Andika!

Writing Swahili in Arabic script

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Connect with the past

- Greek, Arabic, Sanskrit, Chinese texts solely via transliteration?
- Decouples the text from its original environment?
- How much editing has been done?
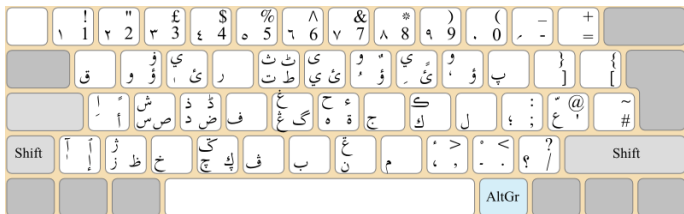- PDF scans?
- Digital MS

Look to the future?

- Write Swahili in Arabic script as easily as Swahili in Roman script
- Digital material: convert automatically
- Non-digital material: OCR $\rightarrow$ tidy $\rightarrow$ convert automatically
- Standard spelling (based on Sh. Yahya's usage) – can it be improved?

Getting started

1. Install a font – Scheherazade, Amiri
2. Set up LibreOffice for RTL typing
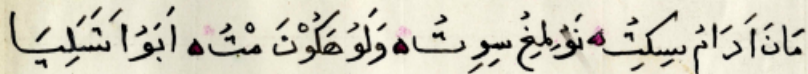3. Install a keyboard layout

Keyboard

- Based on Roman keyboard (Arabic letters mostly on the same keys)

- Consistent rules, eg:
  - dh gh th sh zh are on the same keys as d g t s z
  - short vowels, long vowels, and vowel carriers are on the same key

Demo

- Typing
- Conversion

Mwana Kupona

مَانَ اَدَامُ سِكِتُ ۞ نَوُلِمِغُ سِوِتُ ۞ وَلَوُ هَكُوْنَ مْتُ ۞ اَبَوُ اَتَسَلِيَ

māna aḍāmu sikiṭu * nawulimiġu siwiṭu * walawu hakūna mṭu * abawu aṭasaliya

mwana adamu si kitu, na ulimwengu si wetu, walau hakuna mtu ambao atasaliya

mankind is as nothing, and the world does not belong to us, and there is no person who will live forever

Bajuni fishing songs

اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ ٭ وَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَانِ

assalāmu 'alaykum ٭ wa 'alayhi assalāni

سَالَ نْدَ وِيْنْي إِيْنْد ٭ هُوْدِ نْدَ وِيْنْي نْدَانِ

sāla nḍa wēnye īnḍe ٭ hōḍi nḍa wēnye nḍāni

نَ سَالَ هِيْ نْدَ ذِيْجَ ٭ مْسِوْوْنْ نِأَمَانِ

na sāla hii nḍa ẕītʲa ٭ msiwōne niamāni

سَاسَ طْوَتَاكِجِئَ پِيْفُ ٭ چُتَمْوِيْجَ شِيْهِ غَانِ

sāsa ṭwaṭākatʲia pēfu ٭ tʲuṭamwītʲa shēhe gāni

چُتَمْوِيْجَ مْفِرَادْ ٭ وَ پِيْلِ مْكَيْمَانِ

tʲuṭamwītʲa mfiraḍo ٭ wa pīli mkoyamāni

پِيْنْب نِ أُقِيْذْ فَانْغُ ٭ هُوْلَ كْوَ مَغِيغْ نْدَّانِ

pēṃbe ni uw̱ēzo wāngu ٭ hūla kwa magēgo nḍāni

Wikipedia: *utamaduni*

Dhana hii ilipoibuka kwanza katika karne ya kumi na nane na kumi na tisa barani Ulaya, ilimaanisha mchakato wa kulima au kuboresha kilimo au kilimo cha mboga. Katika karne ya kumi na tisa dhana hii ilimaanisha kuboreshwa kwa mja kupitia kwa elimu na hali kadhalika ilimaanisha kutekelezwa kwa maazimio ya kitaifa au maadili.

ذَانَ هِئِ اِلِئِبُوكَ كْوَنْزَ كَتِيكَ كَارْنِ يَ كُومِ نَ نَانِ نَ
كُومِ نَ تِيسَ بَرَانِ اُلَايَ، اِلِمَأَنِيشَ مْچَكَاتْ وَ كُلِيمَ أَوْ
كُبْرِيشَ كِلِيمْ أَوْ كِلِيمْ چَ مْبوغْ۔ كَتِيكَ كَارْنِ يَ كُومِ نَ تِيسَ
ذَانَ هِئِ اِلِمَأَنِيشَ كُبْرِيشْوَ كْوَ مْجَ كُپِتِئَ كْوَ اِلِيمُ نَ هَالِ
كَذَلِيكَ اِلِمَأَنِيشَ كُتِكِلِيزْوَ كْوَ مَأَزِمِؤْ يَ كِتِئِفَ أَوْ مَأَدِيلِ۔

Critical editions

٤ نْدِمِ مَامَاكِ مُيَاكَ   بِيَ مُونْغُ عَثْمَانِ

njimi māmāke muyăka   4b/a   piya mwengo 'athmăni

njimi māmāke muyăka[2] * piya mwengo 'athumăni[3]

I am the mother of Bwana Muyaka, and of Mwengo Athmani also,

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[2]Bwana Muyaka was the outstanding Swahili poet of 19th century Mombasa. After his death many of his verses were recalled by Mu'allim Sikujua Abdallah al-Batawi (died 1890) and transcribed with annotations by W.E. Taylor (1856-1927). After Taylor's death his papers were acquired by the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London.

[3]Mwengo Athmani: this 18th century poet from Pate composed the *Utendi wa Tambuka* (*The Epic of Heraklios*).

- Database storage → high-quality pdf output
- Annotate individual words with notes, alternate readings, transliterations, etc
- Examine vocabulary, constructions, spelling
- Build POS-tagged corpus of Swahili in Arabic script

Questions?