

Chapter 17

The Verbs ‘To Be,’ ‘To Have’ and ‘To Be in a Place’

The verb *kuwa* means “to be” or “to become,” the verb *kuwa na* means “to have” or “to be with” and the verb *kuwako* means “to be in a place.” All of these verbs are derived from the Monosyllabic verb *wa* which means “be.” Since these verbs are derived from a Monosyllabic verb, they follow the rules studied in Chapters 5, 6, 10 for making and negating sentences using Monosyllabic verbs. *Kuwa*, *kuwa na* and *kuwako* can be used with all tenses, however, in the present tense, they take irregular forms. In the present tense, the verb *kuwa* becomes *ni*, the verb *kuwa na* becomes *-na* and the verb *kuwako* becomes *-ko*.

Section A: *Kuwa* (to be or to become)

The verb *kuwa* means “to be” or “to become.” As you may recall from our previous Chapters, verbs are used in the following structure in a simple sentence:

Subject prefix + Tense marker + Verb

The following are a few examples of sentences using *kuwa* in the simple past, past perfect and future tenses.

Alikuwa hodari. – He/She was clever.

Wamekuwa matajiri. – They have become wealthy people.

Nitakuwa mwalimu. – I will become a teacher.

The above sentences are negated as follows:

Hakuwa hodari. – He/She was not clever.

Hawajakuwa matajiri. – They have not yet become wealthy people.

Sitakuwa mwalimu. – I will not become a teacher.

When we use *kuwa* in the present tense, the verb *kuwa* is substituted by *ni*. In this context the word *ni* is translated as “am,” “is” or “are” and carries the meaning of “be.” It should not be confused with the subject prefix *ni-* which translates as “I.”

~~Subject prefix + Tense marker~~ + Irregular form of the Verb (*ni*)

The following are a few examples of sentences using *ni*.

Baba yake ni mhasibu. – His/her father is an accountant.

Sahani hizi ni ghali. – These plates are expensive.

Maembe yale ni mabivu. – Those mangoes are ripe.

In order to negate sentences using *ni* in the present tense, the verb *ni* is replaced by its negative form, which is *si* and is translated as “am not,” “is not” or “are not” and carries the meaning of “not to be.” Therefore, the above sentences are negated as follows:

Baba yake si mhasibu. – His/her father is not an accountant.

Sahani hizi si ghali. – These plates are not expensive.

Maembe yale si mabivu. – Those mangoes are not ripe.

Practice Exercise A

Translate the following sentences into English.

1. *Shangazi alikuwa mgonjwa.*
2. *Wanawake watakuwa maofisa wa kampuni.*
3. *Mpishi amekuwa mmlikaji wa hoteli.*
4. *Mjomba wangu atakuwa mwigizaji.*
5. *Yeye ni nani?*
6. *Kusoma kwake ni kuzuri.*
7. *Mwezi huu si Januari.*

8. *Watakuwa wapeketevu baada ya kupata vyeo vipya.*
9. *Sasa hivi ni baridi nje.*
10. *Mananasi yale hayajakuwa matamu.*
11. *Majani yatakuwa manjano katika majira ya pukutiko la majani.*
12. *Mashua hayakuwa tayari kusafiri.*
13. *Bendera hii haitakuwa chafu.*
14. *Wakati wa majira ya baridi, matunda ni ghali.*
15. *Tembo wako atakuwa mzee baada ya miaka michache.*

Section B: *Kuwa na* (to have or to be with)

The verb *kuwa na* means “to have” or “to be with.” As you may recall from our previous Chapters, verbs are used in the following structure in a simple sentence:

Subject prefix + Tense marker + Verb

The following are a few examples of sentences using *kuwa na* in the simple past, past perfect and future tenses.

Nilikuwa na watoto wangu. – I was with my children.

Watakuwa na gari kesho kutwa. – They will have a car the day after tomorrow.

Mmekuwa na bahati nzuri. – You (pl.) have had good luck.

Palikuwa na wadudu wengi. – The place (definite) had many insects.

The above sentences are negated as follows:

Sikuwa na watoto wangu. – I was not with my children.

Hawatakuwa na gari kesho kutwa. – They will not have a car the day after tomorrow.

Hamjakuwa na bahati nzuri. – You (pl.) have not yet had good luck.

Hapakuwa na wadudu wengi. – The place (definite) did not have many insects.

When we use *kuwa na* in the present tense, the verb *kuwa na* is substituted by *-na*. In this context, the word *-na* still carries the meaning

of “have” and it should not be confused with *-na* which is used to construct reciprocal verbs as taught in Chapter 27.

Subject prefix + ~~Tense marker~~ + Irregular form of the Verb (*-na*)

The following are a few examples of sentences using *-na*:

Kiti hiki kina rangi nyekundu. – This chair has a red colour.
(This chair is red).

Wana mboga za aina nyingi sokoni. – They have many kinds of vegetables in the market.

Seremala ana wateja wapya. – The carpenter has new customers.

As you can see in the sentences above, the present tense is implied and therefore, the present tense marker *-na-* is omitted.

The above sentences are negated as follows:

Kiti hiki hakina rangi nyekundu. – This chair does not have a red colour. (This chair is not red).

Hawana mboga za aina nyingi sokoni. – They do not have many kinds of vegetables in the market.

Seremala hana wateja wapya. – The carpenter does not have new customers.

Practice Exercise B

Translate the following sentences into Swahili.

16. He/She has a good driver.
17. Their grandmother has a good soul.
18. They have several bags of onions.
19. That village has few inhabitants.
20. I will have a good life.
21. The beggar does not have any food.
22. Do you have a bag?
23. Will he/she not have enough money?
24. The room did not have large windows.
25. He/She has not yet had the opportunity to go to school.

26. Your brother has a good wife.
27. The students will not have an exam at the end of the term.
28. I have not yet had the time to finish my work.
29. We will have a great cook.
30. The author does not have his/her manuscript.

Section C: *Kuwako* (to be in a place)

The verb *kuwako* means “to be in a place.” As you may recall from our previous Chapters, verbs are used in the following structure in a simple sentence:

Subject prefix + Tense marker + Verb

The following are a few examples of sentences using *kuwako* in the simple past, past perfect and future tenses. As you may recall about the PA- (Mahali) class taught in Chapter 10, it consists of the locative suffixes -*ko*, -*po* and -*mo* which represent indefinite, definite and inside a place respectively.

Watakuwako barabarani. – They will be on the street.

Ua lilikuwapo bustanini. – The flower was in the garden.

Mchele umekuwamo kabatini. – The uncooked rice has been in the cupboard.

The above sentences are negated as follows:

Hawatakuwako barabarani. – They will not be on the street.

Ua halikuwapo bustanini. – The flower was not in the garden.

Mchele haujakuwamo kabatini. – The uncooked rice has not yet been in the cupboard.

When *kuwako* is used in the present tense, the verb *kuwako* is substituted by -*ko*, -*po* or -*mo* depending on the location.

Subject prefix + ~~Tense marker~~ +
Irregular form of the Verb (-*ko*, -*po*, -*mo*)

The following are a few examples of sentences using *-ko*, *-po* or *-mo*:

Fatuma yuko shambani. – Fatuma is on the farm.

Wafamasi wapo dukani. – The pharmacists are in the shop.

Vyombo vimo kabatini. – The utensils are in the cupboard.

The above sentences are negated as follows:

Fatuma hayuko shambani. – Fatuma is not on the farm.

Wafamasi hawapo dukani. – The pharmacists are not in the shop.

Vyombo havimo kabatini. – The utensils are not in the cupboard.

Please note when using subject prefixes with locative suffixes *-ko*, *-po* or *-mo*, the subject prefix for 3rd person singular *a-* changes to *yu-* as you can see from the example above.

In addition to using *kuwako* to indicate “to be in a place,” we can also use *kuwa* to indicate location. This can be done in simple past, past perfect and future tenses but cannot be done in present tense. Here are few examples:

Watakuwako barabarani. – They will be on the street.

Watakuwa barabarani. – They will be on the street.

Please note that when we use *kuwa* to indicate “to be in a place,” we cannot specify whether it is indefinite, definite or inside a place.

Practice Exercise C

Translate the following sentences into Swahili.

31. *Chui atakuwako zu.*
32. *Nyangumi wamo baharini.*
33. *Jirani hayuko mahakamani.*
34. *Mayai hayamo frijini.*
35. *Kisu kimekuwapo mezani kutwa.*
36. *Mapiramidi yako Misri.*
37. *Maharamia walikuwa hapa mwezi wa Machi.*
38. *Almasi zipo ardhini.*
39. *Ndege mwekundu yupo tawini.*
40. *Mwanafunzi yule hakuwa darasani jana.*

41. *Saa ya ukuta itakuwamo chumba cha kulia.*
42. *Abiria wamo katika basi.*
43. *Tangazo lipo ubaoni.*
44. *Wazo hili halikuwa kichwani mwangu.*
45. *Mchezaji sinema mashuhuri atakuwa katika tamasha la filamu.*

New Vocabulary

- abiria*: passenger(s)
aina: kind(s), type(s) of
almasi: diamond(s)
ardhi: land(s), ground(s)
bahari: sea(s), ocean(s)
bahati: luck
basi/ma-: bus(es)
bendera: flag(s)
-bivu: ripe
-chache: few
cheo/vy-: position(s), title(s)
chui: leopard(s)
chumba/vy- cha/vya kulia: dining room(s)
embe/ma-: mango(es)
filamu: film(s)
friji: refrigerator(s)
haramia/ma-: bandit(s), pirate(s)
hoteli: hotel(s), restaurant(s)
Januari: January
kadhaa: several
kampuni: company(ies)
kesho kutwa: day after tomorrow
kichwa/vi-: head(s)
kijiji/vi-: village(s)
kitunguu/vi-: onion(s)
kutosha: enough
kutwa: all day
kuwako: to be in a place
Machi: March
mahakama: law court(s)
maisha: life(ves)

majira ya baridi: winter(s)
majira ya pukatiko la majani: autumn(s)
mashua: small boat(s)
mashuhuri: famous, important
mchele: uncooked rice
mfamasi/wa-: pharmacist(s)
mhasibu/wa-: accountant(s)
Misri: Egypt
mkazi/wa-: inhabitant(s), resident(s)
mmilikaji/wa-: owner(s)
mpeketevu/wa-: arrogant person(s)
mswada/mi-: manuscript(s), legislative bill(s)
mteja/wa-: customer(s)
mtunzi/wa-: author(s), composer(s)
muda: period(s), time(s)
muhula/mihula: term(s), period(s)
mwigizaji/wa-: actor(s)
nafasi: space(s), opportunity(ies)
njano: yellow
nje: outside
nyangumi: whale(s)
piramidi/ma-: pyramid(s)
rangi: colour(s)
roho: spirit(s), soul(s)
saa ya/za ukuta: clock(s)
sahani: plate(s)
sasa hivi: right now
seremala/ma-: carpenter(s)
tajiri/ma-: wealthy person(s)
tamasha: festival(s), show(s)
tangazo/ma-: notice(s), advertisement(s)
tembo: elephant(s)
-wa na: be with, have
zu: zoo(s)

Key to Exercises

Answers to Practice Exercise A

1. The aunt was sick.
2. The women will be officers of companies.
3. The cook has become the owner of the hotel/restaurant.
4. My uncle will become an actor.
5. Who is he/she?
6. His/her reading is good.
7. This month is not January.
8. They will become arrogant people after getting new positions.
9. Right now, it is cold outside.
10. Those pineapples have not yet become sweet.
11. The leaves will become yellow in the autumn.
12. The boats were not ready to travel.
13. This flag will not become dirty.
14. In the winter, the fruits are expensive.
15. Your elephant will become old after a few years.

Answers to Practice Exercise B

16. *Ana dereva mzuri.*
17. *Bibi yao ana roho nzuri.*
18. *Wana mifuko kadhaa ya vitunguu.*
19. *Kijiji kile kina wakazi wachache.*
20. *Nitakuwa na maisha mazuri.*
21. *Mwombaji hana chakula cho chote.*
22. *Una mfuko?*
23. *Hatakuwa na pesa za kutosha?*
24. *Chumba hakikuwa na madirisha makubwa.*
25. *Hajakuwa na nafasi ya kwenda shuleni.*
26. *Kaka yako ana mke mwema.*
27. *Wanafunzi hawatakuwa na mtihani mwisho wa muhula.*
28. *Sijakuwa na muda wa kumaliza kazi yangu.*
29. *Tutakuwa na mpishi mzuri.*
30. *Mtunzi hana mswada wake.*

Answers to Practice Exercise C

31. The tiger will be at the zoo.
32. The whales are in the ocean.
33. The neighbor is not at the court.
34. The eggs are not in the fridge.
35. The knife has been on the table all day.
36. The pyramids are in Egypt.
37. The pirates were here in March.
38. The diamonds are in the ground.
39. The red bird is on the branch.
40. That student was not in class yesterday.
41. The clock will be in the dining room.
42. The passengers are in the bus.
43. The notice is on the board.
44. This idea was not in my head.
45. The famous actor will be at the film festival.