

Istilahi za Paje na Jambiani (Terminology of Paje and Jambiani)

nyumba (house):

an orange roof, glassless windows, sagging walls;
cinder blocks crowned with shards of green bottles;
a rusted baby blue gate that does not shut, only slams;
electricity failures, unpredictable plumbing, dishes unclean;
twin couches damp with sweat and a cracked laundry bucket, almost unusable;
the space I live

chakula cha asubuhi (food of the morning):

a humble beginning accepted by each day;
purchased the previous evening from the shy man at his roadside stand;
cheap, from the runt chicken;
cooked in a faulty frying pan, seasoned with a damp clump of salt;
delectable in simplicity, the anticipation of which lifts one from the bed;
my sacred silence as the sun rises

daladala (public bus):

one who excels at making me wait;
blue, the color of deep sea, paint chipping, wheels squeaking;
the way there and the way back;

bodies sardined together, some sitting, some squatting, a few hanging
precariously off the rear platform;
open windows let the breeze mix our sweat;
cost of one silver coin each ride

mwanafunzi (student):

budgeted existence with all expenses documented;
having an immense desire to study the world, striving to understand its workings;
one who conducts interviews in a foreign tongue;
not a tourist, not on vacation, not sleeping in, not wandering aimlessly, not so far
away from people and their villages;
observation, cultivation, translation, communication;
the reason I am here

shamba katika bahari (farm in the ocean):

soft floating ropes, cement anchors flocked by urchins, crusty buoys;
impossible to find for the untrained eye;
the setting of study, the place to grow sponges;
where I work at low tide;
at the mercy of all weather and the sea;
a square plot of opportunity for the destitute

majani (green algae):

a plague, a nuisance, the devil's desire;
sickly fluorescent shade of grime;
stuck to clothes, to *kangas*, tools and skin;
a murderer and sponge's nightmare;
source of unending toil;
accompanying the rain, the months, cyclical, and like the seasons going away only
to return again

mkulima wa spongi (sponge farmer):

woman of immense strength, independent;
tough, diligent, patient, fierce;
one who creates history despite poverty, divorce, catastrophe and death ;
dedicated entrepreneur, swimming champion, mother, teacher;
kind to me always, generous and warm;
deserving of the utmost respect

wali na maharage na mchicha (rice and beans and spinach):

unnamed specialty of the Hungry Lion restaurant;
a bargain, complete with belly satisfaction;
signaling the close of a strenuous day's work;
to be eaten with *chapati* on special occasions;
with familiar service and an expectation of return the next evening;
for meeting strangers, in many tongues

nyumbani (home):

the comfort of a well-tucked bug net and excitement of discovering a new insect species;

ringing with laughter from stories relayed over a deck of cards;

where it is ok to lie on the floor, deflated from the day's frustrations;

more than an assortment of physical and utility inadequacies;

the place where family gathers, biological or otherwise;

what I have created here