

Swahili Taarab: From Traditional Orality to a Globalized Art Form

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Introduction

“Taarab” may simply be defined as a popular form of Swahili music that combines the singing of poetry with the accompaniment of instruments. Traditionally featured on various social occasions, taarab, whose name derives from Arabic language, means, “to make merry or festivities; to sing, vocalize or chant” (Boyd 1986:2). Basically, it is a kind of music, which is meant for pleasant listening. Originally, taarab put more emphasis on the poetic lyrics and idioms than the beats or rhythm mainly because it was not for dancing. The figurative use of language was therefore more valued than its musicality.

The popularity of Swahili taarab is attested to not just by its wide appeal in the East African region but also in the number of scholarly studies undertaken on it by many renowned researchers (eg. Knappert 1979; Campbell 1983; Franken 1986; King'ei 1992 and Mlacha 1996). The fact that Swahili taarab has grown and spread far and beyond the traditional Swahili coast and has embraced new influences stylistically and thematically, calls for a study to understand the nature of the form and content of the genre. This brief paper aims at exploring the evolution of Swahili taarab music as a popular art form in East Africa from its Egyptian and Arabic origins to the current situation where it has acquired certain global traits in many of its aspects. The major argument presented here is that the Swahili taarab form started off as a typical urban-based but traditional oral form fused with external characteristics. Although these characteristics were dominantly Arabic in nature, over time, the form absorbed many local African properties that transformed

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the music into a powerful genre of Swahili oral tradition. The discussion concludes that, in the recent years, Swahili taarab has assumed a global nature to a certain extent in terms of its content, delivery, instrumentation, performance and dissemination.

The fact that Swahili taarab song texts are often written down before they are sung has been taken by some observers as evidence that taarab is not an aspect of African oral tradition (Khatib 1978). However, this fact is inadequate for making such a strong statement since some taarab composers are also singers and vice versa. In addition, some artistes are known to compose the texts of their songs mentally and are able to even make spontaneous performance of their conceived songs provided they are backed up with the appropriate tune. It is noteworthy that researchers such as Khamis agree that taarab tunes are also, in most cases, not written down as music but are created spontaneously to fit in with the lyrics (Khamis 2001: 145-156). However, whereas it is a fact that not all Swahili taarab songs are written before they are performed, it is also true, contrary to what Khamis (2001) observes that not all Swahili dance songs are spontaneous.

Having made the above observation, one cannot but agree with the view advanced by Obiechina that it is no longer possible to undertake a meaningful criticism of African literature in indigenous or foreign languages without making serious reference to its traditional oral constituents at the levels of composition as well as content (Obiechina 1993:124). This is a necessary step because African literary and oral forms such as the Swahili taarab are becoming increasingly complex through their incorporation of old/new, traditional/modern, oral/written and indigenous /foreign configurations. Therefore, this discussion explores some of these aspects of modern taarab by looking at these factors surrounding the music form through the perspective of this theory of change.

Origins and Spread of Swahili Taarab

There seems to be two opposing theories regarding the origins of Swahili taarab form. One school of thought attributes the beginning of Swahili taarab to the famous Swahili poet, Mohamed Kijumwa (1860-1930) who lived in Lamu in the north coast. According to this view, not only did the poet compose the first Swahili taarab song texts but he also made the first known taarab "*kinanda*" (hand-played traditional key-board). However, this view has not received much support from written sources.

According to the other view, Swahili taarab was directly imported from Egypt by the Zanzibar Sultan named Seyyid Bargash who ruled the island between 1870 and 1888 (See Khatib 1978). According to the latter, Swahili taarab is an exotic art form that was transplanted into the Swahili culture and which to date remains alien to that culture. He is at pains to prove that Swahili taarab does not share much in common with other traditional oral genres. However, Khatib's view of oral literature seems to be too restrictive and contrasts sharply with the all-inclusive definition offered by P'Bitek (1973:15-23). He simply sees oral literature as an expressive activity which uses the spoken word to

communicate some deeply-felt emotion or thought.

It is not clear why Khatib insists that Swahili taarab is markedly different from other forms of oral literature yet taarab uses verbal communication to convey immediate social messages in a social and participatory manner just like other oral forms such as narratives, serenades or dance songs. However, the most important point here is that modern “Swahili taarab has profoundly and variedly enriched itself by responding to musical and poetic patterns, ideas, themes, motifs, imagery ... locally and from Asian, European and Latin American origins through the media” (Khamis 2001:147).

Content or Themes

Traditionally, Swahili taarab like other oral forms, provided a medium for the conveyance of everyday themes concerning matters of ordinary happenings in the society. These issues rotated around personal, domestic and societal matters such as expression of emotions like anger, pleasure, gratitude, admiration, approval or discontent. Secondly, moral values such as diligence, honesty, faithfulness, loyalty, obedience, kindness, dependability and wisdom were and still are, inculcated through this medium much as through other traditional oral forms like proverbs, narratives or legends and myths. Thirdly, taarab was often used to stress religious virtues as taught by Islam, the traditional faith of most Swahili natives. A good example of this usage is the famous taarab song sang by Zuhura in the early 1970s and the Machakos Town Choir, among many others (see King’ei 1992). Perhaps, as noted in the earlier study, songs on love and romance have largely dominated Swahili taarab themes.

However, due to modern influences, in addition to the traditional didactic themes mentioned above, taarab has embraced many other themes of current interest. This shift has come about because of the dictates of the audience, which, as noted above has become more regional and mixed as opposed to the traditional native Swahili society. To exemplify this point, modern taarab now has songs with such themes as gender equity awareness campaign, for example, fight against early and forced marriages traditionally common and accepted in the Swahili and other African communities (see song in Appendix A) Other hitherto unquestioned conservative traditions which are now being openly and forcefully challenged include wife-beating, euphemistically referred to as “gender or domestic violence”, sugar daddies and sugar mummies, early and forced marriages, often of under-aged girls, failure to educate girls and many other similar negative attitudes, values, ideologies and practices (see appendix B).

Swahili Taarab as a Traditional Oral Form

What is oral literature and in what ways can Swahili taarab be said to be an oral form. Generally, the term, “oral literature”, refers to those forms or genres of speech formed through deliberate, distinctive and creative use of language. Such forms may

differ from one language community to another but they commonly include songs, narratives, riddles, proverbs, jokes, poems, sayings and tongue twisters, among other possible forms (Bukenya et. al. 1997:3). The most important defining character here is the orality of the forms, that is, the fact that the forms are communicated mainly or exclusively through utterance. The second property is the figurative or idiomatic nature of the language in which these forms are expressed. In fact, it is this latter characteristic that sets oral forms apart from normal everyday speech.

Swahili taarab is both oral and idiomatic in its word choice since it employs various figures of speech. By using poetry, a traditional oral genre, taarab fuses music with intonation or recitation of carefully and skilfully crafted messages to communicate desired social messages. As pointed out above, this artistic fusion of music and poetry, gives Swahili taarab a unique form and style in which instrumentation is not in any way more important than the text (Beier 1963).

Oracy as a social skill is an important avenue of communication in societies such as the Swahili, which depend primarily on the spoken word for inter-personal as well as social interaction. One can state that the composers and singers of Swahili taarab have distinguished themselves as skilled orators in the sense that they have confidently, artistically and convincingly persuaded their audiences to listen and learn from them thereby influencing them in many aspects. To a large extent, this music form owes its popular appeal to the fact that the society is able to identify itself with its style and content.

Stage Performance

Traditionally, taarab is unique in that it is one of the few Swahili music forms that allows men and women to perform together in public (Robert 1967 and Ntarangwi 1998:3). This is why Impey observes that, "While performance and musical composition (of taarab) remain the creative sphere of men, lyrics have become the expressive domain of women" (Impey 1998:428). However, while it is true that very few women taarab artistes play musical instruments with the exception of small *ngoma* (drums) called *tabla*, bigger ones known as *dumbak* and tambourines (*manyanga*), research reveals that in singing out the composed lyrics, women play a role that is equal to or greater than that of men. In most groups, the lead vocalists are women although the choruses include both sexes.

It must be stressed here that the spectacle of women professional or semi-professional taarab singers performing alongside men on stage is a serious departure from the norms of the Islamic Swahili culture. Shaaban Robert goes into a lot of detail to capture the hostility that greeted the start of Siti's singing career as a pioneer Swahili woman professional music performer. According to Shaaban Robert, this hostility was inspired by the conservative elements in Siti's community who criticised her moral standing and questioned her values as a Swahili Muslim woman. The thrust of the criticism was that

since she was an ugly woman who was illiterate, she could only go to the city and sing alongside men in order to exploit her voice for economic survival. Her critics did not recognise that Siti had a right to earn a honest living as a career musician without compromising her morals. According to leading Mombasa-based Swahili culture crusader, Sheikh Ahmad Nabahany, “the performers know it but they ignore it”. Many prominent women taarab singers share this sentiment and it is another pointer to the growing influence of cultural globalisation, which emphasizes gender equity in all professions including the entertainment industry.

The actual performance of Swahili taarab has been so modernized due to the global influences on the art from over the years that it more or less conforms to the arrangement of any orchestra. Firstly, the traditional instruments described by Shaaban Robert. in *Wasifu wa Siti Binti Saad* (1967:11) included *kinanda* (organ), *ngoma* drums (eg. *Msondo*, *dumbak* and *tari*) the hollow string instrument called *udi* (Arabian lute), *nai* (bamboo flute), *fidla* and *zeze* or (*gambusi*), and a whistle-like instrument (*filimbi*). Due to the globalisation and westernisation of taarab and other African music forms since the 1950's when Siti performed, all these traditional instruments have given way to modern ones used universally today. These include violins, electric guitars, keyboards, sets of trap drums, trumpets, saxophones, accordions, *duf* (tambourines), rattles and timing sticks. There are echo chambers, sound mixers, pool-tapes, speakers, amplifiers, microphones, sound-mixers, microphones and many more electronic gadgets.

What factors can account for this instrumental transformation of the performance of Swahili taarab? First, there is the fact that commercialisation of the industry called for competitiveness in all aspects. Secondly, the ever-growing appeal of the music form to an ever-increasing audience demanded a change in the way the music was delivered on stage. The costumes of the artistes have also undergone change. Women are no longer obliged as in the past to wear the traditional Islam *buibui* dress with a face veil. The trend now is to wear a light veil, if need be and modern long flowing skirts or dresses with high-heeled shoes. Again, whereas traditionally the taarab performers would just sit or stand as they sang and played instruments, they now dance along their music especially the vocalists whose movements are not hampered by carrying or playing of instruments.

Preservation and Dissemination

The fact that Swahili taarab finds markets all over the globe is an indication of the strength of its appeal and aesthetic value, which is appreciated across world cultures. This extensive reach of the music form is also an aspect of its globalisation in the sense that it is aided by availability of modern technology in music production such as digital recording and editing machines, taping, production of discs, and compact cassettes as well as audio videotapes. Filming and broadcasting of taarab materials has revolutionized its advertisement and marketing thereby turning it into a multi-million dollar investment.

As a result, many local and foreign investors are willing to put their resources in the development, promotion, production and marketing of this music form.

Before the advent of modern electronic technology, consumers of taarab and other music forms in East Africa relied wholly on radio broadcasts or the rare occasions of live performances mainly at weddings. Those with the economic means could acquire gramophone records, which were highly fragile and hard to come by. However, as stated above, the production, storage, retrieval and dissemination of taarab and other music forms have become quite easy, more convenient and relatively much cheaper. The commercialisation and recent liberalization of music and other forms of entertainment in East Africa has brought many hitherto unknown players into this field. These include producers, rights-holders, marketers, promoters, archivists, researchers, broadcasters, performers and also the pirates of the music.

The role played by each of these groups affects the industry in one way or the other and represents a global change in the growth and development of the industry. For instance, the introduction of computerized production and storage of music means that with a skilled player of the keyboard only, one artiste can produce a whole CD, LP or audiocassette single-handedly. The digital technology also means that it is quite easy to pirate copyrighted material without being discovered which deals a big blow to the original artiste's intellectual property rights for his or her creation.

Aspects of Form and Style in Swahili Taarab

As noted by many researchers in this field, (Allen 1971; Harries, 1962, Knappert 1972 and 1977, Mulokozi 1982 and 1996, Shariff 1988 and Mazrui and Shariff 1994), the Swahili people have a long history of poetic compositions which dates back to a number of centuries. Indeed, the language, Kiswahili is, poetically speaking, a very productive and expressive tongue. One only needs to explore proverbial and other genres of idiomatic speech to see this fact. Generally, the Swahili divide their written poetry into such sub-categories as the *utenzi* (epic) form which is a long composition with many stanzas of between 10 to 15 syllables, *takhmisa* (5 line per stanza poem), *tathnitha* or two-line per stanza, *tathlitha* and the three-line poem. Perhaps it is the *shairi* or quartet form which is the most common of all Swahili poetic compositions and which is also closely related stylistically to the popular song or *wimbo* form in which most taarab songs are cast.

The *wimbo* form is a three-line poem not very much unlike the *tathlitha* the only difference between the two being that the latter is originally composed to be sung. However, it is important to note that all these traditional oral Swahili forms are often sang or recited and they are all strictly composed in metre measures with rhyming schemes. Swahili taarab songs are dominantly composed in the *wimbo* form although examples do exist of songs in the other short or longer forms discussed above. For instance, the following stanza shows a song in a rhymed and metered 4-line regular (8/8) scheme which is commonly used in the traditional and modern prosodic Swahili poem *shairi*

(quatrain):

Muhibu nakuhusia, ingawa mimi ni wako	(ia	ko)	(a/b)
Ikiwa umesikia, nakwenda kinyume kwako	”	”	”
Nakuomba maridhia, usifanye maudhiko	”	”	”
Wajua hino dunia, wema na waovu wako	”	”	”

(Matano Juma, Mombasa, Kenya)

Translation

My love let me tell you, I am all yours
 Even if you feel I am offending you
 I beseech you, do not take offence
 You know the world is full of the good and the bad

The fact that taarab songs are cast in any other style apart from the traditional three-line *wimbo* may be seen as an aspect of modernization of the music poetry. However, the degree of stylistic innovativeness in modern taarab is quite limited since the form still retains the stanza and chorus style almost with no exception.

Perhaps the most important stylistic change to affect Swahili taarab in the last few years is the infusion of beats and rhythms from music styles borrowed from other cultures. In this connection, one remembers that Swahili taarab in the 1960s and 1970s widely adopted tunes directly from popular Indian films and fitted them with Swahili words to match. This was the first step toward the globalisation of the taarab music style, which went a long way in popularising the form especially among the young and multi-racial urban audiences.

The second and more recent trait of stylistic globalisation of Swahili taarab has been in the fusion of dance style beats or rhythms drawn mainly from American and Latin American sources such as rap and calypso or rumba styles. The two styles have influenced the dance music of the entire East African region and even the content to a great extent since the introduction of guitar and dance hall music in the early 1940's.

The rap style is an extremely popular dance form among the youth and its infusion with the slow traditional beat of Swahili taarab has invigorated the form and given it a lively, forceful and throbbing rhythm. An example of a Swahili taarab song that has successfully adopted the rap beat and fused it skilfully with the traditional slow beat in the same text is the late Malkia Rukia's chart-bursting "Penzi Kwetu" (Appendix E).

However influence on Swahili taarab has not been always a one-way affair. While taarab has benefited from the dance styles of *mipasho* and *rusha roho* in Dar es Salaam and *Bango* in Mombasa, often these other music forms have been so strongly impacted upon by taarab that some artistes have been compelled to imitate taarab tunes and adapt them for dance forms such the popular benga style which closely resembles the now almost universal Congolese *dombolo* style. The best example that comes to mind is the

song entitled *vidonge*, which was originally composed by the Mombasa-based Somali-born queen of taarab known as Asha Malika Mohamed. The song was an instant success as its lyrics and throbbing dance style appealed to the young as well as the old. It enjoyed a lot of airtime on the national radio channels and sold many hundreds of cassette tapes in the local and regional market reflecting its popularity. Its message dwelt on the question of marital fidelity and jealousy. This particular piece was copyrighted and adapted by such prominent Zairean Nairobi-based musicians as Samba Mapangala with Viruga Stars and the late Moreno with Orchestra Moja One.

The changes affecting the style of taarab can also be explored at the level of language use. Whereas most traditional songs in this genre were cast in the Kimvita, Kiamu and Kiunguja dialects, it is evident that a number of taarab groups, from the influence of rap and other modern styles, have embraced phrases and words borrowed directly from emerging social slangs such as “Sheng”. One therefore, finds words and phrases such as these in a number of contemporary Swahili taarab lyric:

- (a) Hata wanawake wanataka “Pajero”. (Even women want to possess Pajeros)
- (b) Jitoe kimasomaso (Come out in the open)
- (c) Wape vidonge vyao (Tell them the bitter truth)
- (d) Mimi ndiye kiboko yao (I am more than their match)
- (e) Kasheshe (Troublesome)
- (f) Kisulisuli (Dizziness)
- (g) Utanichoka (You will have to give up on me; You can't beat me)

The above examples have shown that modern Swahili taarab forms have freely embraced a number of new ways of expression such as code switching and code mixing as well as coinage of new words and phrases in an effort to modernize its discourse. This is a pointer to a kind of linguistic global influence. This influence assumes a multiplicity of media. For instance, taarab titles and phrases have found their way into popular street magazines, *kangas* and other materials (Traole 2001: 125). In addition, new forms of danceable taarab have emerged in Tanzania. This new genre takes the form of what is now named *mipasho* and *rusha roho* which distinguish themselves through use of non-idiomatic language. The dance lyrics bear little resemblance to original or traditional taarab forms. The latest form is what Khamis refers to as *taa-rap* (Khamis 2001:150) which is a mixture of original taarab lyrics with modern rap rhythms and lyrics (see appendixes C and E).

However, many traditional taarab figures of speech such as idioms, metaphors, similes, dialogisms, repetitions (alliteration), use of refrains and rhyme still persist in this form. The style of narrating in the first person singular and the address to an invisible (may be imaginary) person (often an adversary) is still rampant in both traditional and modern taarab. The fact that the two types of taarab are thriving alongside each other is

a healthy sign of development of Swahili oral literature due to its intrinsic capacity to change and adapt. A good example of the tendency of Swahili taarab to enrich itself from other global musical experiences is the invitation to the late singer Malkia Rukia of Mombasa to curtain-raise at the recent show for the visiting American hip-hop rapper Coolio and Lost Boysz groups (Mayoyo 2002:18).

The Aspects of Content

What themes have traditionally occupied the Swahili taarab composer to date? Have these themes changed in any significant way over time, say between the 1950's and 2000? It is the view of this writer that Swahili taarab themes have been dynamic rather than static. According to King'ei (1992) and Ntarangwi (1998), Swahili taarab composers are increasingly becoming sensitive and alive to some contemporary global concerns and they have in the recent times attempted to convey these in the medium of their songs.

Traditionally Swahili taarab was, like other traditional oral forms, concerned only with everyday local happenings such as love and romantic escapades, praises of important dignitaries, moral issues and so forth. However, in the past two decades, many national themes such as politics and socio-economic and cultural issues have found their way into Swahili taarab. To exemplify, song texts in appendixes A and B carry contemporary universal themes of current concern. These two songs centre on gender relationships in which the rampant problems of forced early and under-age marriages and 'sugar daddies' are brought to the fore. These are global issues today, especially in the developing world. Given the trend of globalisation of Swahili taarab themes observed today, one expects to have issues of human rights featuring in the music form in the very near future. The fact that contemporary Swahili taarab composers are younger and more socially conscious is a definite advantage in this trend of globalisation.

Geographical Globalisation

All these changes are an aspect of the global influence on taarab which is now consumed far from its traditional Swahili coastal homeland as noted by Ntarangwi, "Taarab has transcended its local Swahili boundaries to be consumed in other communities including cities in East and Central Africa, as well as in Europe, Asia and North America" (Ntarangwi 1998:150). In addition, one can now distinguish Swahili taarab by its area of origin. Thus, today we can talk of taarab from Zanzibar, Tanga, Mombasa, Lamu, Oman, Dubai, Rwanda, Burundi or the Comoros (Khamis 2001). Why, one may want to ask here, do cultures far removed from Swahili society consume Swahili taarab and continue to be attracted to it? Perhaps, more than anything else, this trend conforms with the contemporary cultural revolution which puts emphasis on consumer-driven lifestyles

as marked by globe-trotting tourism and collection of artefacts, music pieces and other kinds of collections from different world material cultures.

The fact that in the recent years Swahili taarab has spread as far afield as Oman and other Gulf states shows that its globalisation is not a mere socio-cultural, economic and technological influence from the Western world. On the other hand, to some extent, the phenomenal diffusion of Swahili taarab as an aspect of internationalised cultural musical form could be attributed to the cultural force, hospitable and cosmopolitan nature of the Swahili society as well as the intrinsic and versatile characteristics inherent in the taarab form itself. This fact is especially important since other kinds of Swahili dance music with the same degree of urbanization and commercialisation have not spread as fast and as far as taarab.

Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the evolution of Swahili taarab music from its traditional set-up as a typical oral literature genre to its current globalised and commercialised state. The paper has demonstrated that Swahili taarab conforms to the stylistic and thematic character of an authentic African oral form. According to critics of oral literature, (see Ojwang 1998:68) the most salient of these characteristics include: a narrator (equivalent to the singer or vocalist), purpose (occasion), message (theme), method (medium and style), context (preferred meaning) and audience.

By tracing the influences of cross-cultural experiences which have revolutionized and modernized the content and performance of Swahili taarab, the discussion has shown that, like many other traditional African oral forms, it is dynamic and liberal since it has and continues to absorb global influences which have helped transform the music. These global influences have affected Swahili taarab at many levels including the aspects of composition, instrumentation and performance, style, delivery, storage and retrieval, dissemination, marketing and even the geographical distribution of its audience and consumers. This dynamism of Swahili taarab will no doubt enhance its survival, development and competitiveness.

Lastly, there is need to investigate the intertextual influence of Swahili taarab to determine its global nature and impact in the field of written literature in East Africa. This fact is ably demonstrated by Traole (2001) in his article, which explores the use of taarab song texts in the novels by Shaaban Robert, Said Ahmed Mohamed and Ken Walibora. Possibly, taarab has had some influence in shaping the style and content of other genres especially prose and poetry and such a study will help quantify the extent and nature of such influence. Given the prevailing environment of accelerated globalisation of the cultures of the world through information and communication technologies, literary expression, media, travel, tourism, trade and commerce, hitherto traditional art forms like Swahili taarab will continue to be transformed and internationalised at an even quicker pace.

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APPENDIXES

A. *Majaliwa* (Fate) (By East African Melody)

B=Binti and Ba=Baba

Bi: Baba niko na huzuni, kunusu ndoa yangu (Dad, I am saddened by my marriage)

Ba: Na hasa ni kutu gani, cha kukuudhi mwanangu? (My child, what makes you sad?)

Bi: Umri wangu ni duni, sijawaza kuwa kwangu(I am too young, not ready to be married)

Ba: Mbona karata ngeni zachezwa nyumbani kwangu?(Why do I see strange behaviour in my house?)

Bi:Na hasa niko shuleni, sijesha masomo yangu (I am still at school, not completed my studies)

Ba: Utamaliza nyumbani, naahidi mkwe wangu(You will complete at home, I assure you my daughter)

Kipokeo: Ndoa za kulazimishana, kwa kukuza baba yake (Forced marriages just to please a father)

Mtoto asokusoma, kakosa raha yake(An uneducated child is disadvantaged)

Wakikosa kulingana, haidumu ndoa yake(An unequal couple, the union collapses)

Bi: Nimeonewa jamani, kukosa uhuru wangu (I am oppressed, denied my freedom)

Ba: Hayo semea pembeni, sivunje kauli yangu(Keep that to yourself, don't disobey my orders)

Bi: Mtu wa miaka sitini, juwa ni mzee kwangu (A 60 year old man, is too old for me)

Ba: Bali lingine sioni, kulinda heshima yangu (I see no other option to guard my respect)

Bi: Aloandika Manani, halifuti mlimwengu(What God has decreed, no man can change)

Ba: Mwana uliwa kwako nyumbani, taabu kazima kwangu.(My child you'll get your own home and help me solve my problems)

Bi: Mimi kwetu sijahuni, wa kuozwa babau yangu (I have not fled my home to be married off to a man of my father's age)

Ba: Basi ni akina nani, wajao nyumbani kwangu? (Who are these visitors in my house?)

Bi: Watoto toka shuleni, ni wanafunzi wenzangu (School children, my friends)

Ba: Na hayeshi huko kwa nini, hadi barazani kwangu?(Why carry school things right into my house?)

Bi: Mwezi huu mtihani, twakumbushana wenzangu(We have an examination this month, we are revising together)

Ba: Na harusi i njiani, jitayarishe mwanagu.(Your wedding is approaching, be ready my

child)

B. *Suga Dedi* (Sugar Daddy) By Juma Bhalo na Asha Malika. Mombasa, 1985, Cassette)... Dialogue Poetry

Mke: Sikilizeni Mahuluki, (babu) nina maneno tasema (Listen rich, I have something to say)

Wowan: Kuna mzee ashiki, kibogoyo meno hana(There is an old toothless man)
Shikamoo haitaki, (babu) kwa kupenda uvulana(He refuses an old man's greeting, yearning for youth)

Kipokeo: (Chorus) Kwa kupenda ndogondogo, mtu mzima hasidi (Craving for young girls is shameful for an old man)

Wamemfanya kinyago, (babu) maskini suga dedi. (He's become a laughing stock poor old man)

Mume: Waeleze mahuluki, (dada) nami sikukukataza (Tell the old men, am not stopping you)

Man: Ni roho haizeeki, mwenzio najiteteza(The heart never ages, let us not quarrel)
Shikamoo siitaki, (dada) kwa sababu yanikomaza(I do not want an old man's greeting as it makes me feel old)

Mke: Kishuga dedi cha kale (babu) ewe kizere cha Mungu (You old Sugar Daddy, poor God's creature)

Sinipigishe kelele, watekwa na walimwengu (Don't shout at me, the world laughs at you)

Marika zako wa tele (babu) waja fwata nini kwangu?(Your age mates are in plenty, what do you seek from me?)

Mume: Moyo ukiwa wataka, (dada) ni vigumu kuushinda(It is hard to overcome a craving heart)

Nami kwako nimefika, sioni tena pa kwenda(I have come to you, where else do I go?)

Kupenda hakuna rika, (dada) sinikataze kupenda. (Love knows no age, do not discourage me)

Mke: Jitambue u kizere, (babu) uwache mingi mikogo(Accept you are aged and stop showing off)

Wajinyang'anyua bure, pesa nane za mihogo (Praising yourself with twenty five cents gotten from selling cassava)

Naona wachezwa shere, (babu) kwa kupenda ndogondogo(You are being deceived for going after young girls)

Mume: Unganambia mwenzangu, (dada) hapo hujasema jambo(Even though you are talking, you have not made any point)

Na lau napokwa changu, yangenishinda kitambo(If I were being robbed of what is my own, I would have given up a long time ago)

Mwenye kula peni langu, (adad) utamnasa mtambo (Whoever eats my penny

will be electrocuted by my machine)

Mke: Mtu hali kama gogo (babu) kwa wasichana ni kero(A man as dry as a log is a bother to girls)

Pale uonapo zogo, elewa pana kasoro(Wherever you find a quarrel there is something wrong)

Shetani wa ndogondogo, (babu) hufugwa na barobaro.(The spirit of young girls is only exorcised by young men)

Mume: Sotolekeza kishogo (dada) ulimwengu wa kisasa (I will not shun the modern world)

Pale uonapo zogo, elewa pana makosa (Wherever there is quarrelling there are mistakes)

Shetani wa ndogondogo hufugwa na mwenye pesa(The spirit of young girls is exorcised by the rich)

C. *Nimependa Kubaini* (Swahili Taarab/Rap – Love/Romance Song) (I want to know the truth)

Nimependa kubaini, kuwaeleza wenzangu (I want to discover and tell my friends)

Sina nasaha moyoni, hutangika roho yangu(I have no peace and my heart is troubled)

Kuna mwana wa jirani, anikata ini langu(There is a neighbours son who hurts me so much)

Dawa nitafutieni, iwezayo kuniponya.(Get me the medicine to cure me)

Kipokeo: Nampenda kwa yakini (I truly love him)

Silijui la kufanya (I do not know what to do)

Nimependa macho yake, hasa akinitazama (I love his eyes when he looks at me)

Uzuri wa umbo lake, kweli ameumbwa vyema(His figure is so attractive)

Hata pia mwendo wake, hupenda kumtizama(Even his walk I love watching him)

Dawa nitafutieni, iwezayo kuniponya (Get me the effective medicine)

Nudhumi hizi ni zake, nilopenda kuziimba (These songs are for him from me)

Za jamii sifa zake, lizompa muumba (His God-given qualities are many)

Ni za fani sifa zake, si mnene, si mwembamba (His qualities are wonderful, neither big nor slender)

Chorus:

Mimi ninayo si mzaha, wala sambini mipaka(I feel it truly no joke)

Midomo yake chupa, ladha yake imba(His lips are sweet)

Poza ya roho yangu, ni chake kiwiliwili(His body is my heart's rest)

D. *Mimi Balungi Malenga* (Kujigamba Kishairi) (I am Balungi na Master Poet)

Mimi ni Balungi, malenga wajuzi walotimia (I am Balungi the perfect poet)
 Na kama wewe jitenge, mimi si wa kukisia (You keep off, I am not to be joked with)
 Ni lazima ujifunge, iwapo utasogea (You have to be ready before you come near me)

Kipokeo: (Chorus)

Kisha bure ungejigamba, Hapa kwangu hungii (Your pride is in vain, you can't beat me)

Wewe kamba ya mgomba, hata kuni hufungii (You're a banana-leaf rope, you can't even tie fire wood)

Bahari yangu ni kuu, sivulii vudumbwidumbwi (My sea is deep; I do not fish in shallow waters)

Wala sendi kwa miguu, naolea mashuwani (Neither do I walk but sail in a boat)

Wewe ningojea juu, huniwezi baharini (You wait for me on land; you can't beat me at sea)

Ni mjuzi sifunziwi, wa kutweka na kukuwa (I am skilful in loading and unloading; am no novice)

Na kama wewe hujui, kwa hivi sasa chaguwa (If you do not know this just you watch)

Wewe kwangu husituwi, hilo keti ukijuwa (You can not shake me, just know this)

Jama sijihatarishe, ukakatiza umri (Do not endanger yourself or cut short your life)

Usoliweza lipishe, hutokiweza kidari (What beats you, let it pass; you can't beat a big chest)

Bure sijihangaishe, mpanga mambo Kahari. (Do not tire yourself for nothing; God decrees everything)

E: *Penzi Kwetu* : (Our Love) by Malkia Rukia (Taarab/Taarab Mix)

Naona Mwafurahika, na vingi vyenu vicheko (You seem very happy and full of laughter)

Majungu mkiyapika, moto na moshi wa miko (Brewing scandals like mangrove smoke)

Mbona mnajishituka?, Msivunje yenu miiko. (Why are you panicking; do not break taboos)

Kipokeo: (Chorus) Anipenda nampenda, hatuna mabadiliko (We love each other; no change)

Japokuwa mwatuvunda, penzi kwetu bado liko (Despite your machinations, we are still in love)

Twapendana kihakika, kwetu hamna mashiko (We truly love one another; you can not penetrate our relationship)

Mtazidi kufedheheka, kujipa jingi sumbuko (You will continue to be ashamed and be perplexed)

Mbona mnajishituka? Msivunje yenu miiko. (Why are you amazed; do not break taboos)