

**BOOK REVIEW** | Prof Chiraghdin is the acclaimed author of the book 'Historia ya Kiswahili'

# A timely tribute to 'godfather of Kiswahili'

Pioneer literary scholar brought back to life in new book celebrating his ground-breaking works

BY ENOCK MATUNDURA  
satnation@ke.nationmedia.com

**K**iswahili is arguably one of the most successful African languages. The spread of this Bantu language, currently spoken by over 120 million people mainly in East Africa, has over the years attracted the attention of research scholars.

One such local scholar whose works have attracted positive acclaim is Shihabuddin Chiraghdin (1934-1976), author of *Historia ya Kiswahili* (Oxford University Press, 1977).

However, the life history of this Kiswahili scholar, whose works laid a solid foundation on which later

scholars built their research on, is not well known.

Efforts by the scholar's daughter, Latifa S. Chiraghdin, to dig out facts about her father recently came to fruition when she managed to publish his biography.

The book, *Life Journey of a Swahili Scholar*, was launched at the second Research Institute of Swahili Studies in East Africa conference in Mombasa recently.

Some of the scholar's age mates, some who are fellow Kiswahili gurus and poets, attended. They included Kiswahili Ustadh Sagaf, Prof Ahmad Sheikh Nabhan, Prof Mohammed Hyder, Dr Idle Farar, Prof Mohammed Abdulaziz, Prof Aldin Mutembe and Prof Ibrahim Noor Sharif.

Most of Prof Chiraghdin's works were published posthumously.

The 164-page book is divided into 14 chapters, each dealing with a different aspect of the scholar's life.

The foreword is written by Prof Mohammad Hyder of Mombasa, who says Prof Chiraghdin was not only a notable Swahili scholar, compared to his foreign contemporaries such as Lyndon Harris, but he was a Mswahili, just like Muyaka bin Mwinyi al Ghassaniy.

In chapter one, the author traces the lineage and roots of her father, commonly referred to as Maalim Shihab, back to India, in Lahore, Punjab Province of the 1860s. The



HEZEKIEL GIKAMBI | NATION

Author Wallah bin Wallah rewards Mombasa poet Mohammed Kadhar as he recites a poem during the launch of the book *Life Journey Of Swahili Scholar*, which traces the life of Shihabuddin Chiraghdin, last October in Mombasa. The book is written by Chiraghdin's daughter, Latifa Shihabuddin (top right).

Chiraghdin family moved to Mombasa in June 1865, when the British brought Indians to East Africa to provide labour for the construction of the railway.

Chiraghdin was born on January, 23, 1934. He got his early education in a Madrassa, and later joined Arab Secondary School.

After sitting the Cambridge School Certificate in 1951, he joined Makerere University College.

The author gives detailed accounts

of her father's career as a teacher, mentor, scholar and writer.

Among his popular books which have been in use at secondary, teacher training colleges and universities are *Historia ya Kiswahili*, co-written with poet Mathias Mnyampala, and *Malenga wa Karne Moja*.

The latter is a collection of the works of pre-20th century Kiswahili poets such as Muyaka, Sheikh Ahmad Nabhan, Mwalimu Kihere and Fumo Liyongo.



However, this fast-paced biography ends on a sad note as the author narrates some moving episodes on how Prof Chiraghdin started ailing and eventually succumbed in 1976 aged just 47 during a surgical operation in London.

The biography, which is meticulously written in simple language, talks of Prof Shihabuddin as a parent, community man, scholar, educator, philosopher and a role model of his time.

The author was born on June 1, 1961 in Mombasa. She was educated at Agha Khan Primary and Coast Girls High School. She had a long stint with Kenya Posts and Telecommunications for 14 years before quitting to manage her own business.

The writer, Enock Matundura, author of 'Mkasa wa Shujaa Liyongo,' teaches Kiswahili literature at Chuka University. bitugi@yahoo.com

## BOOK REVIEW

### About the book

**Title:** Life Journey of a Swahili Scholar.  
**Author:** Latifa S. Chiraghdin.  
**Publisher:** Jor's Publishers.  
**Reviewer:** Enock Matundura.

# Professional CLEANING SERVICES

A clean, well maintained office environment becomes a key attraction to workers and a critical component of production in human resource and a growth driver for many businesses.

The **Business Daily** will be publishing a special feature on **Professional Cleaning Services** to be published on the **14<sup>th</sup> May 2013** to provide our readers with an in-depth guide on a working office. The feature will, among others, focus on the following;

- Cleaning equipment
- Service providers
- Cleaning products

To participate in this report contact our project co-ordinator: Johnkennedy on; 0724690601, Email: jkemboi@ke.nationmedia.com

**BUSINESS DAILY**

*Special Feature*

**NETWORKING IN HEELS**  
A Premier women-only networking cocktail event  
PRESENTS

# Back To Business

**SPEAKERS**  
**Norah Odwesso**  
Public Affairs & Communications Director,  
Coca-Cola Central, East & West Africa

**Carole Mandi**  
CEO, Carol Mandi Media

**DATE**  
May 9th

**TIME**  
6pm - 9pm

**VENUE**  
Intercontinental Hotel

**TICKETS**  
Ksh.2,000/-

**CONTACTS**  
events@networkinginheels.co.ke  
Call: 0721302640 | 0725640353

[WWW.NETWORKINGINHEELS.CO.KE](http://WWW.NETWORKINGINHEELS.CO.KE)