

Shairi la Pete / The Ring Poem from Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings"
(imetafsiriwa na / translated by Oliver Stegen, tarehe 9 Apr 2011)

Pete tatu kwa Maelzi Wafalme angani
Pete saba kwa Vihunzi makumbini mwa madini
Pete kenda kwa Wanadamu watakaokufa hukumuni
Pete moja kwa Bwana wa Giza juu ya kiti cha gizani
Nchini kwa Mordor ambako jinamizi hutisha
Pete moja ili imiliki zote na popote kuzishurutisha
Pete moja ili ikusanye zote na gizani kuzitaabisha
Nchini kwa Mordor ambako jinamizi hutisha

For reference's sake, here's the English original (with the Ring's inscription in **bold**):
Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.

Some translator's notes:

On "Elves" and "Dwarves", I couldn't find suitable concepts in Swahili.

For the Elves, a loanword "Elvi" (plural "Maelvi") has the unfortunate connection with mlevi/walevi (through metathesis), meaning "drunkard(s)". As even Tolkien didn't like "elfish" connotations, hence changing the consonant from f to v, I tried to find a similarly appropriate consonantal shift. In the diachronic process from Proto-Bantu to modern Bantu languages, v and z have often been exchanged with each other. A consequent neologism "Elzi/Maelzi" would have potentially positive connotations (through similar metathesis) with mlezi/walezi, meaning "guardian, custodian", someone who teaches and raises minors (which seems to me to reflect well with the Elves as the elder race who taught speech to trees and animals and helped the second-born human races after their awakening).

With the Dwarves, there are problems with the Swahili terms "kibete" or "kibushuti" which one finds for "dwarf" in dictionaries, as these are derogatory terms emphasizing the size of a person. In Middle Earth however, the Dwarves represent an entire culture of miners, stocky hard workers with a knack for war technology and jewellery.

Consequently, I concentrated on the Bantu concept of clans of smiths, "mhunzi/wahunzi", which often form a subculture in their own rights. Combined with the diminutive prefix, I arrived at Vihunzi (singular Kihunzi) for the Dwarves.

Finally, the rhyme scheme of ABAB ACCA of the English original, I changed to AAAA BBBB which looked more Swahili to me (unfortunately, I didn't succeed in keeping a Swahili meter, so there's still room for improvement ☺).