

Living the Stanzas of Bongo Fleva: Its Light and Dark Sides

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Abstract

This article explores the values (both negative and positive) of *Bongo Fleva* (especially Hip-hop) culture as revealed in the stanzas and through the lives of artists and audience. Apparently, what the artists sing is closely linked to their real lives and that they sing their wishes and behaviours which can affect the audience too. To attain the goal of this study I have listened to and analyzed different *Bongo Fleva* songs, held interviews with *Bongo Fleva* fans and traced written, video and biographical information of sampled *Bongo Fleva* artists for testimonial purposes. The findings reveal that *Bongo Fleva* music has positive and negative values on the audience and artists. The article recommends that, there is a need to restructure the operation of the censorship organ, namely *Baraza la Sanaa Tanzania*, or add more censorship organs to do away with undesired effects of the genre; the artists should be made aware of the fact that ‘*Bongo Fleva Music Industry*’ is of great value and should not be misused by incorporating transgressive lifestyle.

Ikisiri

Makala hii inalenga kuchunguza faida na hasara ya utamaduni wa nyimbo za Bongo Fleva (hususani hip-hop) kwa wasanii na hadhira kama inavyojidhihirisha katika maisha yao na beti za nyimbo zao. Nyimbo zao ni kielelezo cha tabia na shauku yao. Ili kufanikisha azma hii, utafiti ulijikita katika kusikiliza na kuchambua nyimbo za Bongo Fleva, kufanya mahojiano na wapenzi wa Bongo Fleva na kuchunguza maisha halisi ya wasanii na pia kutafiti namna hadhira inavyoathirika na maudhui hayo. Makala ilihusisha pia taarifa binafsi za kimaandishi na picha za video za wasanii waliolengwa. Utafiti umegundua kuwa Bongo Fleva ina faida na hasara kwa wasanii na hadhira. Makala inashauri kuwa chombo cha udhibiti yaani Baraza la Sanaa la Taifa, au viongezwe vyombo vingine vya udhibiti ili kuongeza juhudi za kudhibiti na kuhakiki maudhui ya nyimbo za Bongo Fleva ili kuondokana na athari hasi. Wasanii wanatakiwa kutambua kuwa tasnia ya Bongo Fleva ni ya thamani na isitumiwe vibaya kwa kuingiza mambo yanayokinzana na maadili.

1.0 Introduction

As *Bongo Fleva* poetry grows, it also attracts the attention and interest of many scholars to research on various portions of the genre just like how adolescents and young adults are struggling to enter into the world of this music. Different scholars and amateurs have explored *Bongo Fleva* from different perspectives. These include Suriano (2007) who studied how Swahili Hip-hop reflects Tanzanian urban youth culture, with its changing identities, life-styles, aspirations, constraints, and language. Another scholar is Kerr (2014) whose intensive study centered on the ongoing debates about new forms of identity and sociality created by rappers. He also explored both appropriations from the transnational circulation of styles and signs as well as local orders of meaning rappers use to fashion themselves. Clark (2004, 2012) studied how Hip-hop music and its culture have expanded globally and commercially, revealing that with that expansion there is a struggle by

marginalized hip-hop artists to maintain authenticity within the hip-hop culture against the trends toward commercialization. However, no specific study had typically concentrated on the way the Bongo Fleva and its Hip-hop culture have impact on both the audience and the composers, who compose their personal life. That is, there is no specific study that has made a comparison of the values of the lyrics and the private life of the artist on the one hand and the audience on the other hand. This is what this article is dealing with.

Since the onset of Bongo Fleva, different claims have been directed to the poetry and artists. Graebner (1989: 243 cited in De Rycker 2002: 40 as quoted by Englert 2003: 78) argues as follows:

In Tanzania (in its early stage of Bongo Fleva and even now) musicians are [were] commonly considered to be *wahuni*, i.e. hooligans, drunkards, drug takers, while their music is enjoyed by the same people who call them these names.

The paradoxical statement above is central to the claim I have stated in this article that the artists and their stanzas have ambivalent role to play to the artists themselves and the audiences. Until this juncture, audiences have been sharply divided in their ways they perceive the values in the Bongo Fleva lyrics. There are those who believe and take it for granted that the poetry has no side effects while others perceive the dark and light sides of the poetry and its poets. This article depicts the way the lyrics are part and parcel of the artists' life and establishes the link between the lyrics on one hand and audiences and composers' lives on the other. The paper has been divided into five sections: the introductory part which also includes the definition of Bongo Fleva as well as the relationship between Bongo Fleva and American hip hop, methodological part which gives clues on sampling procedure and the nature of analysis. Then, there is the main body in which each artist is treated independently and the inclusion of audience's views and observations which is followed by conclusions and recommendations.

1.1 Definition of Bongo Fleva

In this paper, Bongo Fleva is used to mean different sub-genres of music composed and performed in Tanzania which is also known as *Muziki wa Kizazi Kipya* (The music of the new generation). It includes *Tanzanian Reggae*, *Raga*, *Bongo Bangla*, *Takeu*, *Rhymes* and *Blues*, and *Hip-hop/Rap*. The genres consist of mixed elements from American Hip-hop, R&B, Zouk, *Reggae*, *Congolese Bolingo*, *Indian* and Tanzanian musical elements (cf. Suriano, 2006; Reuster-Jahn & Hacke, 2011). The term 'Bongo' from the phrase Bongo Fleva comes from the Swahili word *ubongo* meaning 'brain' which initially referred to Dar es Salaam - a tricky and difficulty city where one has to use brain to acquire their basic needs for survival. It also means being canny and tricky in order to survive in the challenging city of Dar es

Salaam (Masonga, 2005; Perullo, 2003; Omari, 2009). Recently the term ‘bongo’ had been broadened semantically to mean Tanzania (cf. Stock, 2004). The word ‘fleva’ or ‘flava’ is *Swahilization* of the pronunciation and spelling simplification of the English word flavour. So, Bongo Fleva simply means a flavour of music from Bongo (Dar es Salaam/Tanzania). This paper prefers to use ‘fleva’ instead of ‘flava’.

Englert (2003) informs that hip-hop has its origin in America and it reached Tanzania in 1980s. Because of the limited media at that time it became popular in the early 1990’s with the advent of liberalization. It was customized to suit the Tanzanian context by writing it in Swahili and mixing hip-hop with local genres hence Bongo Fleva. Until then the music has grown and is currently identifying itself with celebrities such as Ambwene Allen Yessayah (AY), Farid Kubanda (Fid Q), Hamis Mwinjuma (Mwanafalsafa or MwanaFA), Innocent Sahani (D-Nob), John Simon (Joe Makini), Joseph Mbilinyi (2Proud, Mr. II, or Sugu), Khalid Salum Mohammed (TID i.e. Top in Dar), Mbwana Mohamed (MB Dogg Man), Mike Mwakatundu (Mike Tee or Mnyalu), and Nasib Abdul (Diamond Platinumz) to mention just a few of them (Omari, 2011:72).

1.2 Diagnosing Bongo Fleva Hip-hop Culture against American Hip-hop Culture

Bongo fleva is believed to be the offspring of American rap/hip-hop. It is possible for the two to share some cultural elements. In the memoir titled *The Evolution of Hip-hop Culture* by Devos (2006-2007) America rap/hip-hop was explored centering the argument on whether rap is dangerous and if there are characteristics of rap culture that needed critical attention (and so is Bongo Fleva). Devos’ study revealed mixed results concerning hip-hop culture that some of the gangster references in songs’ lyrics were fictional but reflecting the reality of the hood they emanate from and some of the gangsters and their audiences were the victim of their gangster rap life style leading their death and to the formation of moves to censor songs. Parents Music Resources (PMRC) founded by Tipper Gore and Susan Baker is singled as an example of such censorship tool putting warning labels on music albums glorifying gangster lifestyle including Ice T’s album.

Many writings associates hip-hop with blacks and Spanish or the non-whites. For example, Devos (2006-2007) traces the development of rap music and associate it with reggae music. He considers rap to have sprung from the South Bronx of New York By 1930 by Blacks and Spanish and was of the following categories: boast rap, insults rap, news rap, message rap and party raps. He further analyses gangster rap/hardcore rap that involves lyrics on the lifestyle of inner-city gang members, pimps or drug dealers, homicides, misogyny, violent fantasies and false conscious

(pg. 14). Furthermore, Devos (2006-2007) points out examples of American hip-hop gangster cultural celebrities such as Schooly D (who demonstrated his gangster character by making direct references to his gang as well as putting his pistol against another rappers head), Ice T (whose song *6 in the Morning* makes references to guns and pimping), DMX (who is considered the king of hardcore rap and whose survival techniques were to rob people and deal with drugs which led several runs with the law). Other gangster rappers according to Devos include, 2 Pac (who was gunned down six months later after the release of his album *All Eyes On Me* in 1996, and whose death is associated with his violent lyrics and lifestyle), Notorious B.I.G (who got shot dead six months after the death of 2 Pac), Snoop Doggy Dogg and 50 Cents (who display the character of pimping and have even released porn videos, despite their influential powers they possess on the youngsters).

I critically agree with Ronald Turner's response as interviewed by Devos (2006 - 2007: 27) when he says 'gangster rap appeal to many people who have rebellious attitude against society [and parents/family order]'. Reflecting on the violence nature I traced above concerning the America gangster rappers it is obvious that hip-hop music spread with its cultural elements. The American hip-hop celebrities I have mentioned earlier above in this paper are very popular and they have also influenced many Tanzanian hip-hop artists. For the purpose of this study, I have decided to single out Tanzanian hip-hop artists whose lives' deeds and lyrics have captured the attention of tabloids, serious newspapers, and media in general and the society at large following their song lyrics' transgressing or constructive themes versus their private lives.

Comparing Tanzanian and American popular musicians, Tanzanian artists sing, wear, talk/speak, walk, dance and behave like their fellow American artists. As they are shaped by role models from America, they also shape their audience who copy even controversial cultural elements and practices in their lyrics and their real lives. For instance, Rashid Makwiro (Chid Benz or Chid Benzino) who puts on a nose pin as the late 2Pac, Mr. Blue who wears earrings like American RnB singer, Nayo.

2.0 Methodology

This paper analyses the ambivalent themes of six Bongo Flewa songs and reflects them against the rappers' private lives. The selection of the artists and their songs in question is two folds. First, there are songs and artists with political interests. This category includes artists like Joseph Haule's (Prof Jay) *Ndiyo Mzee*, (*Yes Sir*), Mr II's *Hali Halisi* (*Real Situation*) as well as Nakaaya Sumari's (featuring M1 of Dead Preez) *Mr. Politician*. The second category is based on songs that explicitly glorify transgressing themes and the artists in this group have confessed or have

been proved to have been abusing drugs in their real life. This group includes Langa Kileo's *Matawi ya Juu* (High Branches), Chid Benzino's *Dar es Salaam Stand up* and Albert Mangwea's (Mangwair) *Mikasi* (Sex). They preach risky sexual practices like prostitution, alcoholism and drugs. They are examples of artists whose songs have been taken as a reflection of their negative private lives.

Again, the sampled artists are long standing performers and hit makers. However, they have sung various songs with various messages. Since the paper has an interest in political and transgressive themes and the way they influences the lives of the artists and or the audience, this paper finds it better to ignore their other songs and thematic concern and thus the sampled songs are considered as typical and best representative of the larger population of artists and their songs. The findings of the study are the result of thematic analysis of the songs and exploration of personal profiles of the artists in question through their real life situation, interviews and their own testimonies they made through various social media. To achieve this, I listened to their songs, translated them into English, transcribed and analyzed them. The themes were then compared with the personal profile of the artist obtained from newspapers, blogs and interviews they made on televisions to find out the extent to which the themes reflect the artists' lives. Additionally, ten secondary school students (Bongo Fleva fans) were interviewed regarding the way they are influenced by Bongo Fleva artists.

3.0 Data Analysis and Discussion

Thematically, Bongo Fleva's themes range from HIV awareness as in Ferouz featuring Prof Jay *Starehe* (Luxury) and Mwana FA's *Alikufa kwa Ngoma* (Died from HIV/AIDS), women and children issues as in Vick Kamata's *Wanawake na Maendeleo* (Women and Development), Ney wa Mitego's *Wanawake* (Women), and GK's *Sauti ya Manka* (Manka's Voice) to songs makes social political commentaries which are essential for positive transformations such as Prof Jay's *Ndiyo Mzee* (Yes sir), Mr II's *Kura Yangu* (My Vote), Kala Jeremiah's *Wimbo wa Taifa* (National Anthem), ROMA's *Viva* and Nakaaya Sumari's *Mr. Politician*. Artists also provide means for entertainment and relaxations. Yet, others , including Ney wa Mitego's *Pale Kati Patamu* (That Centre is Sweet) and Langa's *Matawi ya Juu* (High Branches) manifest negative values in the sense that they devalue women as sexual wantons.

This paper analyses the selected six song lyrics of six artists, namely *Mr. Politician* by Nakaaya featuring MRap 1, *Hali Halisi* (Real Situation) by Sugu, *Ndiyo Mzee* (Yes Sir) by Prof Jay, *Mikasi* (Sex) by Mangwair, *Dar es Salaam Stand Up* by Chid Benz and *Matawi ya Juu* (High Branches) by Langa. This paper centres social political issues that are expressed in their lyrics as positive values Bongo fleva artists express. Bongo fleva is a cornerstone where everyone including

the politicians are reminded and critiqued. The researcher suggests that artists also in their private lives wish they could become social transforming agents by being elected as political leaders since they have been involved even in politics. The following are some of the artists and their pieces:

3.1 Nakaaya Sumari

Nakaaya Sumari's best known hit is *Mr. Politician* (Featuring M1 of Dead Preez) which was released in the album titled *Nervous Conditions* (2008). It ridicules a fake politician and awakens the masses on how the politicians enrich themselves. The song lyrics below dramatizes the way many politicians brainwash the citizenry during electoral campaign asking to be elected or re-elected by pouring sweet but fake promises and yet after entering in the national assembly they forget their voters. This is evident in Tanzanian politics.

Nakaaya featuring M1 of Dead Preez's *Mr. Politician*

Kiitikio: Nakaaya

1. *Miaka ya juzi juzi*
2. *Uliomba kura zangu*
3. *Ahadi nazo, ulizimimina*
4. *Elimu bora, afya bora*
5. *Barabara nzuri, ajira nje nje*
6. *Hivi leo, sioni mabadiliko*
7. *Hali imekuwa ngumu*
8. *Nawe watajirika*
9. *Elimu mbaya, afya inazorota*
10. *Barabara hazipitiki, vijana hawana ajira*

Chorus: Nakaaya

1. A few years ago
2. You asked for my vote
3. And you poured out promises
4. Better education, better healthcare
5. Good roads, jobs everywhere
6. But today, I don't see changes
7. The situation has become hard
8. And you are getting richer
9. Education is bad, and healthcare is deteriorating
10. Roads are impassable, youths don't have jobs

M1 of Dead Preez's *Mr. Politician* (Raps in English Language)

11. Hey Mr. Prime Minister,
12. It's kind of sinister,
13. The price of gas is so high it is nonsense
14. It's the time of the month you know the rent due
15. And all the outsiders buying the land
16. Why do you send cheques in the mail, pockets empty
17. And why we don't get no respect Mr. MP?
18. See all the promises you made us about dropping taxes,
19. And we the only ones getting robbed
20. The crime is not blowing up, but time is running out
21. 'Cos all we want is change, that's what it's all about
22. We will accept no less than our demands are:
23. Land and injustice
24. We stand for the 30 million walking these streets you never fixed
25. We sick and tired of hearing these lies, games and tricks
26. Instead of looking up to these fake ones for hope,
27. Remember Amina the next time you vote!

Nakaaya's *Mr. Politician* can be taken as an expression of her political activism and ideas which were also seen in her later 2010's involvement in politics through Chama Cha Mapinduzi when she contested for special seat member of parliament (MP) in Arusha urban constituency (see Anna Peter, *Mwananchi* posted 26/4/201). Her lyrics allude to the deceased youth activist Amina Chifupa, who was a Member of Parliament. The allusion may entail the well-wishing of young Tanzanians since Amina was chiefly campaigning for their well-being. Amina's activism is a good character to remember and thus the artist reminds the audience to remember her, hence doing what she could have done.

Nakaaya's political aspiration in the above song is clear and obvious. She pardons societal awareness, and comments on poor politics and leadership. In Tanzania, it is a normal thing for politicians (constituents' representatives) to make a lot of sweet promises to the mass during electoral campaigns, yet after winning the seats they forget the mass. Her further attempt to become the MP was reported by *bongo5.com* where she contested for the same political seat in 2015 Tanzania general election through an opposition party CHADEMA (Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo) again in vain.

There is no doubt that Nakaaya's song has depicted important issues which voters need to take on board. These include good roads, employment, and healthcare facilities. Perhaps these are the very thing she could have dealt with once elected. Quoted from the *bongo5.com* she says:

Nahisi muda umefika wa kutenda ninayoyahubiri siku zote, nataka nikasimamie matatizo ya uzazi kwa wakina mama hili linanipa uchungu katika maisha yangu siku zote.

I think it's time to do what I have been preaching [in *Mr. Politician* for example] all days, I want to deal with women's reproductive health problem which angers in my all life.

Whereas Nakaaya's dream to become a politician did not materialize, yet, her fellow artist Joseph Mbilinyi (Mr II or Sugu) won the 2010 and 2015 elections and became the Mbeya Urban Member of Parliament. Sugu's songs such as *Kura Yangu* (My Vote) and *Hali Halisi* (Real Situation) are full of political commentaries.

3.2 Joseph Mbilinyi (Mr. II or Sugu)

Joseph Mbilinyi, also known as Mr II or Sugu (stubborn), is perhaps the most famous Tanzania hip-hop legend. According to Mbilinyi his albums include: *Ni Mimi* (It's me) (1995), *Ndani ya Bongo* (Inside Bongo) (1996), *Niite Mister II* (Call me Mr II) (1998), *Nje ya Bongo* (Out of Bongo) (1999), *Millennium* (2000), *Muziki na Maisha* (Music and Life) (2001), *Itikadi* (Ideology) (2002), and *Sugu*

(Stubborn) (2004). His lyrics deal with and reflect almost every issue in his society. For instance, in 2016, while being an MP, he released the single called *Freedom* in which he raps his personal struggle and wishing economic freedom for everyone. This article uses Sugu's song *Hali Halisi* which is found in *Niite Mr II* album; the song is one of the highly charged politically among his other songs. The lyrics below reveal:

Sugu's *Hali Halisi* (Real Situation)

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| 1. <i>Wacha tutabasamu</i> | 1. Let us smile |
| 2. <i>Tuna maisha magumu mpaka rais anafhamu,</i> | 2. We have difficult life even the president knows |
| 3. <i>Bado tunatabasamu kwa kila hali, hii ni hali halisi,</i> | 3. We still smile for every situation, this situation is real |
| 4. <i>Kila siku ni sisi na polisi na polisi na sisi.</i> | 4. Every day it's us against the police and the police against us |
| 5. <i>Pilato Kizimbani anatumboja sisi,</i> | 5. The judge in court is waiting for us |
| 6. <i>Bwana jela gereza ni anatumboja sisi,</i> | 6. The officer in prison is waiting for us |
| 7. <i>Bongo mambo sio mazuri,</i> | 7. Things are not good at Bongo |
| 8. <i>Najua bado kali,</i> | 8. The sun is still hot |
| 9. <i>Salam kwa papa John Paul wa Pili,</i> | 9. Hi to papa John Paul II |
| 10. <i>Wananchi wenye hasira wachoma watu moto,</i> | 10. Angry citizens burn people |
| 11. <i>Tusio na kazi sasa tupo na matumbo joto</i> | 11. We the unemployed are worried |
| 12. <i>Tutapochoka amani tutapigana na nani,</i> | 12. Tired of peace who will we fight against? |
| 13. <i>Uzalendo unatumshinda,</i> | 13. Tolerance is too much |
| 14. <i>Miaka inavyokwenda naona sura zilezile,</i> | 14. As years go by I see the same people |
| 15. <i>Viongozi wale wale toka nipo shule mpaka sasa</i> | 15. Same leaders since school days until now |
| 16. <i>Usicheze na siasa, siasa ni mchezo mchafu,</i> | 16. Don't play with politics, it's a dirty game |
| 17. <i>Wanataka umaarufu, wanasiasa wa bongo wengi waongo,</i> | 17. They (politicians) want fame, most of Bongo (Tanzanian Politicians) are liars |
| 18. <i>Wananipa hasira utadhani nipo Ubungo,</i> | 18. They make me angry as if I have a house in Ubungo |
| 19. <i>Oooh! Hapa nilipo nionipo tu kama sipo</i> | 19. I am here but it's as if I am not |
| 20. <i>Na sijui kama kuna maisha baada ya kifo</i> | 20. I don't know if there is life after death |

In the stanza above, Sugu is disillusioned by Tanzanian political leaders who are leaders for life. They are always there in their position yet they bring no positive changes since his childhood to date (see lines 14-15). Prior to 1995 Tanzanian politics was monotonous: same candidates with fake promises preaching of peace while there were increased violence, crimes and the unemployment. The unemployed became scapegoat of any social problem.

In *Hali Halisi*, Sugu raps the lawlessness and the injustices, and that some people act against the law by "burning people". While the masses lack public legal and civic education there are court injustices and increased worries to the

unemployed. He also focuses on the existing police brutality. The mixture of all these problems causes the rapper to express his political dissatisfactions by saying “I am here but it’s as if I am not”. His verse “they make me angry...” may implicate his inner desire to bring changes politically. And thus his being the Member of Parliament is the realization of the dream.

3.3 Joseph Haule (Prof Jay)

Prof Jay’s lyrics are thematically broad too. They present a wide range of issues facing and expected by average Tanzanians. They are about club and entertainment as in *Piga Makofi* (Clap Hands), love as in *Nimeamini* (I trusted) featuring Judith Wambura (Lady Jay Dee), raising HIV/AIDS awareness as in *Msinitenge* (Don’t Segregate Me), political issues as in *Nang’atuka* (I Resign), *Ndiyo Mzee* (Yes Sir), *Kikao cha Dharura* (Emergence Meeting), *Jukumu Letu* (Our Responsibility) Prof Jay featuring Hamisi Mwinjuma (Mwana FA), as well as social issues as in *Bongo Dar es Salaam*. Prof Jay strongest political concerns can mainly be traced in the songs *Ndiyo Mzee* (Yes Sir), *Jukumu Letu* (Our Responsibility), *Kikao cha Dharura* (Emergency Meeting) and *Nang’atuka* (I Resign). Excluding *Jukumu Letu*, the rest are a triad; are like a series of politicians’ lives. Whereby in *Ndiyo Mzee* he campaigns to be elected as the MP, in *Kikao cha Dharura*, voters are tired of unchanged life situations and unfulfilled fake promises and thus questions the MP, the MP also asks to be reelected so that he could fulfill the promises. In *Nang’atuka*, the leader repents to the voters about his misuse of power when he served as the MP and thus he is ready to resign from his seat. This paper analyses *Ndiyo Mzee* in a two-fold manner, first as a political satire. In this respect, Prof Jay uses his poetry to ridicule and criticize the politician who did not fulfill his promises. He makes use of a real political situation in which most of political leaders enrich themselves while leaving behind the voters in abject poverty. Yet, they will be reelected since they are good at making sweet but unfulfilled promises. In Tanzania for example, during electoral campaigns, politicians convince the mass that they are their only solution to their problems and that they will do ‘this’ or ‘that’. For example, some of the verses in *Ndiyo Mzee* read:

Prof Jay’s *Ndiyo Mzee* (Yes Sir)

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| 1. <i>Naitwa Joseph Haule, Mwana wa Msolopogasi</i> | 1. I am Joseph Haule son of Msolopogasi |
| 2. <i>Nadhani nimeletwa niokoe hiki kizazi,</i> | 2. I think I have been brought to save this generation |
| 3. <i>Mimi ni mwanasiasa niliyebarikiwa na Mungu,</i> | 3. I am a politician blessed by God |
| 4. <i>Nimeletwa kwenu waungwana ili niwapunguzie machungu,</i> | 4. I was brought to you gentle people so that I can reduce your sufferings |

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|--|--|
| 5. <i>Mimi ni mteule kusini mwa jangwa la sahara</i> | 5. I am the chosen among the South of Saharan desert |
| 6. <i>Ndo maana nimetunukiwa cheti cha juu cha utawala</i> | 6. That is why, I have been awarded the high certificate of management |

Most of politicians in Africa and Tanzania in particular promise what they will not fulfill even though they are in a position to fulfill some of them. There had been chaos and complaints about the politicians whom after being elected will not come back to their constituencies and thus they will not bother to fulfill what they promised the voters. In *Ndiyo Mzee*, Prof Jay tells the voters that he is determined to make Tanzania a powerful state within few days, provide meaningful wages to workers, improve learning by sending students to make practical in the moon, every bar maid to ride a Benz, end poverty, and that farmers will have tractors and many other promises, but only he (Joseph Haule) suits the MP position to achieve all these. All voters agree by saying *Ndiyo Mzee* (Yes Sir).

Secondly, the use of the persona: Joseph Haule can be implicated as his inner psychological preoccupation that has to do with his political wishes. Though he satirizes the politician in general, his official involvement in politics as a political candidate may imply his long dream of solving people's problems through politics. Through the *Mikasi TV show* interview, Prof Jay reveals that his preoccupation with political themes is the outcome of political dissatisfaction that he had long observed from political leaders' behaviour. He may have been further influenced by Sugu who became the MP since 2010. In the 2015's Tanzania general election, a number of artists: singers, rappers, actors and actress involved directly as candidates of various constituencies. Through this election Prof Jay is now the member of parliament of Mikumi constituency. He got elected after contesting via the main opposition party, CHADEMA (Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo). This can be connected with his desires and wishes he has been expressing in his politically charged songs like *Ndiyo Mzee* where he asks voters to elect him as their political leader.

3.4 Albert Mangwea (Mangwair)

Albert Mangwea whose aliases also include Ngwair, Ngwea, Cow Boy or Obama is believed to have died from drug abuse over dosage in 2014 (www.habari.co.tz). His lyrics handle a wide range of themes such as love (in *She Got Gwan and Alma*), politics (in *CCM* where he campaigns for Chama Cha Mapinduzi as his best political party), club, sex, alcohol, and drugs (in *CNN, Mikasi, Ndani ya Club* (In The Club), and *Nipeni Dili Masela* (Guys give me a Deal)). In this article my argument is Mangwair's songs, especially *Mikasi*, did not only pollute the audiences' behaviour but also himself. This is because he practiced what he/other glorified and his song lyrics have contributed to understanding his tragic death. For

example, through the music based blog *bongo5.com*, Fredrick Bundala (the blogger) informs that the music producer, Mangwair's fan and rapper Mswaki who recorded the song *Open Letter* as a tribute to Mangwair after his death, has been inspired (or obsessed) by Magwair's character and wants to use it in his music career as a rapper. Bundala writes:

Mswaki kupitia mradi wake alioupa jina 'Keeping Ngwair Alive' atakuwa akirap kwa kutumia mtindo na sauti ya Ngwair [...] wiki hii producer huyo alisafiri hadi mjini Morogoro kumuona Mama mzazi wa Ngwair ili kumuomba kibali cha kufanya hivyo.

Through his project named 'Keeping Ngwair Alive' he will be rapping using Ngwair's style and voice [...] this week that producer journeyed to Ngwair's mother to beg for the permission (My Translation).

It is not known yet who will inherit Mangwair's negative traits. Yet, his glorification of sex, drugs and alcohol (in his songs) normalizes these ill behaviours especially to the youth who are his fans. For instance, in 2000 Mangwair's greatest hit song *Mikasi*, whose stanzas are still recited by many Tanzanian youths, won the Kilimanjaro Music award as the best song of the year. His album became the best album of the year and the music producer Khalifani Majani (P Funk Majani) also became the best producer of the song. According to Reuster-Jahn (2007), the song makes it clear that enjoying life is having sex, drugs and alcohol. *Mikasi* clearly depicts Mangwair's perception on and glorification of drugs, sex and alcohol, as the lyrics confirm:

Mangwair's ft. Ferouz *Mikasi* (Sex)

Kiitikio: Ferouz

*Mitungi, blunt, mikasi oooh yeeeeaaaaaaah
Kama ukitaka kuvinjari nasi basi
Mfukoni mwako nawe uwe safi*

Chorus: Ferouz

Alcohol, drugs, sex oooh yeeeeaaaaaaah
If you want to enjoy with us
You must also have money in your pocket

Ubeti I: Mangwair

1. *Makamuzi yanaendelea mpaka night*
2. *Watu wanaingia graveyard kwanza kupata nyasi*
3. *Tunarudi kila mmoja anajisachi*
4. *Ni kiasi gani mfukoni kilichobaki*
5. *Kujicheki mi nna kama laki*
6. *Nikawaambia machizi kinachofuata mikasi*

Stanza 1: Mangwair

1. We are having fun till the night
2. People enters the grave yard to have [smoke] marijuana
3. We come back and each checks his pocket
4. How much money still in the pocket
5. To check myself I've almost one hundred thousand
6. I told the friends what follows is sex

Ubeti II: Mangwair

1. *Kulewa tushalewa kilichobaki mikasi*

Stanza II: Mangwair

1. We are already drunk what follows is sex

- | | |
|--|--|
| 2. <i>Washikaji eh milupo tutapata wapi?</i> | 2. Oh! Friends where shall we find whores? |
| 3. <i>Milupo labda mitaa ya kati</i> | 3. Whores may be on the central street |
| 4. <i>Twenzetu tukapige mikasi.</i> | 4. Let's go and have sex |

Reflecting on the lyrics above, against the postmortem reports from South Africa which revealed that Mangwair died from drugs abuse I am convinced to argue that Mangwair lived what he was actually singing as it is demonstrated in his stanzas. Consider the postmortem report from his dead body:

A blood sample from his body reveals the concentration of different drugs including heroine, dirty cocaine and 0.08 grams of marijuana (*Mwananchi* online Newspaper, 2015).

The blog *hancyclassics*¹ posted some further information revealing Mangwair's death as associated with drugs abuse, it reads:

Albert Mangwea 'Mangwair au Ngwea' anadaiwa kufariki kutokana na dawa za kulevya nchini Afrika Kusini mapema wiki iliyopita...Hata hivyo kifo chake kitoe changamoto kwa wasanii wengine akiwemo Ray C aliyeko kwenye kituo cha kujirekebisha kutokana na matumizi ya dawa za kulevya.

Albert Mangwair or Ngwea is said to have died from drug abuse in South Africa earlier last week... his death should give a lesson to other artists including Ray C who is at a rehabilitation center as a result of drug abuse (my translation).

To pursue my argument further, this article has crosschecked David Nyika (Daz Baba)'s² song *Wife* in which Mangwea was featured.

Daz Baba's Wife ft. Mangwair

Mangwair:

1. *Ikiwezekana apandishe hata majani,*
2. *Isiwe anaboreka anapokuwa nami ,*
3. *Anakata viuno alivyofunzwa unyagoni,*
4. *Ili tunapokuwa ndani anipe burudani.*

Mangwair:

1. If possible she should use marijuana,
2. That she won't be bored with me,
3. She [winds her waist] as she was taught during *unyago* [a puberty rite],
4. So that when we're in bed [making sex] she will give me a good time.

¹ Hancyclassics <http://hancyclassics.blogspot.com/2013/06/tusipochukua-hatua-dawa-za-kulevya.html>.

² In www.habarileo.co.tz/index.php/makala/36730-dawa-za-kulevya-zitawamaliza-wasanii 14th March 2014. Daz Baba is believed to be the drug addict. The source also mentions names of other artists' who have died from drugs abuse such as Albert Mangwair, Langa Kileo and a Dance musician Banza Stone, and the survivors such as Ray C. Other drug addicted Bongo fleva artists are David Nyika 'Daz Baba', Waziri Mkuto 'Lord Eyez', and Abasi Kansas '20%'.

(Translation based on Suriano (2007) with minor alteration by Researcher)

Mangwair's life, according to his stanzas above, is proved to be happier when he abuses drugs as he even wants a woman who also smokes marijuana. Some of the artists he featured in his songs (such as Daz Baba and Chid Benz) are also accused of abusing drugs.

The motif of explicit references to sex, alcohol and drugs in Mangwair's stanzas according to my argument in this article has something to do with revelation of his inner life and this is clearly evident in the postmortem report which cleared the doubt that his death was attributed to drug and alcohol over dosage. His song *Mikasi* seems to glorify risk behaviors, although Baraza la Sanaa Tanzania (Tanzania Arts Council -BASATA) has done no fruitful effort to ban it. Many teenagers who are Mangwair's fans are likely to practice what is likely to be the message in the stanzas. You can access the song through different social media including *YouTube*.

However, contrary to many Tanzanians' expectations, Ferouz who sings the chorus in *Mikasi* is known for his educative hit *Starehe* (Luxury), a song which attracted the attention of millions of Tanzanians for his creative dramatization of HIV/AIDS message. His song was a seminal input in the fight against the HIV pandemic. The song describes promiscuity as the risk behaviour responsible for transmission of the disease. Yet his creative role has worsened and now in the featured song *Mikasi* he glorifies the use of drugs, practicing unsafe and unlawful sex, and alcohol abuse. The question about Ferouz and his ambivalent nature is: are the lyrics in the two songs *Mikasi* and *Starehe* fictional or real representation of his life? The answer in this is not conclusive but may reveal some insights. Art may both reflect the authors' life or his surroundings. Either of this may define Ferouz's music.

3.5 Langa Kileo (aka Rais wa Ghetto or Rais wa Mateja)

Langa Kileo aka³ Rais wa Ghetho (the Ghetto's President) and later Rais wa Mateja (The Drug Addicts' President); the latter being the name he made himself after he underwent drug abuse and later on rehabbed. Langa as an artist emerged as *Coca-Cola Pop Star Search* (2004) from which he and two other female artists namely Sara Kaisi (Shaa) and Witness Fred Mwaijaga (Bad Girl) became winners and formed a group Wakilisha (Represent). The group later split and made each artist to stand as a solo artist.

As the solo artist Langa made several hit songs which led to her being nominated for several awards competitions including Kisima awards⁴ (2006)

³ aka means "also known as".

⁴ Kisima Awards is hosted by Kenyans in The Republic of Kenya.

where his first single *Matawi ya Juu*⁵ (High branches i.e. high class) was awarded as the best East African song. It has been reported that ‘Langa, after making a name for himself in the Bongo Flewa genre as Rais wa Mateja (The Drug Addicts’ president) he was hard hit by drug addiction, which affected both his health and talent’ (*The Citizen Newspaper*, June 17, 2013). For instance, in *Matawi ya Juu* (High branches) is explicitly praising and glorifying alcohol, ganja, unsafe sex (having sex with multiple partners) and alcoholism. Langa’s *Matawi ya Juu* was followed by other thematically related song which talks of sex, *Pipi Kijiti* (Loll Pop - metaphorically meaning a penis). In *Pipi Kijiti*, Langa is insisting on unprotected sex when he writes “*Raha ya pipi ya kijiti kula bila maganda/Pata raha halisi usisikilize propaganda*”, meaning “The happiness of penis is when it is bare, get the natural happiness don’t listen to propaganda”. This was followed by *Gangsta* (2009) in which he still glorifies weed as he writes “*Nakula kaya nyingi kama vile Nyabingi*” the verse simply translates as “I smoke a lot of marijuana like Nyabingi”. However, his thematic trend changed after he became a drug addict and thus after rehab he composed thematically positive songs which warns the youth to avoid abusing drugs *Kifo Jela* (Death-Jail) in 2011 and *Rafiki wa Kweli* in which he uses a Swahili proverb which its English equivalence is “A friend in need is a friend indeed” talking about real and fake friend he encountered during his hard times period.

In the interview by the famous TV hip-hop show known as *Cheusi Dawu*⁶/Fidstyle hosted by Fid Q, Langa, unlike other Tanzanian male hip-hop stars who are romoured to use drugs, confessed that he has used drugs for quite a long time. *Matawi ya Juu* also verifies that Langa’s lyrics were under no any circumstance far from the way he lived. Consider the following lyrics:

⁵In Kisima awards *Matawi ya Juu* was awarded as the Best East African Song of the year 2006 in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Kisima_Music_Awards

⁶ CheusiDawa /Fidstyle is the hip-hop TV show hosted by Fid q (hip-hop artist) on East African Television (Channel5).

Langa's Matawi ya Juu (High branches)

Kiitikio

1. *Aha matawi ya juu x 2*
2. *Mkwanja (upo), pamba (zipo),*
3. *Mademu wa kijanja sio washamba wapo,*
4. *Ganja (zipo), lager (zipo)*
5. *Starehe ilipo ndo Langa alipo*

Ubeti I

1. *Kwanza naenda kwa pusha nanunua mapuri ganja*
2. *Baada ya kuvuta, nakula vizuri nyama*
3. *Mitungi na kret, sigara n'na pakiti*
4. *Naegemea ukuta, nakamata viuno vilivolegea mifupa.*
5. *Huyu akichomoa namchomekea yule*

Chorus

1. Aha! High (branches) classes
2. Money (present), stylish clothes (present)
3. Smartest girls not the dully ones (are present)
4. Marijuana (is present), lager⁷ as well
5. Where there is luxury Langa is also there.

Stanza I

1. First I go to the drug dealer/seller to buy unprocessed marijuana,
2. After smoking, I nicely eat meat.
3. I've plenty of beer, and a packet of cigarette.
4. I lean against the wall, I hold soft waists (girls)
5. If one girl refuses I go for another one (metaphorically meaning having sex in the club with any partner)

Studying the lyrics of *Matawi ya Juu*, it is clearly evident that Langa, like Mangwair, praises and glorifies risk sexual practices like having many sexual partners, using drugs (marijuana) and alcoholism. Yet the song was and is liked by many young East Africans as it can be verified by the comments posted on *YouTube* video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OkV). Although Langa changed and stopped abusing drugs, no assessment has been done to discover the number of youths that have been influenced by his lifestyle and the values of his songs. Yet, *Matawi ya juu* can be accessed through *YouTube*. And Langa's slang *Matawi ya juu* (which means high quality life) is popular and widely used among young and older Tanzanians. It is an example of the impact of the song on the audience.

3.6 Rashid⁸ Makwiro (Chid Benz)

Generally, there is a reasonable number of individual artists who are either alleged or proved to have been glorifying gangster culture and assume the life they sing. This includes the once awarded Hip-hop star Chid Benz(ino) in his song *Dare es Salaam Stand Up*. In this song he makes reference to marijuana (in Swahili slang, *majani*) and glorifies partying life. The following verses reveal this argument:

Naona Dar inafuka moshi wa majani
I see Dar[es Salaam] evolving marijuana smoke

⁷ Lager, in Tanzanian context, simply means to any kind of alcoholic drinks as opposed to a specific beer.

⁸ Chidi Benz was admitted in Bagamoyo sober house as the drug addict.

Masista duu wamejimix na marastamani
Beautiful girls mixed with Rasta men

These few lines create an image of how Dar es Salaam dwellers prefer the use of marijuana to the extent that the city emits marijuana smokes to fill it. Chid Benz also was proved by a law court to have possessed and used drugs including marijuana he glorifies. Consider:

Mahakama ya hakimu Mkazi Kisutu imemuhukumu kifungo cha miaka miwili jela Msanii wa Hip-hop, Rashid Makwiro 'Chid Benz' au kulipa faini ya shilingi laki tisa baada ya kupatikana na hatia ya makosa matatu ikiwemo kukutwa na dawa za kulevya ... heroin... bangi (Mwananchi online newspaper, accessed on 07/05/2015).

The Kisutu resident magistrate court sentenced Rashid Makwiro 'Chid Benz' a two years jail imprisonment or to pay a fine of nine hundred thousand Tanzanian shillings after being proved guilty of three crimes including being found with abusive drugs; heroine, marijuana (my translation).

Dar es Salaam stand up glorifies marijuana smoking. Exposing teens to this song depicting beautiful girls mixed with rasta men in a marijuana smoky place is likely to harm their behavioral development as they are conditioned to see marijuana smoking as fashion, not a crime.

4.0 Teens' and Audience' Concerns

Bongo Flewa and Tanzanian hip-hop culture is a very influential tool for shaping the young majority, and teens in particular. Through its powerful lyrics, beautiful melodies, and modernized mannerisms as the youths name them 'swaga' (swag i.e. fashionable appearance) artists mould themselves and the audience. Hip-hop life styles have both negative and positive implication on the majority of artists and young audiences who try to define their identity. Bongo flewa artists compose and live the experience of their composition, in the course of presenting their works they also let others (the audiences) live and go through the experiences they sing. Speaking on this, Mr. Mudemu, a lecturer who is also a Bongo Flewa fan informs that his buying of the clothes and foot wears is much shaped by Bongo Flewa great artists like Joh Makini, and G Walawala. He says that "[t]he artists go with time and their stylish clothes also go with time" (interview 11th October 2014). Mudemu adds that it is likely possible for young Tanzanians to adopt any style and behaviour of any artists of their choice and that the good thing is when they adopt positive style. Some of the young may adopt gangsterism or gangster hip-hop. The genre influences the young generation in issues that have to do with drug trafficking, dealing or abuse, promiscuity, alcohol abuse, violence which are prevailing in the Bongo Flewa lyrics and lives. These are the very same issues which are deeply rooted in American hip-hop culture as briefed elsewhere in this

article. Tanzanian hip-hop poets and other Bongo Flewa singers are condemned as they are central characters when it comes to such destructive practices and risk behaviours. It should be noted that many of their fans are younger people who are prone to copy risky behavior and who imitate things and behavior to identify themselves with their models. For example, among 10 secondary students whom I interviewed (5 girls and 5 boys), 2 out of 5 girls said Ray C was their role model and gave testimony that they wear dresses styled as those of Ray C. Similarly, 3 boys agreed to be fans of Chid Benz and said that they had not been influenced by the artist yet. However, two of the remained boys confessed that they have developed smoking habits because of discoing and clubbing culture which is part of music. They also agreed to be Chid Benz's and hip-hop fans. Chid Benz, Langa, Mangwair and Ray C have been proved beyond doubt that they are/were drugs abusers/addicts (*HabariLeo* 14th March 2015). Except Ray C, the remaining three artists on the list above have composed song lyrics which explicitly glorified sex and abuse of drugs and hooking whores as we have seen above. Again, all except Ray C are hip-hop artists.

An American based study carried by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (2006) found that young people who listen to rap and hip-hop music are more likely to have problems with alcohol, drugs, and violence than listeners of other types of music. It should be remembered that hip-hop artists are also listeners of other world hip-hop artists' songs and they are therefore likely to face the problems mentioned by the study above. Meanwhile, the acceptance of the Bongo Flewa artists as MPs will further awake other youths and many artists to get involved in Tanzanian politics.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Following the multiple but ambivalent roles that Bongo Flewa can play, and the fact that its culture has both positive and negative values, there is a need to formalize this creative industry. The government should invest in building many music academies from which young musicians will be taught to be good and useful musicians who will make positive transformations. Moreover, Bongo Flewa music industry is a sector that employs many youngsters and should be commercialized to create employment opportunities, improve the earning of the recent and upcoming musicians hence this will reduce their temptation to involve in drugs dealings.

Awareness should be raised among Tanzanian musicians on their roles and involvement in drug abuse as well as drug trafficking, and that it is possible to make hits without glorifying sex, gangster culture, alcohol, and drug abuse. Avoiding gangster hip-hop, artists may win a wide audience including those who over generalize that Bongo Flewa is the den of jeopardizing values. Lastly,

hardcore/insult/gangster rap needs to be discouraged, and thus any indicator of explicitly glorification of unlawful sexual practices, drugs and alcohol abuse in Bongo Flewa should be considered illegal and that lyrics of that nature should be banned by BASATA as they increase behavioral problems (Greene, 2008).

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