sikate Tamaa* (1980) is a collection of poems composed by Said A. Mohamed; and edited by Abdilatif Abdalla. The poems in *Sikate Tamaa* (Do not give up) centre around the reality of life in the world, highlighting suffering and oppression of the poor. Several of the poems discuss good and bad leadership in the third world countries especially after independence. Thematically, the poems can be categorized into two groups, namely political poems and poems about everyday life. In the political poems, the poet paints a picture of the ills rendered by leaders, corruption in particular, thus rebuking such leaders. For instance, in the poem "Nimeamka!" (I have woken up!), the poet says that he is now alert and will not be deceived again by those looting from him. The poet in "Ajabu" (Strange) shows how farmers who work hard in the fields do not enjoy the fruit of their labour; instead, the rich are the ones who benefit from the farmers' harvest. In the poem "Ukoloni na Ukoloni-mamboleo" (Colonialism and Neo-colonialism), the poet draws a comparison between colonialism and neo-colonialism, showing that the latter is worse than the former. This poem implies that African leadership is ruthless and wicked compared to the colonial masters. There are many poems about everyday matters such as not giving up in life in "Sikate Tamaa" (Do not give up), not to be choosy in job searching in "Mtu hachagui Kazi" (One does not choose a job) and oppression of women by men in "Imani ya Mwana" (Faith of a child). In terms of structure, the poet tries to deviate from traditional poetic structures. The poet in *Sikate Tamaa* uses the loanword *shujaa* in the poem "Namsifu Mwanamke" (In praise of woman). The word *shujaa* represents a hero who in most cases is a male person. *Shujaa* is a brave person or a warrior, who has gone through battles and came out victorious. In the African context, women never went to battle; they remained at home as their men went to the battlefield. In this poem, the poet depicts a woman warrior who is very brave

despite traditional societal expectation. According to the poet, this woman is strong, firm, merciful, hard working and brave like a man. The poet uses the word *shujaa* in this poem to effectively explain the characteristics of this new African woman. In Swahili, an equivalent of *shujaa* is the word *nguli*. Despite having a Swahili word, the poet chose to use a loanword, for prestige reasons.

*Bara Jingine* (Another continent, 2001) is a collection of modern poems authored by Kithaka wa Mberia. It contains a total of thirty-four poems which are thematically categorized into two groups, namely poems on political and social topics, and poems to do with nature and environmental matters (Bertoncini 92). Structurally, the poems in *Bara Jingine* are composed in free verse and are generally short (Bertoncini 94). These are modern poems in Swahili as opposed to the traditional prosodic poems which are composed by adhering to the strict rules of equal stanzas, rhyme and meter. Modern poetry in Swahili is characterized by free verse, absence of rhymes and meter, and no equal number of stanzas in a verse. Thus, *Bara Jingine* is representative of modern Swahili poetry. Bertocini asserts that "Kithaka wa Mberia together with other East African contemporary poets has made a great contribution towards the renewal of the genre, proving that Swahili poetry is able to express universal themes and reach high artistic standards even without following traditional models" (103).

"Kikaoni Addis Ababa" (In a meeting in Addis Ababa) paints a picture of a meeting held by then presidents of African countries who met in the capital city of Ethiopia. This happened during the apartheid days in South Africa under the rule of P. W. Botha who also attended the meeting. In that meeting, all the African presidents rebuked the then president of South Africa for the violence and deaths suffered by poor South Africans of African descent. They lashed out at him for the innocent blood that was shed following the brutal shooting and killing of African school children in Soweto. "Jumapili ya Damu" (Bloody Sunday) is a poem that describes the kind of violence that takes place in African countries under military regimes. It paints a picture where shops are suddenly broken into and looted followed by gunshots and merciless killing of people. In this poem, the poet seems to allude to the regimes of former presidents Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, Jean-Bedel Bokassa of the Central African Republic, Idi Amin Dada of Uganda, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire and Samuel Doe of Liberia. The poet finally longs for a day when African countries will be ruled by democratically elected leaders.

Social topics such as gender-based violence against women feature in certain poems (Bertoncini 92). The poem "Giza Mbele" (Darkness ahead), is a story of a schoolgirl who is abducted and raped on her way from school. As a result, the girl becomes pregnant and, cannot, therefore, proceed with her education. Likewise, "Pamela" is a poem that describes a young schoolgirl who is gang-raped and later drops out of school. Because of the rape, she goes mad and begins loitering in the market place naked. Different people in the community try to explain the predica-

ment that has befallen Pamela—some saying it is God’s wrath for her sins, others claiming it is witchcraft; while others suggest it is the ghost of her departed maternal uncle that is tormenting her.

Poems about the environment include “Ngao” (Shield), in which the poet-speaker laments that through his technological activities, man is slowly destroying the ozone layer, thus exposing himself to the harmful rays of the sun. In the poem “Mimi, Mto Nairobi” (I, River Nairobi), the poet paints a picture of River Nairobi, lamenting how Nairobi people are destroying the river. The river is dying due to its being harmed by waste in the form of oil, tins, tyres and all manner of garbage being dumped unto it. When people moved to Nairobi city, they found the river very clean and used its waters in their various activities. Now the river regrets the fact that even though it co-exists with Nairobi people, the people do not appreciate it in turn.

The poet of *Bara Jingine* has used loanwords from the economic register such as *umiliki* (possessions) and *sokoni* (in the market). In the third stanza of the poem “Jumapili ya Damu” the poet uses the loanword *umiliki*. Economic activity is suddenly disrupted by the violence caused by military regimes. Due to the military violence in the city, all the merchandise in the shops is looted, leaving the shopkeepers whose possessions have been looted poorer. Although the Swahili had possessions prior to the coming of Arabs, they seem to have no word for it. Therefore, this loanword was used for the reason of need; there is no Swahili word that can be used in its place. In part three of the poem “Pamela”, the poet uses the loanword *sokoni*, in which he describes Pamela’s life after her ordeal of being gang raped. According to the poet, Pamela resorts to a life of loitering in the market place after eventually becoming mad. Here, the irony is that a market is a place which is busy with economical activities, as people come to buy and sell. On the contrary, Pamela is not engaging in economical activities at the market because of her rape ordeal. The word *sokoni* which is used metaphorically, shows the effect of rape on Pamela. In other words, evil acts such as violence meted on women end up affecting women’s economic power by derailing their studies and career development. Swahili has words for “market,” that is, *chete* and *gulio*. However, the poet used the loanword *sokoni*, again for the reason of prestige. In this case, the loanword plays the role of decorating the poem for aesthetic purposes. It is also important to note that the Swahili words *chete* and *ngulio* are not used in everyday conversation of the speakers; instead, the words *soko* (market) and *sokoni* (in the market) are often used.

*Adili na Nduguze* (1952) is a novel authored by Shaaban Robert. It is a story of Adili whose brothers are jealous of him. The novel “is concerned with the virtue of charity, the criticism of futile jealousy and the lashing out of punishment that deforms the physical structure of human beings instead of reforming them morally” (Wafula 67). The loanword *Adili* is used for the main character of this novel. This word refers to something or someone righteous and morally upright. The narrator uses this name

to portray the unquestionable character of this person called Adili. As a government officer, Adili maintains a high level of integrity in all that he does, and this is the theme being showcased through the main character. The virtue of being a good person had been in Swahili before the coming of the Arabs. The word that was used by Swahili people to refer to integrity is *mwenendo mwema*, which literally means, good behavior or conduct. Thus, for prestige reasons, the author uses the loanword *Adili*, which has more weight in terms of integrity compared to the Swahili word.

*Siku Njema* (1996), literally translated as "Good Day", is a novel by Ken Walibora. It is a story about a young man known as Kongowea Mswahili, who was born to a talented *taarab* singer called Zainabu Makame. The loanword refers to a special kind of Swahili music whose melody is Arabian or Indian. Through the depiction of Mswahili's mother as a gifted *taarab* singer, the author depicts Swahili culture, because that type of music is a popular genre within it. This story shows that Zainabu Makame is a woman of integrity both in her private and public life as a *taarab* musician. In Swahili, there is no equivalent for *taarab* since this kind of music is a new concept that was introduced into Swahili culture. Even though the Swahili had their own types of music, there is no Swahili word that could be used to refer to *taarab* music. Hence, the loanword *taarab* serves both need and prestige reasons in this story.

My analysis of the literary texts has demonstrated that most loanwords were borrowed to cater for functional needs and prestige especially in the domains of commerce and religion. The examples given are just but a few of the many loanwords identified in the selected literary works. One could thus argue that literature enhances the idea of cultural integration through showcasing the Arabic words borrowed into Swahili.

## Conclusion

Linguistic borrowing is a product of cultural contact among speakers of Swahili and Arabic. Moreover, this cultural contact has led to cultural integration from Arabic to Swahili which happened especially when the Swahili people embraced the Islamic faith. Apart from Islam, the Swahili also adopted Arabic culture into their own and borrowed their linguistic terms into the Swahili language, which are evident in Swahili literature. As witnessed above, the language used in Swahili literary works contains a lot of words borrowed from Arabic. Linguistic borrowing from Arabic to Swahili has led to the realisation of many Arabic words in Swahili. As such, Swahili has continued to enrich her vocabulary in many socio-cultural, religious and economic domains of society. Words borrowed from Arabic have become part and parcel of Swahili both in spoken and written forms. Thus, Arabic has enriched Swahili literature with its vocabulary, which is also integrated in Swahili culture. Linguistic borrowing can be said to have a significant contribution to the growth and development of Swahili. Swahili has benefited from Arabic vocabulary because of

linguistic borrowing. It is through linguistic borrowing that Swahili contains many words from Arabic; and this is the reason many people mistake Swahili either to be an Arabic dialect, or to have Arabic origins. Hence, Swahili has ended up having a lot of cultural concepts in the spheres of religion, economics, education, socio-cultural, administration and literature borrowed from Arabic. The loanwords from Arabic are widely used by writers of Swahili literary works ranging from the novel, poetry, the short story and plays, as witnessed in the writings of Sayyid Abdalla A. Nasiri, Shaaban Robert, Said A. Mohamed, Kithaka wa Mberia and Ken Walibora, who use loanwords effectively in the writing of their literary texts.

### Works Cited

- Amidu, A. A. "Kiswahili: People, Language, Literature and Lingua Franca." *Nordic Journal of African Studies* vol. 4, no. 1, 1995, pp. 104–23.
- Akidah, M. A. "A Lexical Phonology Study of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)." Diss. U of Nairobi, 2012. <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/8456>.
- Bertoncini, E. Z. "Some Remarks on Kithaka wa Mberia's Poetry." *Swahili Forum* vol. 17, 2010, pp. 91–103.
- Boesch, C. "Is Culture a Golden Barrier Between Human and Chimpanzee?" *Evolutionary Anthropology* vol. 12, no. 2, 2003, pp. 82–91. <https://doi.org/10.1002/evan.10106>.
- Chiraghdin, S. and M. Mathias. *Historia ya Kiswahili*. Oxford UP, 1977.
- Choge, S. C. "Fifty Years of Kiswahili In Regional and International Development." *The Journal of Pan African Studies* vol. 4, no. 2, 2012, pp. 172–203.
- Gromov, M. "Women Characters in the Novels of Ken Walibora: Victims or Winners?" *Pathways to African Feminism and Development. Journal of African Women Studies Center* vol. 1, no. 3, 2015, pp. 1–13. <http://journals.uonbi.ac.ke/index.php/aws/article/view/1462>.
- Harries, L. "The Arabs and Swahili Culture." *AFRICA* vol. 34, no. 3, 1964, pp. 224–9.
- Massamba, D. P. B., Y. M. Kihore and J. I. Hokororo. *Sarufi Miundo ya Kiswahili Sanifu (SAMAKISA): Sekondari na Vyuo*. Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili (TUKI), 2004.
- Mazrui A. A. and A. M. Mazrui. *The Power of Babel: Language and Governance in the African Experience*. James Curry, 1998.
- Mohamed, S. A. *Sikate Tamaa*. Longman Kenya, 1980.
- Mwaliwa, C. H. "An Analysis of the Syllable Structure of Standard Swahili Loanwords from Modern Standard Arabic." Diss. U of Nairobi, 2014. <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/77245>.
- Nasiri, S. A. A. *Inkishafi*. Longman Kenya, 1980.
- Polome, E. *Swahili Language Handbook*. Center for Applied Linguistics, 1967.
- Shaaban, R. *Adili na Nduguze*. Macmillan, 1952.
- Walibora, K. *Siku Njema*. Longhorn, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Al-Inkishafi: A Nineteenth Century Swahili Poem.* *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences* vol. 3, no. 3, 2015, pp. 91–101. <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/87114>.
- Wafula, R. M. "The Use of Allegory in Shaaban Robert's Prose Works." Diss. U of Nairobi, 1989. <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/23810>.
- Wamitila, K.W. "Reading the Kenyan Swahili Prose Works: A Terra Incognita in Swahili Literature". *AAP* vol. 51, 1997, pp. 117–25.

**Appendix: Loanwords in the selected literary texts**

*Inkishafi*

<b>Kiswahili</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Askari	Guard
Bidhaa	Product
Bismillahi	In the name of God
Dhahabu	Gold
Dhambi	Sin
Dhiki	Distress
Dini	Religion
Dunia	World
Enzi	Era
Fasihi	Literature
Fedha	Silver
Hadithi	Story
Haki	Justice
Hali	Condition
Hela	Money
Inkishafi	Soul-searching
Jahanam	Hell
Kalamu	Pen
Khasara	Loss
Marashi	Perfume
Mola	God
Mtume	Prophet
Safari	Journey
Sala	Prayer
Salamu	Greeting
Sanaa	Art
Shetani	Satan
Toba	Repentance
Ubeti	Stanza
Utenzi	Narrative poem
Wahakiki	Critics
Washairi	Poets
Waziri	Minister

*Sikate Tamaa*

Ari	Zeal
Asubuhi	Morning
Dawa	Medicine
Dhamana	Surety
Fahari	Pride
Fasihi	Literature
Ghali	Expensive
Haba	Little
Hadaa	Deceive
Hadithi	Story
Hotuba	Speech
Huria	Free
Imani	Faith
Jahanamu	Hell
Kiburi	Pride
Kubariki	To bless
Kufisidi	To destroy
Madaraka	Power
Mali	Wealth
Mashariki	East
Mdhamini	Guarantor
Milele	Forever
Nielimike	To be educated
Raha	Comfort
Roho	Spirit
Sanaa	Art
Shujaa	Hero
Tamaa	Greed
Thabiti	To be firm
Thamani	Value
Ubeti	Stanza
Utawala	Rule
Utenzi	Narrative Poem
Wahakiki	Critics
Washairi	Poets
Watukufu	Glorious people

*Bara Jingine*

Aibu	Shame
Amani	Peace
Amri	Order
Barafu	Ice
Binadamu	Human being
Bunduki	Rifle
Dhiki	Distress
Dhulumiwa	Oppressed
Enzi	Era
Fasihi	Literature
Ghadhabu	Wrath
Habari	News
Hadithi	Story
Hayawani	Beast
Kahawa	Coffee
Maduka	Shops
Maghala	Store rooms
Mahadhi	Rhythm
Mashairi	Poems
Mauti	Death
Msafiri	Traveller
Sanaa	Art
Serikali	Government
Siasa	Politics
Sokoni	In the market
Sura	Chapter
Tabasamu	Smile
Taifa	Nation
Taratibu	Slowly
Tiba	Medical treatment
Ubeti	Stanza
Ufisadi	Corruption
Ufukara	Poverty
Umiliki	Possessions
Utafiti	Research
Utenzi	Epic Poem
Viwanda	Industries
Wahakiki	Critics
Walimu	Teachers
Washairi	Poets

*Adili na Nduguze*

Adili	Moral
Almasi	Diamond
Amirijeshi	Commander
Ardhi	Land
Arobaini	Forty
Birika	Kettle
Daftarini	In an exercise book
Dola	State
Faida	Profit
Gharama	Cost
Habari	News
Harusi	Wedding
Hasidi	Malicious
Hazina	Treasure
Imamu	Imam
Ishara	Sign
Ishirini	Twenty
Karibu	Welcome
Lugha	Language
Maalum	Special
Madiwani	Councillors
Mali	Wealth
Maradhi	Disease
Mashuhuri	Famous
Mfalme	King
Mwadilifu	Moral person
Nahodha	Captain
Naibu	Deputy
Rai	Plead
Sanifu	Skilled
Sheria	Law
Sifa	Praise
Starehe	Comfort
Suluhu	Solution
Tabia	Behaviour
Taji	Crown
Tamasha	Festivity
Thuluthi	A third
Walikariri	They recited
Waziri	Minister
Yamkini	Probably

*Siku Njema*

Alhamdulillah	Praise be to God
Almuradi	So long as
Amirijeshi	Commander
Darubini	Telescope
Dola	State
Dua	Prayer
Elimu	Education
Ghadhabu	Wrath
Gharama	Cost
Haramu	Illegitimate
Hasidi	Malicious
Hayati	Deceased
Husudu	Envy
Inshallah	God willing
Jazba	Emotion
Joho	Robe
Kahaba	Prostitute
Madiwani	Councillors
Maelfu	Thousands
Makala	Article
Maktaba	Library
Mfalme	King
Mwanaharamu	Illegitimate child
Naam	Yes
Naibu	Deputy
Rafiki	Friend
Rasilmali	Assets
Rubani	Pilot
Saumu	A fast
Sheria	Law
Sukari	Sugar
Taarab	Taarab music
Takriban	Almost
Taswira	Imagery
Umma	Public
Ushairi	Poetry
Wakati	Time
Yamini	Oath