



Swahili chronicles

Mark Walker



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CONTENTS

Swahili Chronicles — a journey to the heart of Tanzania.....	1
Going Home	2
Village reflections	5
<i>Boda boda</i> men.....	7
<i>Karibu sana</i> (welcome again)	9
The burning of boats in Ushongo Bay.....	12
In Harmony.....	13
The amazing Mr. Clinton	15
“I am not friends with chillies,” salty rubber tyres or a stomach full of octopus	17
Pass the baby on the left-hand side	20
Lost.....	21
The two sides of Dar es Salaam	23
You see, Sir, the problem is.....	25
Clinking coffee cups, heated charcoal — a morning walk in Dar es Salaam	26
Terrace tales — life from rags to riches.....	27
Life on the edge	29
A fishy tale for breakfast	31
Kilimanjaro Express.....	32
The poverty of education, the education of poverty.....	33
The shape of things to come	35
A village banquet	37
The mysterious case of the Castle milk stout — lost in translation in Bukoba	38
The reality of student life	39
Mist, mud and a Mercedes	41
Sunshine, showers and surprises — a late afternoon walk in Musoma	43
Sunshine, showers and surprises — a late afternoon walk in Musoma	43
Petrified passengers preaching on public transport and other peculiarities of coach travel in Tanzania	45
Rape of My Homeland	46
Crowds, cattle, chickens and cicadas	49
Leaving Tanzania with a thankful heart.....	51
Notes	52



I feel very at home when I am travelling through East Africa, nothing seems too much of a problem even though I am a Caucasian.





Swahili Chronicles — a journey to the heart of Tanzania

I have been travelling to Tanzania frequently over a period of fifteen years. Usually for no more than one month at a time.

This last journey was different — I chose to disappear and do my own thing for three months. You may well ask, “Why?”

So many people have questions about Africa, yet have never been there.

“Isn’t it dangerous?”

“Won’t you get ill?”

“Isn’t everyone out to cheat you?”

“They’re all starving, aren’t they?”

Or they give you platitudes.

“Oh, you’re so brave!”

“I couldn’t do what you do!”

You shall find my response in this collection of short stories, poetry and photographs.

Going Home

The red faced, white skinned man
Is going home
Not to cold, grey skies
Or to granite clad tenement buildings

The homecoming can be felt
Anticipated in every bone and sinew
Sweet and pungent music to my ears

Freedom comes with a hard price tag
A searching, longing
To piece life's jigsaw together

Now a new colour is apparent and alive

Vibrant at times, muted at others

Seen in God's nature
His people and landscapes
That are new yet familiar

Gone are the dark clouds
Of fear and foreboding
Changed to the sunrise and distant horizons

Reachable now as life is content

Years are advancing
Yet youthfulness lingers
As long as I've passion
To live to the full

Follow no leader
React to your conscience
Stirred up emotions
To contemplate later

Love every moment
As if it's the last one
Eager to harness
All that's ahead

So I rest in the knowledge
That money is useless
Seldom buys freedom
Quickly shall tarnish

The red faced, white skinned man
Is going home
Not to cold, grey skies
Or to granite clad tenement buildings

The red faced, white skinned, black man
Has found life in its fullness
In Tanzania



Village reflections

The journey starts in Pangani, a small village on the Swahili coast of Tanzania.

These are my thoughts.

It is early evening, just before sundown, and the cool sea air envelopes the street, save for a few homes lucky enough to have generators or main power.

Yet, as I walk back from the beach and I listen to the waves crashing on the shore, my friends and I also hear the delightful laughter and childhood happiness of kids playing in the street.

“*Mzungu, mzungu,*” they cry... or perhaps, “*Shikamoo,*” the Swahili greeting of respect to the elders.

One small boy plays in the gutter right next to the red earth road and the shop selling essentials of the day.

All this is done in the shadow of a small solar lamp outside an old ramshackle house.

But I ask you, is this POVERTY?

I don't think so.

I think it is part of a rich childhood.