

What Is 'Old' in Old Age? An Inquiry into Swahili Paremia

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Abstract

This article is about gerontological proverbs in Swahili folkloric discourses. The question posed in this study is as follows: how is old age depicted according to Swahili paremiology? To answer this question, 49 popular Swahili gerontological proverbs have been analysed. The findings show that Swahili gerontological proverbs, like other non-Western gerontological proverbs, pay due respect to elders who are considered wise, knowledgeable, and experienced. How someone is perceived to be an elder is largely socially and culturally constructed. There are several Swahili gerontological proverbs that are equivalent to proverbs in different cultures and languages including Russian, German, Yiddish, French, Chinese, Arabic, and others.

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Keywords: Swahili proverbs; gerontology; paremiology; paremiography; old age; ageing

About the author

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Introduction

Lutfiyya (1970) described attitudes of older members of the Arab family as follows:

The villagers are taught from childhood to show great respect for their elders. Children are often instructed to kiss the hands of the older people when they are introduced to them, to be polite in the presence of the elders, and to stand up and offer them their seats. They are to remain standing until the older folks are seated. Young people are encouraged to listen and to learn from their elders. Only from the older people who have lived in the past can one learn of something of value, they are told. The wisdom of elders is seldom questioned. (Lutfiyya 1970, 55)

Lutfiyya presents a hierarchical picture of a society that exerts a positive attitude towards elders. Older people are valued as custodians of culture and are considered as having immense wisdom, insights, observations, and experiences of different facets of life in their respective societies. Although Lutfiyya confines himself to describing the culture and structure of a particular rural Arab society and how it treats its elderly members, such treatment is not unique to rural Arab settings. A similar picture appears in Sjaak van der Geest's (1996) insightful article "The Elder and His Elbow: Twelve Interpretations of an Akan Proverb". Van der Geest presents Akan traditions in rural Ghana, where "the elder is treated with respect because of his wisdom, his refined manners, and his age. The younger generation is expected to show its respect all the time [...] Children are supposed to heed the calls of the elders and sit quietly at their feet to listen to their wisdom" (van der Geest 1996, 111).

The above comparative description of societies valuing their elders as "receptacle[s] of traditional knowledge" (van der Geest 1996, 111), with immense wisdom and experiences, is broadly shared across numerous non-Western cultures. But the rhetorical question posed by Daignault et al. (2021), "How old is old?", implies that biological age is not a factor in determining that one qualifies as an elder. Additionally, these authors demonstrate that the perception of ageing is not uniform within cultures.

The article by Daignault et al., as the title indicates, only looks at the chronological aspect of ageing, that is, the number of years since someone was born (Hooyman and Kiyak 2011). However, here we want to look at ageing in the sense of the "later life", following Hepworth (2000), as a simultaneously collective and personal experience. Ageing is not simply a matter of chronological or biological changes, but a complex and dynamic process between the body, self, and society.

Although in most societies people who are aged 60 years or older are considered 'old', large numbers of people in Sub-Saharan Africa do not know their exact biological age (Aboderin 2010; Spitzer and Mabeyo 2009; Ezeh et al. 2006). Most of them equate diverse constructions of age with "physical features, reproductive experiences, or social roles in communities, rather than by chronological age" (Nakao 2015, 127). According to Riley (1978, 43), "particular years of age (like particular historical dates) have no meaning in themselves; they are mere indexes, useful only as they reflect socially or theoretically relevant components of personal or social change". Such a view has been corroborated by a renowned paremiologist, Wolfgang Mieder, in his 2020 book entitled *The Worldview of Modern American Proverbs*. Chapter 4 of his book has the title, "Age Is Just a Number": American Proverbial Wisdom about Age and Aging". The chapter's title states that years are just a number and should not be considered

as an aspect of being old. Here we notice the intersection between a folkloric proverb construction and a gerontological theme.

Proverbs are defined by paremiologists as part of verbal folklore which contain wisdom, everyday experiences, common observations, and traditional views passed on from one generation into another (Mieder 2012, 5). They can be analysed and quoted as gerontological discourse when they refer to old age and ageing processes. According to the classification of proverbs by Mati Kuusi (quoted in Mieder 2004, 16-17), 'youth and age' are a part of the proverbial archetype of 'social life'. However, the study of old age and ageing in Swahili paremiology remains rare. With the exception of the article "The elder in African Society" by Joseph Mbele (2004), which pronounces the relevance of proverbs as folkloric discourse providing insights into the socio-cultural aspects of old age in African societies – with a few Swahili examples – there is no other work on gerontology in the context of the Swahili proverb corpus. There are two main approaches for the scholarly analysis of gerontological proverbs – studies that have analysed a single proverb (van der Geest 1996; Zhang 2021; Mieder 2020), and studies that have analysed a corpus of proverbs (Peters 1986; Mbonyingingo and Nshimirimana 2021). Nonetheless, the total number of studies which use proverbs to study verbal knowledge about ageing is still small (Kljajevic 2022, 1).

Coincidentally, in most cases in Swahili paremiographs (proverbial dictionaries), gerontological themes are found. The lacuna is hereby filled in this study by analysing how Swahili speakers conceive of old age and ageing through their proverbial discourses. The proverbs discussed here are primarily extracted from Albert Scheven's book *Swahili Proverbs: Nia Zikiwa Moja, Kilicho Mbali Huja* (1981) as a primary source. Other proverbs are extracted from various Swahili paremiographs such as King'ei and Ndal'u's (1989) *Kamusi ya Methali*, Kyallo Wamitila's (2001) *Kamusi ya*

Methali, Shaaban Robert's (2007) *Mithali na Mifano ya Kiswahili*, and Nico Nassenstein's (2022) *Swahili Proverbs from the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. A total of 49 proverbs linked to gerontological themes were found in these sources by using keywords such as *mtoto/mwana* 'child', *mzee/wazee* 'old person(s)', *uzee* 'old age', *kijana/vijana* 'youth', *ujana* 'young age', *utuuzima* 'adulthood', and *ajuza/ukongwe* 'very old age' (see Appendix 1).

This paper is divided into four sections. After the introduction, the second section explores who is considered old according to Swahili paremia; the third section then asks how old age is conceived in the Swahili proverbs analysed here; and the last section concludes the piece.

Who is old in the context of Swahili paremia?

In my attempt to search for gerontological proverbs that respond to the question of who is considered an old person (*mzee ni nani?*), I found 32 proverbs (see Data A in Appendix 1). None of these proverbs directly indicated the age limits of an old person. This means that almost none of the proverbs sampled explicitly defines old age in terms of chronological age (old person – *mzee*) in quantitative terms, as is the case of American proverbs such as *Life begins at forty*. Rather, in Swahili, *Mzee* may be described as a person who 'has eaten a lot of salt' – *Amekula chumvi nyingi*. This proverb is used when describing a person who has lived longer than others, similar to the Chinese proverb *Wo chi guo de yian bi ni chi guo de fuan hai duo* 'I have eaten more salt than you have eaten rice'. 'Eating large quantities of salt' stands as a metaphor for having encountered severe challenges in life spanning over a long period of time.

Consequently, the society expects such an ageing person, who has consumed too much salt in his or her life, to be inactive, paving the way for a new generation. The advice

is given through a fowl metaphor that *Nyama ya kuku mchanga sio sawa na kuku mzee* 'The meat of a young chicken is not the same as the meat of an old one'. This health proverb implies that former is tender whilst the latter is hard to chew. The young are sternly reminded that despite their physical abilities and healthy bodies they are living on borrowed time, as in *Ujana ni maji ya moto, hayakawii kupoa* 'Youth is like hot water, it does not delay to cool off' and therefore 'once gone, it is gone forever'.

In Swahili proverbs, *wazee* 'elders' are not only generalized as holding esteemed positions as uplifted and respected individuals, but there are other attributes of *wazee* that are mentioned throughout proverbs. In the proverb *Penye wazee haliharibiki neno* 'Where there are elders, nothing goes awry', it is implied that the elderly are not only responsible for but are relied on for making important decisions, settling disputes, and providing guidance to the community. Despite the inherent physical flaws of old people, we are told that *Kinywa cha mzee kina harufu, lakini hakisemi uwongo* 'The mouth of an elder may have an offensive smell, but it speaks no lie'. Here, culturally, *wazee* are considered to be trusted to a great extent to be truthful, trustworthy, and knowledgeable.

The bodies of old people may be weak compared to those of young people, according to the afore-mentioned proverb: *Nyama ya kuku mchanga sio sawa na kuku mzee* 'The meat of a young chicken is not the same as the meat of an old one'. But we are also reminded that *Ajuza alikuwa kijana* 'a very old person was once a young one'. This proverb is the opposite of the German proverb "The old cow thinks she never was a calf" (Mieder 2004, 92). Thus, differences between the capabilities of the young and the old should not be used as a basis for disrespect. The freshness and vigour of youth is celebrated in a philosophical proverb, *Vijana hukaa wakitumaini; wazee wakikumbuka*. 'The youth have expectations, the old are reminiscent'. It is interesting to find that proverbs from other languages are similar

to those in Swahili. For instance, in French, the equivalent proverb is as follows: "Youth live on hope, old age on remembrance" (see Mieder 2004, 92). Generally, this proverb implies that when people reach old age, they tend to revisit their past experiences introspectively.

According to another proverb, young people, despite their high aspirations, dreams, and goals, are portrayed by their elders as stubborn and lacking in wisdom: *Vijana hawana hekima, hisani wala kupendana* 'Youth have no wisdom, kindness, or love'. Since they are presumed to lack wisdom, *wazee* must be treated kindly and with wisdom in order to control youngsters. Another proverb goes: *Uhenga haambiwi mwana* 'A child is not told what happened in the old days'. This proverb suggests that young people should not be fully informed of past knowledge. Elderly people are deemed to be a reservoir or library of past events. There may be a shift in values and priorities within society that makes elders to feel the need to withhold historical knowledge and experiences from younger generations. Additionally, there is a proverb that goes as follows: *Hakuna mzee atakayesema alikuwa mwoga utotoni* 'There are no senior persons who will say that they were cowards as children'. Why do elders not acknowledge being cowardly during their childhood? Since old individuals refuse to reveal their past weakness and want to maintain their status quo, sharing their past experiences, especially with the younger generation, may not always be fruitful. Here the gap is maintained between the older members of the society and the younger ones.

Vijana (the young) are not fully trusted by *Wazee*. There is a general feeling that the youth lack perseverance. The following proverb accuses youngsters of mistrust, betrayal, and above all they are deemed as 'assassins' of the old folks: *Mwana huua mzee, mzee hamuuwi mwana*, 'The child kills the parent, the parent does not kill the child'. As for their 'hot blood', youngsters may scare a section of

people (especially girls) into openly declaring that: *Heri kuwa mpenzi wa wazee kuliko kuwa mtumwa wa vijana*. 'It's better to be the darling of the elders than to be a servant of the young'.

Such declarations are a sign that a lack of trust in people who have not reached a mature age is common in Swahili culture. Are the young portrayed as victims or victimizers? This is a question that can be further explored. Youth are strongly urged to respect elders: *Fanya heshima kwa wazee hata kama si wako* 'Honour the elders, even if they are not yours'. The maintenance of 'gerontocracy' is perpetuated here. According to George Dei, 'gerontocracy' encompasses "the traditional African respect for the authority of elderly persons for their wisdom, knowledge of community affairs, and 'closeness' to the ancestors" (Dei 1994, 13).

According to Adegbindin, old age is construed as 'the basis of wisdom' (Adegbindin 2011: 455). As a link to ancestors or spirit world, the elderly are considered to have the ability to cause bad luck, as suggested by the following proverbs: *Radhi ya wazee ni bora kushinda mali* 'The blessing of your parents is better than wealth'. Another proverb is: *Machizi ya wazee yanatonesha moyo* 'The tears of the elders hurt the heart'.

Both proverbs show the power of elders over the members of the community. Moreover, if elders decided to abandon the younger generation (disengagement), dire social consequences are to be expected. Therefore, the didactic saying in Swahili warns that *wazee wakinyamaza, watoto watapotea* 'If the elders keep quiet the children will get lost'. The reason is given in the Congolese Swahili proverb that *Wekalaka eshimiya batu nye baliona yuwa mbele yako* 'You always need to respect the people who have seen the sun before you'.

While physical strength may decline with age, we are reminded that virtues such as wisdom, patience, and compassion can continue

to develop and flourish. *Uzeekao ni mwili siyo roho* 'What gets old is the body, not the soul'. Another example is *Mpofuka ukongweni, hapotewi na njia* 'One who becomes blind in old age does not lose the way'.

Metaphorically, 'the way' is referring to the suggestion that old folks, having lived for many years and have experienced many tribulations and successes, therefore, through their experience, cannot be easily swayed. The famous proverb *Kuishi kwingi ni kuona mengi* 'The longer a person lives on earth, the more he sees' has received extended remarks from Maryam Baruwa in her Swahili proverbial collection entitled *Methali za Kiswahili: Maana na Matumizi*:

Mtu aliyeishi miaka 30 si sawa na aliyeishi miaka 100. Aliyeishi miaka 100 huwa ameona mengi zaidi. Hivyo aliyeishi umri mrefu huwa ana uzoefu mwingi wa mambo mbalimbali kwa hiyo huwa na hekima na maarifa zaidi. Yeye kwa ajili hii hawi sawa na 'kijana cha juzi'. (Baruwa 2002, 15)

'A person who has lived for 30 years is not the same as the person who has lived 100 years. The one who has lived 100 years has seen many things. Therefore, the one who has lived for a long time has experienced different things and thus has the wisdom and more knowledge. For these reasons he /she will not be the same as a youngster of the day before.'

To emphasize that elders are knowledgeable, the bulk of the gerontological proverbs in Swahili that employ animal figures suggest that elders are knowledgeable, experienced, wise, and have usually endured all sorts of tribulations:

Mbwa mzee hajifunzi ujanja mpya
'An old dog does not learn new tricks.'

Chiriku mzee hakamatwi na makapi
'An old sparrow cannot be trapped with chaff.'

Fahali mzee hupigana kwa maarifa
'An old bull fights with experience.'

Mzee ni mtetea. 'An old person works like a hen.'

Ukimwona nyani mzee, amekwepa mishale mingi 'If you see an old baboon know that he has evaded many spears.'

To refer to *Mzee* as an old dog, old sparrow, old bull, old baboon, or a chicken that has started laying eggs (*mtetea*) is to positively praise the elders using animal metaphors. These animals represent 'fable' characters that are easily recognizable by Swahili speakers and that drive home the point that elders are custodians of knowledge, have immense experience, and cannot easily be swayed. There are a number of equivalents from different cultures. For example for *Mbwa mzee hajifunzi ujanja mpya* 'An old dog does not learn new tricks', equivalents can be found in English, German, and French proverbs:

'An old tree must not be transplanted'

'Old love does not rust'

'An old oven is easier to heat than a new one' (see Mieder 2004, 91–93)

As far as physiological traits of sexual potency are concerned, the old people, especially men, do not easily resign early. The claim that *Hata mzee anapanda mchikichi* 'Even an old person climbs the palm tree' seems to allude to an old

man's ability to perform sexual acts. The act of cohabiting with a young woman is compared to harvesting palm nuts, which requires much strength and agility. Likewise, in the Southern Mexican dialect of Tzetzil, Mieder (2004, 111) reports on the following equivalents:

'The man does not see (people) well, but he kicks (them) well.'

Similar to the proverb above, this applies to old men who still have strong interest in sex. Yet following the lament that *Uzee hauna dawa* 'There is no cure for old age', society is urged to provide palliative care for elders through unfamiliar adage of *Sungura akizeeka humnyonya mamaye* 'When a hare gets old it sucks the tits of its mother'. Swahili youth are raised to accept and forbear the plight of the older members.

Youth are not always denigrated in Swahili proverbs to praise the senior community members. Credits are given to young people who excel in life, seek knowledge, travel far, and pave the way:

Mwana mtamba kule hupita mzee wa kale. 'The child that travels far excels the elder of old time [in experience].'

Kiyana anaenda safari sana ni mukubwa kupita muzee ule ayaendaka fazi. 'A young man who travels a lot is older than an old man who has not gone anywhere.'

Mutoto anaweza pika ngoma, bazee banacheza. 'A child can play the drums and elders dance.'

These proverbs suggest that young individuals who explore, discover, and venture beyond familiar territories can surpass the achievements or knowledge of the older generations. Their advancement may arise out of a pursuit

for knowledge. Young ones can acquire fresh ideas, insights, and achievements that surpass what was accomplished by previous generations. They are physically credited by the above proverbs for their daringness in breaking new grounds and challenging established norms. It is important to note that these sayings should not be interpreted as a dismissal or disregard for the wisdom and contributions of the older generations. They simply highlight the potential for young individuals to excel and make significant contributions through their explorations and experiences. Knowledge, experience, and wisdom are not always reserved to the aged; elders can also learn from young people.

How is old age portrayed in Swahili paremia?

Joshua Madumulla, in his book on *Proverbs and Sayings: Theory and Practice* (1995), has set aside pages 102–104 specifically for exemplification of Hehe Bantu proverbs based on the theme of 'elders'. Of interest is the proverb *Uzee ni mkuyu, utazeeka* 'Old age is a fig tree, you'll get old' (p. 103). The proverb implies that although a fig tree takes time to mature it does eventually get old. The intention of the proverb is to remind young people that despite their physical abilities and healthy bodies, *Ujana ni maji ya moto, hayakawii kupoa*. 'Youth is like hot water, it does not delay cooling off', hence they are living on borrowed time. Mieder (2004, 106) provides us with a parallel American proverb, 'You're only young once', to reiterate a biblical proverb 'Youth is an unrecoverable asset' (Ecclesiastes 11: 9-10).

But the Swahili proverbial expression *Uzee hauna dawa* 'There is no cure for old age' joins the debate on whether old age is an ailment or can be reversed. The Swahili standpoint on the ageing process and its consequences is that it is futile to think of prolonging life. However, research on the cure for old age is gaining ascendance and renders this medical

proverb a controversial one. The proverb gets connected to another health issue through the expression that *Hofu ya kaburi kaja na umri* 'Fear of the grave comes with [old] age', despite the unpalatable and unfair occurrence of the proverb '*Kifo hakina mzee wala kijana* 'Death respects neither adult nor child'. This cruel fact is reflected in the analogy that it is possible for young people to die early but it is impossible for the elderly to live long. Death is an unwelcome event as we grow old; the natural process of decay and wearing down of our bodies until they show visible marking of bodily fragility is inevitable. Older members of the society, even with a good diet and advances in modern medication, are inevitably subjected to oft-recurring life situations of illness and death; hence the discourse *Uzee hauna dawa* 'There is no cure for old age' gets its legitimacy.

Members of the Swahili community are reminded that *Jino la utoto huzeeki nalo* 'You'll not get old with the tooth of your childhood'. Here, ageing is construed in the Swahili milieu as an unavoidable path to physical deterioration. This fact is not pronounced only in the Swahili culture; in his Yiddish proverbial collection Mieder points out two health proverbs:

'Age weakens teeth and memory.'

'You don't need a calendar to die.'
(Mieder 2004, 99)

In terms of proverbial wisdom, *Ukicheza ujani utalipa uzeeni* 'If you play while young, you will pay when old' is an explicit call to Swahili youth to make the most of their youthful vigour. Fortunately, both youth and adults are nation builders, but each has a different contribution to make.

But a stern warning is advanced to young people that *ng'ombe hazeeki maini* 'a cow's liver does not grow old'. In what seems to be rationalization and acceptance of the physiological deterioration of the biological body, the saying *Uzeekao ni mwili siyo roho* 'What gets old

is the body, not the soul', comes into play to ensure that the distinction between 'mortal body' and 'immortal soul' is made apparent. This is a caution not to dismiss the frail elders completely, as they still harbour very strong and well enduring souls.

Conclusion

Although ageing and becoming old are universal aspects of being alive, every society has its own ways of attaching meaning to age and

ageing. Paremiology is a helpful method to better understand cultural notions of ageing. In this article I have shown what it means to be old and what the relationship between old and young is, according to Swahili proverbs. It is important to note here that chronological age (counting years) appears not to be a factor in defining old age in Swahili proverbs. The concept of old age in Swahili paremia supports the contention that old age is not always defined by a specific numerical age but rather by the social and cultural context.

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Appendix 1

DATA A : Who is old?

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|--------|--|---------|--|
| (i) | <i>Mzee ni mtungi, hupokea machicha.</i>
'An old person is like a brewing pot.' | (xiii) | <i>Vijana hawana hekima, hisani wala kupendana.</i>
'Children have no wisdom, kindness, or love.' [They have to learn all those.] |
| (ii) | <i>Mzee ni mtetea.</i>
'An old person works like a hen.' | (xiv) | <i>Uhenga haambiwi mwana.</i> 'A child is not told what happened in the old days.' |
| (iii) | <i>Wepanakalaka kucheka muzee kama munapanda ku miti pamoja kusuka nashinda muzee, yenapasha tingana, yetatoka muzuri.</i>
'Do not laugh about the old man when you climb a tree together and descending overpowers the old man – he can simply jump and will get down easily.' | (xv) | <i>Heri kuwa mpenzi wa wazee kuliko kuwa mtumwa wa vijana.</i> 'It's better to be the darling of the elders than to be a servant of the young.' |
| (iv) | <i>Mwana humuua mzee, mzee hamuui mwana.</i>
'The child kills the parent, the parent does not kill the child.' | (xvi) | <i>Hata mzee anapanda mchikichi.</i>
'Even an old person climbs the palm.' |
| (v) | <i>Mwana mtamba kule hupita mzee wa kale.</i>
'The child that travels far excels the elder of old time [in experience].' | (xvii) | <i>Kijana mzima hupanda milima.</i>
'A healthy young person climbs mountains.' |
| (vi) | <i>Kiyana anaenda safari sana ni mukubwa kupita muzee ule ayaendaka fazi.</i>
'A young man who travels a lot is older than an old man who has not gone anywhere.' | (xviii) | <i>Penye wazee haliharibiki neno.</i>
'Among a group of elders nothing goes wrong.' |
| (vii) | <i>Mutoto anaweza pika ngoma, bazee banacheza.</i>
'A child can play the drums and elders dance.' | (xix) | <i>Kinywa cha mzee kina harufu, lakini hakisemi uwongo.</i>
'The mouth of an elder may have an offensive smell, but has no lie.' |
| (viii) | <i>Wazee wakinyamaza watoto wata-potea.</i>
'If the elders keep quiet the children will get lost.' | (xx) | <i>Zamani bazee balisema: Kwenda mbele aiko kufika.</i>
'Long ago the old people said: Going early does not necessarily mean arriving (early).' |
| (ix) | <i>Hakuna mzee atakayesema alikuwa mwoga utotoni.</i> 'There are no senior persons who will say that they were cowards as children.' | (xxi) | <i>Radhi ya wazee ni bora kushinda mali.</i>
'The blessing of your parents is better than wealth.' |
| (x) | <i>Kifo hakina mzee wala kijana.</i>
'Death respects neither adult nor child.' | (xxii) | <i>Asiyesikia la mkuu huvunjika guu.</i>
'One who does not listen to the elderly suffers a broken leg.' |
| (xi) | <i>Ajuza alikuwa kijana.</i>
'The very old person was once a young one.' | (xxiii) | <i>Fanya heshima kwa wazee hata kama si wako.</i>
'Honour the elders, even if they are not yours.' |
| (xii) | <i>Vijana hukaa wakitumaini; wazee wakikumbuka.</i> | (xxiv) | <i>Wekalaka eshimiya batu nye baliona yuwa mbele yako.</i>
'You always need to respect the people who have seen the sun before you.' |
| | | (xxv) | <i>Machozi ya wazee yanatonesha moyo.</i>
'Tears of the elders hurt the heart.' |

- (xxvi) *Visima vya kale havifukiwi.* 'An old well is not to be filled up.'
- (xxvii) *Nyama ya kuku mchanga sio sawa na kuku mzee.* 'The meat of a young chicken is not the same as the meat of an old one.'
- (xxviii) *Mbwa mzee hajifunzi ujanja mpya.* 'An old dog does not learn new tricks.'
- (xxix) *Chiriku mzee hakamatwi na makapi.* 'An old sparrow cannot be trapped with chaff.'
- (xxx) *Fahali mzee hupigana kwa maarifa.* 'An old bull fights with experience.'
- (xxxi) *Ukimwona nyani mzee, amekwepa mishale mingi.* 'If you see an old baboon, know that he has evaded many spears.'
- (xxxii) *Ng'ombe hazeeki maini.* 'A cow's liver does not grow old.'
- DATA B: **What is old age?**
- (xxxiii) *Ujana ni maji ya moto, hayakawii kupoa.* 'Youth is like hot water, it does not delay to cool off.'
- (xxxiv) *Ujana ni moshi, uzee ni kutu.* 'Youth is like smoke, old age is like rust.'
- (xxxv) *Ujana ni tumaini, uzee ni kumbu-kumbu.* 'Youth is hope, old age is remembrance.'
- (xxxvi) *Ujana mali, uzee kutu.* 'Youth is a richness, old age is rust.'
- (xxxvii) *Jino la utoto huzeeki nalo.* 'You'll not get old with the tooth of your childhood.'
- (xxxviii) *Uzee ni mwizi wa nguvu.* 'Old age incapacitates(or folds up).' (Madumulla 103)
- (xxxix) *Uzee ni mkuyu, utazeeka.* 'Old age is a fig tree, you'll get old.' (Madumulla 103)
- (xl) *Uzee hauna dawa* 'There is no cure for old age'
- (xli) *Ukubwa ni jaa.* 'Greatness is like a rubbish hole.'
- (xlii) *Ukicheza ujanani utalipa uzeeni.* 'If you play while young, you will pay when old.'
- (xliii) *Uzeekao ni mwili siyo roho.* 'What gets old is the body, not the soul.'
- (xliv) *Mpofuka ukongweni, hapotewi na njia.* 'One who becomes blind in old age does not lose the way.'
- (xlv) *Ukipofuka na utu uzima panapowekwa chumvi unapajua.* 'If you become blind in adulthood you eventually know where the salt is kept.'
- (xlvi) *Ujuzi hauzeeki.* 'Knowledge never gets old.'
- (xlvii) *Hofu ya kaburi kaja na umri.* 'Fear of the grave comes with [old] age.'
- (xlviii) *Kula chumvi nyingi.* 'Eat much salt.'
- (xlix) *Kuishi kwingi ni kuona mengi.* 'The longer a person lives on earth, the more he sees.'