

SAFAL KISWAHILI PRIZE FOR AFRICAN LITERATURE

2025 Shortlist Announcement

Dar es Salaam, Friday July 24th 2026 — The winners of the Safal Kiswahili Prize for African Literature were today awarded by the Guest of Honour, Dr Riziki Pembe, Zanzibar's Minister of Information, Culture, Arts and Sports, at the University of Dar es Salaam on the 10th-anniversary awards ceremony.

The Prize is supported by Safal Group, through its subsidiaries Mabati Rolling Mills of Kenya and ALAF Tanzania.

The 2025 Judges, Prof Rayya Timammy of the University of Nairobi, Dr. Masoud Mohammed of the State University of Zanzibar, and Prof. Austin Bukenya, formerly of Makerere University, selected **Salim Hussein Ng'anzi's** novel ***Mwanamkasi Ndio Basi*** (*Mwanamkasi, That's It!*), as the winner in the Fiction category, and **Ali Hilal Ali's** Poetry collection, ***Diwani ya Vizikwa Vya Kale*** (*The Anthology of the Ancient Ruins*), as the winner in the poetry category. They both received prize money of US \$5,000 Dollars each.

Ali Hilal Ali also won the Prize for Fiction in 2017. His award winning manuscript, ***Mmeza Fupa*** has since been translated into English by Meg Arenberg, winning a PEN/Heim Translation Fund Grant, and will be published by University of Georgia Press in 2027 as *The Swallower of Secrets*.

In her speech, the Minister congratulated the winners and praised the management of the Prize, its board, and the sponsors, led by Safal Group, for their important work in promoting literature in African languages, particularly Kiswahili.

The Safal Group Chairman Sarit Shah said: "At Safal Group we believe in the power of partnerships, for the past 10 years we have reached thousands of writers, scholars and kiswahili stakeholders. Today, as we mark 10 years since the inception of the Safal Kiswahili Prize, I congratulate the winners and challenge them to inspire younger generations to rise.

He further added, “We take pride in the remarkable achievements of the prize and look forward to expanding our partnerships and in turn expand our reach and make our mark in changing many lives for the better and for many years to come.”

This year, **230 manuscripts were submitted for the awards from seven countries**. On behalf of the judges, Professor Rayya Timammy, commended the 2025 entrants for the outstanding quality of their writing “This undoubtedly demonstrates that literary talent in Kiswahili continues to grow and flourish at a remarkable pace.”

The second-place winner in the Fiction category was **Dickson Damas Mtalaze** (Tanzania) for his manuscript, ***Shamba la Mawe*** (*Stone Farm*), and in the Poetry category was **Lenard Barnaba Mtesigwa** (Tanzania) for his manuscript ***Rima la Miiko na Balaa*** (*The Pit of Taboos and Calamities*). Each received 2,500 USD. Mtesigwa was previously shortlisted in 2022 & 2023.

The winner in the Short Story Collection category is **Dominic Maina Oigo** (Kenya) for ***Mbunge Mtarajiwa na Hadithi Nyingine*** (*The Member of Parliament Elect and Other Stories*) who received \$2,500 USD.

As earlier announced, other shortlisted works and authors were:

- ***Ziaka Imetoboka*** (*The Quiver Has a Hole*) by Mathew Theuri Maina (Kenya)
- ***Zigo la Kichwa*** (*Carrying Heavy Thoughts on the Head*) by Maimuna Hashim Maalim (Tanzania)
- ***Koti la Karani na Hadithi Nyingine*** (*The Clerk’s Coat and Other Stories*) by Stallone Joyfully (Tanzania)
- ***Siri ya Mama na Hadithi Nyingine*** (*The Mother’s Secret and Other Stories*) by Sophia Said Puta (Tanzania).

Mathew Theuri Maina, Ali Hilal Ali, Lenard Barnaba Mtesigwa and Stallone Joyfully have either won or been shortlisted for previous editions of the prize.

The winners and their fellow shortlistees were in attendance during the award giving ceremony in Dar es Salaam. It is the first time a woman has been shortlisted for a short story collection.

In summary the Prize-winning works and authors are:

Fiction

1st Prize - *Mwanamkasi Ndio Basi* - Salim Hussein Ng'anzi (Tanzania) \$5,000

2nd Prize - *Shamba la Mawe* - Dickson Damas Mtalaze (Tanzania) \$2,500

Poetry

1st Prize - *Diwani ya Vizikwa Vya Kale* - Ali Hilal Ali (Tanzania) \$5,000

2nd Prize - *Rima la Miiko na Balaa* - Lenard Barnaba Mtesigwa (Tanzania) \$2,500

Short Story Collection

1st Prize – *Mbunge Mtarajiwa na Hadithi Nyingine* - Dominic Maina Oigo (Kenya) \$2,500

The winning entries will also be considered for publication in Kiswahili by **Mkuki na Nyota Publishers** in Tanzania while the winning poetry will be translated into English and published by the **African Poetry Book Fund**. So far Mkuki na Nyota have published over 25 books.

This year, to mark the 10th Anniversary of the Prize, Mkuki na Nyota have published two special editions of Poetry and Prose, containing work from all the former first Prize winners: *Tunu Mpya* and *Hazina Mpya*, available from TPH Bookshop.

[ENDS]

Notes to Editors

The Safal Kiswahili Prize for African Literature was founded in 2014 by Dr. Lizzy Attree and Dr. Mukoma wa Ngũgĩ to recognize writing in African languages and encourage translation from, between, and into African languages. This year's awards mark the prize's 10th anniversary; it has been awarded every year since 2015, except in 2020, when the awards were paused due to the global Covid pandemic.

Kiswahili Prize Award Criteria: The prize will be awarded to the best unpublished manuscript or book published within two years of the award year across the categories of fiction (novels and short story collections), poetry, memoir, and graphic novels. The total proposed awards of 15,000 US dollars will be divided as follows:

1st Fiction/Non-fiction prize - USD 5,000

1st Poetry prize – USD 5,000

(2) Runner-up Prizes in any genre– USD 2,500

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The Safal MRM Foundation, based in Kenya, is a philanthropic enterprise of Mabati Rolling Mills and the Safal Group. It founded, and continues to fully manage, both the Mabati Technical Training Institute, and the Mabati Medical Centre, both in Mariakani, Kenya. www.safalmrmfoundation.org

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Mkuki na Nyota Publishers is an independent, vibrant Tanzanian imprint publishing relevant, progressive, liberating, affordable and entertaining content. Established in 1991, Mkuki na Nyota Publishers emerged in response to the general absence of high quality, independent publishing in Tanzania. Its mission statement is to publish, “Relevant Books, Affordable Books, and Beautiful Books.” <https://mkukinanyota.com/product-category/safal-kiswahili-prize/page/2/?srsltid=AfmBOorCTx29YxwXldB9pFThrAkwEcxdUf0kLWyEgvU6mMofDecW30X9>

The Africa Poetry Fund promotes and advances the development and publication of the poetic arts through its book series, contests, workshops, and seminars and through its collaborations with publishers, festivals, booking agents, colleges, universities, conferences and all other entities that share an interest in the poetic arts of Africa. <http://africanpoetrybf.unl.edu/>

Board of Trustees: Abdilatif Abdalla (Chair), Mukoma wa Ngũgĩ, Lizzy Attree, Walter Bgoya, Sarit Shah, Anthony Ng’ang’a, Clarissa Vierke, Farouk Topan, Zuweina Farah, Munyao Kilolo and Ida Hadjivayanis.

Director: Munyao Kilolo.

The bi-lingual website is: <https://kiswahiliprize.org>

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Facebook Page: Safal Kiswahili Prize for African Literature

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