RISALA YA CHUO KIKUU

Kwa niaba ya Jumuia ya Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es Salaam ningependa kusema machache kuhusu huyo mwenzetu aliyetuacha.

Dk. May Lenna Balisidya (Bibi Matteru) alikuwa mfanyakazi wa Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es Salaam kwa muda wa miaka kumi na minne kama mwalimu katika Idara ya Kiswahili. Wakati tunamwaga tujikumbushe mambo muhimu aliyoenda kitaaluma, kiutafiti, kiufundishaji na kimaandishi.

Katika uwanja wa taaluma Marehemu Dk. May aliandika makala yasiyopungua kumi na tatu katika majarida ya hapa nchini na nje ya nchi, na ameacha makala tatu ambazo zinatarajiwa kuchapishwa karibuni. Ameandika vitabu vya kitaaluma vitatu: vivili vinahusu Fasihi-Simulizi na Sanaa za Maonyesho, na kimoja cha kufundishia wageni Kiswahili ambacho bado kiko matayarishoni.

Kwa upande wa utafiti, alifanya utafiti mkubwa kuhusu nadharia ya Fasihi-Simulizi na hasa Fasihi-Simulizi ya Wagogo na Fasihi-Simulizi ya Kiswahili kwa ujumla. Alifanya utafiti kuhusu uwezekano wa kutumia Kiswahili kama lugha ya kufundishia taaluma zote katika shule za Sekondari, vyuo na elimu ya juu. Mchango wake kuhusu suala hili unafahamika zaidi na Baraza la Taifa.

Amefanya pia utafiti wa kutosha kuhusu fasihi na wanawake, na masuala yahusuyo nafasi ya mwanamke katika jamii za Kifarika hasa Tanzania. Na katika shahada yake ya udaktari katika Falsafa alishughulikia uhusiano uliopo kati ya sera ya lugha na umbaji wa Fasihi-Simulizi.


Dk. May alikuwa miongoni mwa waandishi wachache wanawake katika Afrika Mashariki. Na kazi iliyompia sifa kubwa ni riwaya yake ya Shida, ishughulikiayo matatizo ya maisha kisiasa, kiuchumi na kiutamaduni. Katika maandishi yake, daima alikuwa mtetezi wa haki za wanyonge. Maandishi ambayo yako mitamboni ni Mihati na Akusamehe dhambi zako. Alishi-
rikiana pia na wenziwe kuandika vitabu vya watoto na tamthilia kama Harakati za Ukombozi na Ayubu.

Marehemu Dk. May amecha pengo kubwa si katika taaluma tu lakini pia kama rafiki wa wengi.

Dk. May amekufa. Lakini amecha fundisho kubwa, kwa wale ambao tumebaki, kuhusu jinsi ya kukabiliiana na kifo. Hata wakati alipokuwa ameambiwa na madaktari wake kuwa siku zake za kuishi zilikuwa chache aliendelea kufanya kazi zake za kimasomo. Fundisho hili tunalipata katika barua aliyomwandikia Mkuu wa Idara ya Kiswahili. Alisema hivi:


Hili ni fundisho kubwa. Tumwaqe kwa beti mbili kutoka shairi liitwalo ’’Dunia Kaburi Wazi’’ lilioandikwa na Mathias Mnyampala:

Kila kiumbe hukoma, kama maji kiafazi,
Ya mitoni husimama, hunyauka michirizi,
Na ndivyo wetu uzima, hukatika kama uzi,
Dunia kaburi wazi, humeza kila kijacho.

Kifo hakina huruma, na hakina uchaguzi,
Hakina mwenye hekima, kuwa awa mbakizi,
Viimbe dunia nzima, vizazi hata vizazi,
Dunia kaburi wazi, humeza kila kijacho.

MUNGU AMILAZE MAHALI PEMAPA PEPO
IN MEMORIAM: DR. MAY BALISIDYA MATTERU  
(1947 - 1987)  

F.E.M.K. Senkoro

The death of May Balisidya Matteru on 27th December, 1987, though already predicted by her doctors, for she had a terminal case of cancer, shocked not only us, her colleagues at the University of Dar es Salaam and those who were so close to her at the University of Wisconsin- Madison, U.S.A., where she had obtained her Ph.D. in African Literature hardly a month back, but it also saddened the Tanzanian Community in general. Having taught in various schools and also at the University of Dar es Salaam for more than fifteen years, May was a person who in many different ways had deeply and profoundly affected and even influenced the lives of many people.

May was among the foremost promoters and reknowned scholars of Tanzanian and African Oral Literature; a very keen developer of Kiswahili language (she had held the position of Vice Chairman of the National Kiswahili Council of Tanzania for two terms), and an excellent, just teacher who knew very well how to challenge her students in literary discussions, not even once treating them as Paulo Freire's empty pots but making them formulate freely and give their opinions openly about the numerous literary topics which she dealt with in and outside the classroom. She was strict with her marking, yet very fair when one supported one's views with clear, literary evidence. The most lasting and memorable of my encounters with this earth's warmest soul can hardly be sorted out
of the many associations I had with her as my former teacher and later on colleague at the University of Dar es Salaam.

As a writer, May's works leave a very lasting effect both in content and in form. She was among the first to appraise the Arusha Declaration, Tanzania's blueprint which had spelled out the country's development strategy. This appraisal comes out clearly in her novel, _Shida_("Hardships", 1975). Always an Advocate for equality among all people in society, she shows in _Shida_, the plight of the people of the lower classes in Tanzania where, she cautions, the economic rift between the leaders and those they lead is bigger and bigger, contrary to the Arusha spirit. _Shida_ tells the story of the lives of a boy called Chonya and his childhood girlfriend, Matika who is rebaptized "Shida" by the city's man-eat-man culture. Balisidya's Bildungsroman shows the two characters undergoing a gradual re-education as they discover the realities around them. Out of the hardships, filth, deprivations and inequalities which they experience, Chonya is forced to turn into a "thief" while Matika becomes a prostitute. Chonya is caught and jailed, and in prison he re-examines his life as his elders visit him. Finally, he is convinced that the best solution for his predicament is to return, after his hard life in jail, to the rural areas and start a new, "freer" life. Meanwhile, Matika had already taken that step and had gone back to her village after spending many years in the city.

Such was Balisidya's first literary work. It followed that time's popular trend of back-to-the-countryside-approach, but in a much more analytical way which related the town-country conflict to the whole socio-politico-economic system pertaining in Tanzania, as evidenced in Chonya's re-examination and re-education which reveal the class nature of his problems:

In that spark of a moment...he decided that money was the source of his problems; but behind this money there were other factors too... He knew that he did not have the money to bribe the big shots in government offices and companies... "It is true," he thought, "However, even if I had a job I would not manage to live in comfort and luxury like the big people do so long as the
prices of essential goods and life in general is extremely expensive."
Money, as he saw it now, was a secondary reason. The environment and the whole system was then the primary source of all unhappiness and poverty in peoples' lives. (pp. 53-54)

Such were Chonya's and thus, May's views on the class division of Tanzania. We see the author questioning this kind of life in the hillarious plays Harakati za Ukombozi ("The Liberation Struggles", co-authored with Penina Muhando and Amandina Lihamba, 1977) and Ayubu ("Job", co-authored with the Paukwa Theatre Association, 1984). These satirical works laugh at the social, political and economic situation in the country, showing how the very people who announced the Arusha Declaration on political platforms and rooftops are the same ones who have gone all the distance to trample on the very foundations of the pronouncements.

May did not end at just writing on the plight of the poor man and on the desired equality between men, but she actively showed this in her practical life. I remember way back in 1981 when she and myself were invited to Lund, Sweden to attend a meeting of the International Association for Applied Linguistics (ALLA). We had arrived rather late, one day only before the conference, and quite tired after a long trip from Dar es Salaam. I remember being given the conference's documents and may drew my attention to the fact that racist South Africa was being officially represented at the conference. That, she said, was contrary to OAU's and UNO's resolutions regarding boycotts (including cultural) against the inhuman system of apartheid. This sparked off a series of consultations which finally ended with us and many other delegates boycotting the conference and going back to our respective countries.

Such was May who, politics aside, showed also tireless efforts in securing the desired reputation and right for Kiswahili language to be used as the medium of instruction at all levels of our education system in Tanzania. Such was May who, being a loving mother of two, endeavored, with Penina Muhando, to write the much-needed books for preschool children to alleviate the acute shortage of children's literature in Tanzania. Such was May, whose many scholarly articles in may literary periodicals show a deep-thinking scholar who, with a broad mind, tackled such issues like "the Woman Question", "Theory of Literature" and Gogo Oral literature.
May courageously wrote to me, "I want to get my Ph.D. while I live. It has been such a great investment to be given up." And so she battled with death and defended her Ph.D. dissertation in bed and celebrated her success in a wheelchair! Yes, such was the unique, irreplaceable person that May was. A strong-hearted soul, ready to declare in the same letter to me, "I still cherish the idea that I shall be back and happy once more with you, my colleagues in our department." And that was after doctors had told her that she had hardly three months to live. Indeed, such was May who leaves us a formidable example of courage in the face of death, summarized in her letter to the Head of Kiswahili Department at the University of Dar es Salaam:

"If death comes in a month or two or more, so what? I am not immortal and so is no one of this flesh... I shall not live in anticipation of death. That is a domain I have no power over. I shall live a life worth dying; and so here I am, carrying on as normal until such a time.

May Balisidya Matteru - a woman of compassion, ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of others. A beloved teacher whose being here mattered so much. A dedicated scholar and an advocate for equality and happiness for mankind. Above all, a friend, a cherished colleague. Goodbye May. We all loved you and feel a strong sense of loss and grief for your departure. Rest in peace, dear May.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME: May Lenna Balisidya (Mrs. Matteru)
Birthdate: May 10, 1947
Birth Place: Dodoma, Tanzania
Marital Status: Married
Children: Two

EDUCATION:


ACADEMIC AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

1982 Fulbright Scholarship for graduate studies in the United States (Ph.D.)

1978 Ford Foundation Grant for the Summer Language Institute at the University of Illinois.

1974 DAAD (West German Government) Scholarship for graduate Studies (M.A.).

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE


1980 - 1987 Senior Lecturer, Kiswahili Department, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
1977 - 1980  Lecturer, Kiswahili Department, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

1974 - 1977  Assistant Lecturer, Kiswahili Department, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

1973 - 1974  Tutorial Assistant, Kiswahili Department, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.


EXTRA CURRICULAR AND OTHER EXPERIENCES:


1979 - 1982  Vice-Chairperson of the Kiswahili National Council of Tanzania.

1971 - 1982  Member of the Kiswahili National Council of Tanzania.


1978  Member, Organizing Committee for Kiswahili Writers' International Seminar/Cum Workshop Institute of Kiswahili Research and UNESCO, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

1977 - 1987  Member of Paukwa Theatre Group.
1976 - 1987  Member of Tanzania Writers' Association.

1973 - 1987  Member, Kiswahili Language Association, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

1979 - 1987  Member of the African Literature Association, based in the United States.

1973 - 1987  Member of the UWT (Women Organization in Tanzania).

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ATTENDED:


April, 1985 African Literature Association Meeting, Northwestern University, Illinois U.S.A. Paper presented: "Adopted or Adapted to? Neo Swahili Literature in Tanzania".

April, 1985 Society for Ethnomusicology, Widwest Chapter Meeting, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A. Paper presented: "Form, Content and Social Context of Cigogo Ikumbi Songs".


SENKORO

April, 1980 Theatre Festival, Erlangen, West Germany


June-Aug., 1978 Language Institute at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.

RESEARCHES CONDUCTED:

1985-1986 The Impact of Language Planning on Oral Literary Creativity. (For Ph.D. Dissertation).


PUBLICATIONS

Published Books:


(b) Fasihi na Sanaa za Maonyesho. (Literature and Theatre) co-authored with P.O. Muhando, T.P.H. Dar es Salaam 1977.

(d) Tujifunze Kusoma. (Children's Book) et al., T.P.H., Dar es Salaam, 1982.

(e) Tujifunze Kuhesabu. (Children's Book) et.al., T.P.H., Dar es Salaam, 1982.


ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION:

(a) Fasihi Simulizi katika Jamii. (Oral Literature and Society) T.P.H., Dar es Salaam.

(b) Mabadiliko katika Fasihi Simulizi ya Wagogo. (Change in the Oral Literature of the Wagogo). Institute of Kiswahili Research. Dar es Salaam.


(d) Tujifunze Kusoma. (Children's Book) et al., T.P.H., Dar es Salaam, 1982.


PUBLISHED PAPERS:

(a) "Wakati Ukuta" (Critique) Mulika, No. 2, 1972, Institute of Swahili Research, Dar es Salaam.

(b) "Mtawa Mweusi" (Critique) Mulika, No. 2, 1972, Institute of Swahili Research, Dar es Salaam.

(c) "Nakupenda Lakini" (Critique) Mulika, No. 4, 1972, Institute of Swahili Research, Dar es Salaam.
(d) "Hatia" (Critique) Mulika, No. 7, 1976, Institute of Swahili Research, Dar es Salaam.

(e) "Sauti ya Dhiki" (Critique) Mulika, No. 7, 1976, Institute of Swahili Research, Dar es Salaam.

(f) "Uhuru wa Mwandishi" (The Freedom of the Writer) Zinduko, No. 2, 1976, Department of Kiswahili, University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam.

(g) "Fani ya Hadithi: Riwaya" (The Novel) Kioo cha Lugha, No. 6, 1975, Department of Kiswahili, University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam.

(h) "Hadithi na Kiswahili:" (The Story and Swahili Language) Semina ya Maofisa Lugha, 1977, BAKITA, Dar es Salaam.


(k) "Haja ya Kutumia Kiswahili katika kufundishia Elimu ya Juu" (Kiswahili in Higher Education) Lugha Yetu, No. 35/36, 1981, BAKITA, Dar es Salaam.


ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION:

(a) "The Impact of African Values on African Cultures" African Cultures, UNESCO, Forthcoming.

In Memoriam

(c) "Mchango wa Wanawake katika Sanaa na Elimu" (Women in Art and Education in Tanzania)
The Women's National Organization (UWT)
Manuscript on the Contribution of Women in Development in Tanzania.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS:

"Hadithi na Utumizi wake katika Ukuza wa Lugha ya Kiswahili" Lugha Yetu No.38 1980/81 BAKITA Dar es Salaam.

"Fasihi Simulizi na Uandishi wa Kiswahili" in Fasihi Makala za Semina ya Kimataifa ya Waandishi wa Kiswahili III, TUKI, Dar es Salaam, 1983.

(a) Adopted or Adapted to? Ne 0 Swahili Literature in Tanzania in Kiswahili Vol.54.

(b) The Construction of Sex and Gender Roles in Penina Muhando's Plays in Kiswahili Vol.54.

(c) Swahili Literary Criticism: Orientality vs Indigeneity in Ba Shiru, 1987.