

(E)Merging of the Old with(in) the New: Continuity of Children's Play Songs and Rhymes in East African Hip Hop Culture

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Abstract

Recording music and disco is not very old in Africa. However, this does not mean that there was an absence of musical performances for public consumption. Hip Hop music, coming from the disco background where the Disc Jockey (DJ) would acknowledge the audience and introduce the singers, was never originally meant to be recorded. The DJs interrupted with rap commentaries to inject immediacy in an otherwise old recording, thus enlivening up the audience. The chorus in Hip Hop songs not only acted as an interlude but was also used by artists to create a specific atmosphere; either for excitement or to charge up the audience's emotions or summarise the theme of the song. This was an intentional move by the artist to induce memorability of the song to his/her audience. Hip-hop has created newer forms of popular music culture within Africa. Hip Hop artists, as new African cultural practitioners, have innovatively harnessed these new forms of technology in a manner that not only serves to retain the old genres of African literature but also blends them more effectively, bringing out new conventions and new genres that are specific to African popular culture. Amongst the new conventions and lending is that which includes African songs, especially, children play songs and verses infused into Hip Hop. Notably, Hip Hop's origin is in its reliance on beats and chorus of well-known /popular songs in the community. This incorporation of the popular beats and chorus are those that also borrow from children's play songs and verses. By doing so, today's Hip-Hop rappers rely and borrow renowned beats and combine with original rap composition sections which thus gives a continuity and merging of the old and the new, an African past with that of the Western/ American new. This paper thus interrogates the role of children play songs and verses as an old genre in African Orality and the contemporary interaction with Hip Hop music, the creativity, the discourses of formations, re-formation and the transformations that goes beyond entertainment, to include the blending of the unfamiliar with the familiar. It also interrogates the insertion of the old to the new as a way of negotiation, re-negotiations and newer forms of instruction in the all manner of African Cultural Practices and Orality.

Key Words: Hip Hop, Children Play Songs and Verses, African Cultural Practices

Problematizing African Orality in the Contemporary World

The future of the regions' traditional oral songs, especially that of children play songs and verses has been studied and analysed to be on the decline, and that the declining state is attributed to modern day schooling and modernity. (Aaron L. Rosenberg 2008; Abu Abarry 1989; Ruth Finnegan 1970). It is for this reason that Taban Lo Liyong insisted in *Popular Culture of East Africa* that the region's traditional oral expressions ought to contend with modern forms and ideas. The space of contestations that tradition has to contend with not only for survival but also in expression, are stifled through the majority of the contemporary audience, be it youth or children, inability and insensitivity of much knowledge of their past and traditional culture(s). Through the modern day schooling system, the difference in recreational and play times activities of video games, movies in Netflix, board games and so on the spaces occupied, the contemporary setting in its entirety is threatening to present a future without a traditional oral expression and those that exists within this space, however, are documented and shelved in books. There is nothing wrong with the preservation of Traditional Oral Literature in either written and/ or any other form of preservation, but, the lived experience of this tradition in its "authentic and live" form is dying if not dead.

It is this bleak and uncertain future that faces African traditional songs, that this paper seeks to analyze the link between children's play songs and verses from East Africa and Hip Hop within the East African region. The papers' aim is to analyse the way the region's Hip Hop expression employs known nursery rhymes, children's play songs and verses to not only create a newer life of the African oral songs but also is incorporated to appropriate contemporary art to function the same way the traditional songs functioned. The argument is that through the infusion of children play songs and verses verses in Hip Hop music genre, then, Hip hop is used as an enhancer for a continuity and a sense of belonging for the audience with their past, present and future, against the contemporary forces that threaten to stifle traditional oral songs.

Assumptions and Biases on Hip Hop

Hip Hop music as a genre in America, East Africa and the rest of the world has been analysed and studied and amongst some scholars, Hip hop has been painted in a negative light. The understanding of Hip Hop as a "ghetto and gutter" genre is analysed by scholars whose solely focus is on the thematic issues raised that touch on sex, partying, drugs, black violence, crime and delinquency and other vices.(Robin D.G Kelley 2000; Tricia Rose 1994; Evan Mwangi 2004). This however is not the only picture of Hip Hop culture, its past, its present neither its future. Amongst Hip Hop aficionados in the both the scholarly and non-scholarly spaces, there is a different image all together, in Hip Hop as a genre as in it exists a culture of artistry, resistance (political, social and economic), history, explorations, inspirations and appropriations amongst others. In the East African Scene, Hip Hop as a music genre has been studied and the similarities between Africa and America as spaces of production and links drawn up.

According to Divinity LaShelle Barkely's study of "Kaya Hip-Hop in Coastal Kenya" she understands there is a difference between "conscious" and "commercialized" Hip Hop and draws up the link of similarities and interweaving between American Hip Hop and Kenyan Hip Hop genres, the Kaya Hip Hop in Mombasa and Ukoo Flani Mau Mau

in Nairobi. Amongst these similarities which she highlights are: the use of urban language; the use of elaborate drum sequences and pulsating rhythms in the song production; the socio-political and social economic issues addressed in the songs and the aesthetic symbolism such as the dress, jewellery, and hairstyles (2007, 24). All the stated above similarities cut across Hip Hop music genre that is always evolving. For instance in the graffiti art, the sites have changed from walls to that of inking skin as a site. Other aspects characteristic of Hip hop as a music genre is DJaying, Break Dancing and MCing or Rapping (Dagbovie 2005). On the manner of dressing, Evan Mwangi notes that the mode of dressing of the East African Hip Hop artists is a copy of their American counterparts to which he calls them costumes, “worn in the performance (are) invoked in the songs and include bling bling (chains), sagging baggy trousers, rings, pendants, and sports shoes (2004, 6). He further states that the performance of Hip Hop music in the East African space in regard to the artists’ costumes has changed from that of their counterparts in America. This change he notes is due to the poverty that many artists face in East Africa, as many of the artists are unemployed youth and come from low income places, thus fall to music as a form of employment

This change in costumes that Mwangi highlights is befitting that which is performed within the children play songs and verses. As the children play and are involved in their games, it is noted that rarely do they involve costumes, be it in school or at home. The clothes that they are wearing outside double up and are transformed to become “costumes” in the act of their performance. Just as the children find it appropriate and can switch their space to a stage and back to a “non staged” space, their clothes from everyday donned clothes to costumes to back again to normal clothes so also are the Hip Hop artists able to change their clothes bought from second-hand-open-air markets which they wear everyday also doubles up to be their costumes and back to everyday clothes (6-7). The result of this performance and ability to switch draws from, and resembles that in children play songs and verses. Huizinga calls this the “differentness” and secrecy of play is most vividly expressed in “dressing up.” He continues to explain that, “the disguised or “masked” individual plays another part, another being. HE is another being. The terrors of childhood, open _ hearted gaiety, mystic fantasy and sacred awe are all inextricably entangled ...” (1980, 13). This thus accentuates a connection of the ordinary life and that of the children and musicians as not being too serious, at the same time immersing them within a space and time of intensity and utter formation of social grouping with their audience who do not assume to wear disguises or costumes. However, this should be noted that it is not a template or one that cuts across all Hip Hop artists for instance CMB Prezzo, Jaguar, Khaligraph Jones and so on. Some still like the hype and glamour like their Western counterparts portray and are befitting for them and are appropriately utilised by them to show how successful they are, the “we made it” mentality.

Even though we have looked at the similarities that stand out in American and East African Hip Hop, new emerging similarities that cuts across Hip Hop and African traditional music and songs is the use of drumming. Jeff Greenwald analysis of “Hip Hop Drumming: The Rhyme May Define, but the Groove Makes You Move” says that drums like in the African context serve an important role that they not only are used to establish the groove and emphasize on vocal style, but also act as a cultural signifier. Incorporating various drumming sounds and styles into hip hop add breadth and variety

beyond the lyrical content. The drum in Hip Hop defines the music as much as any other element, musical or extra musical (2002, 270).

Children Play Songs and Verses and East African Hip Hop

Over the recent period of years beginning with the start of the millennium, there has been an increased adaptation and change of the Hip Hop genre within the East Africa setting. The commercialisation of Hip Hop in America seemed to have trickled down and has had its effect on the East African setting, with television shows like Channel O in the early 2000's. Additionally, the wave of socially - conscious rappers like Ukoo Flani in Mombasa, Mashifta, Ukoo Flani- Mau Mau, Wenyaji in Nairobi Kenya was ridden out by a much publicized and consumer based needs which saw the new emerging Hip Hop styles of *genge*, *kapuka* and *boomba* with their own recording labels. The change in the thematic social concerns that touched on issues like drugs, alcohol abuse, political protestations, murder and extra judicial killings, prostitution and exploitation of women and so on was quickly and loudly replaced with party songs, sex and alcohol songs played in the local radio stations, public transport vehicles and in clubs. This commercialisation was not just in Kenya alone but also in Tanzania with the much acclaimed singer Mr Nice with his TAKEU style (a style comprising Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda audience).

Much has been written about this changes, however, a gap exists in the analysis of these emerging much hyped and commercialized Hip Hop songs within the East African context other than being identifiable with delinquency, partying, masculinity tendency and overlook the artistic, language prowess and the projection of urban life as it is and the "aspirations and dreams of the Artists" in a setting that is limiting them, the ghetto and the gutter. This, however, does not mean that the emerging genres spell the ghetto life alone, but artists like CMB Prezzo with his record label CMB Brothers show the other side of life, the affluent one. The changing scenes of conscious rap to that of socially commercialized is not the only change that happened in the Hip Hop world.

Mr Nice from Tanzania with his infusion of TAKEU style into Hip Hop utilised the mix and merge of nursery play songs and verses not only in the dancing style but also the composition of his songs. The mixing is part of Hip Hop traditions in which the Deejay plays and mixes two songs to introduce a new version of the old song and to hype the crowd. The artist double up as Deejays even though they do not flip the disc jockey as DJs but rather they interweave and intertextualize different genres to bring about a new sound of Hip Hop.

What are Children Play Songs and Verses and its role in Children and Hip Hop?

To understand what children's songs and verses are, we need to understand the definition of who a child is, which has proven to be difficult. Different sections of the constitution that deal with children define a child differently. The Children's Act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age. According to the Labour statutes, the Department of Children Services under the Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Development laws and arms of government that deal with children. They uniformly draw their definition from the Kenyan Constitution, whereby age is one of major cutting across parameters used to define who a child is. For instance a child under the Provisions of Employment Act is one who is under 16 years. Controversially

in the Industrial Training Act it allows for minors under age 15 to work as apprentices in an industrial undertaking without setting a minimum age (Africapay.Org, 2019). This conflicting definition of who a child is in terms of age(s), even within the same constitution in different contexts, makes us refer to Finnegan's understanding as that which falls to the role they assume and their contextualisation and socialisation of the world they exist in.

Ciarunji Chesaina in an inaugural lecture at the University of Nairobi on "The role and Significance of Oral Literature in Social and Psychological Development of Children" says that it is prudent to understand the position of children within the society, as not just "the future members and leaders but also ensure the fecundity and continuity of every society" (2007, 2). She observes the diversity of definition that covers who a child is and says that all scholars in various disciplines agree that a child is one who is a young human being or anyone who is not yet an adult. This antonymic definition is restricting due to the unclear definition in terms of who a child is. She nevertheless continues to clarify further that childhood is that period between infancy and maturity or/ and puberty with age and physical maturation as part of attributes used by other scholars to measure who a child is or who an adult is (3).

From the above understanding, Chesaina and I, are in agreement and find fault in the definitions and understanding of who a child is, when analysed from the above parameters. This is because physical attributes and age as maturity against psychosocial developments in children and even adults varies. It thus is prudent to come to a conclusion just as Ruth Finnegan did understand that in the African context a child is thus subjected to be defined and understood but not entirely dependent on the society's age structure, the assignments of tasks, role and behaviour expected of them (1970, 305). It is thereby in this aspect of contestations of societies, if we are to look at children in terms of their development stages that we can analyse and understand their existence and belonging into the grown up world, one which is assumed to be complex and scary. Additionally, we will attempt to analyse the role of the children play songs and verses, an assumed genre of songs specifically positioned for children and its infusion into this complex grown up world of Hip Hop.

Children play songs and verses can be understood from Johan H. Huizinga's perspective and analysis as that "requires the interplay of text, music and dramatization with the playground as the stage." His recommendation of what children play songs and verses is through the characterisation elements observable in the genre as that which there is a presence of children and their ability to perform; there is space enough to accommodate them be it in a ring, circle or line; the availability of light to aid in the visibility of the children's performance (artificial or natural) and theatrical props which the children are wearing for disguise (10). However, it should be noted that not all of Huizinga's elements must exist for there to be children's play songs and verse performance. usually children play in the clothes that they wore and do not assume of imagine them to be props or costumes, like had been observable by Mwangi (2004) that Hip Hop artists wear clothes and assume them to be their "costumes."

The importance of children play songs and verses and its impact on the moral, social, physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing of children, its decline and recommendations for its survival, have not only been studied by many scholars from

across the globe but also documented in many papers and books. They have not only tried to offer recommendations but also solutions for the survival and futures of African Orality and additionally children play songs and verses for its infusion into the modern system of education, right from nursery school all the way to tertiary institutions. Some have recommended for the collection, analysis and preservation and more informed research and studies to be carried out to inform policy makers and education authorities to gearing towards effective implementation in the education of children and adults alike (Aaron L . Rosenberg 2008; Abu Abarry 1989, Ruth Finnegan 1970; Chesaina Ciarunji 2007).

Children Play Songs and Verses Contesting for Space within East African Hip Hop

With the analysis that modernity is posing challenges and a bleak future to African Orality, majority of the people are losing not only their native tongue but also their cultures. This is through the adoption of foreign and the coloniser's language, biases and erratic assumptions and conclusion of African Orality which labels it as "primitive, early and archaic", the changes in socialization, schooling and so on, have taken a toll on the ability of African Orality to continually flourish and survive. However, the same conditions that are stifling its growth has opened newer avenues and spaces of research in Orality reiterating what Taban Lo Liyong insistence in *Popular Culture of East Africa* that the region's traditional oral expressions ought to contend with modern forms and ideas, and not just contend but rather find a space to exist and coexist or appropriate the modern space as much as it can to adapt and survive like a floor growing from a hard rock or the concrete pavement.

Children play songs and verses have been adopted into nursery schools and teaching institutions whereby even though it was performed majorly by and for children, a different trend is taking place in the contemporary world. Not only have the performers and audience changed from children to include adult teachers and Hip Hop artists, but it has also evolved to include "closed" spaces of performance within the internet, closed and confined spaces of the classroom, from the spaces of the rural areas to (exclusive and inclusive) urban spaces, in its modality from that of play to an economic venture and so on.

Hip Hop as an American music genre transverses not just physical national boundaries but also, goes beyond those spaces of time and immaterial spaces of histories. Its development like that of the wading waves of the oceans are constantly moving forward and drawing back to the land it was born. Its' history is drawn from interconnections and interweaving of not just the African Americans history but also that of the Africans. From the Orality nature of African songs and drumming, to the history of slavery songs and experiences sung in spirituals, the longing and lose spoken in the Blues, Soul and Jazz to the experimentation of Rhythm and Blues (RnB) to Hip Hop/ Rap to a continuity and revisiting of the circle back to the infusion of African music with Hip Hop. For this reason, Tricia Rose states that the role that the rappers play in black community is in a striking manner, similar to that of the black historian. She says,

"Rap music is a black cultural expression that prioritizes black voices from the margins of urban America. Rap music is a form of rhymed storytelling

accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based music. . . . From the outset, rap music has articulated the pleasures and problems of black urban life in contemporary America (and Africa) Rappers speak with the voice of personal experience, taking on the identity of the observer or narrator.... Rappers tell long, involved, and sometimes abstract stories with catchy and memorable phrases and beats that lend themselves to black sound bite packaging, storing critical fragments in fast-paced electrified rhythms. Rap tales are told in elaborate and ever-changing black slang and refer to black cultural figures and rituals, mainstream film, video and television characters, AND LITTLE-KNOWN black heroes” (1994, 2-3).(emphasis is mine)

With the retelling and recounting of little known history, we can look at it from the aspect of not so famous black heroes or we would like to understand for the sake of relationship the little known black heroes being the child with their imaginations and life that are considered little by adults. This interweaving and intersectional ties between Hip Hop and Children play songs and verses as emerging and continuities in music and histories, we shall look at the performance, language, the function and roles the music, artist play to their audience and the future of Orality in East Africa. To thus achieve this, we shall sample a few songs by Kenyan artists, one Tanzanian artist. My bias for choosing these two countries is due to the fact of my limited understanding of Luganda, a language prominently used in most Ugandan songs. From Kenya, the Hip Hop scene that has produced “Genge” and “Kapuka”, we will analyse the following artists and their songs, Madtraxx featuring Redrepublik- “Skamaress”. Rhaptaz ft Jimw@t- Paulina, and from Tanzania, Mr Nice with his new Hip Hop style of TAKEU – “Kidali po” and “Sasambua”.

The role of songs in both the African context and the African American context cannot be overemphasized, as a form long tradition of expression for every occasion; from birth, to death, from labour to play and entertainment, from initiation to marriage, from religious liturgies to secular setting, from the expression of public affairs of politics to those private love affairs, songs have and are continually used as a voice and agency of the complex situations, aspirations, dreams, and experiences lived either individually or collectively as a community. As art, the dual functioning of oral literature is most appropriate in songs to the community. The didactic function of inculcating morals and the other, entertaining aspect are both applicable in both Hip hop and Children’s play songs and verse. Not only are these roles resounded, but their function is equally to resonating in these two genres.

The fusion of Hip Hop and Children play songs and verses in Madtraxx featuring RedRepublic’s song “Skamaress” creates and blends of the past and the present. This fusion is expressive of the past experiences within the present and contemporary time. The music begins with kids in the parking lot and at a near- distant an old man holding a guitar and two other men playing draught. The “naturalized” and staged performance of the children who are immersed in their own play games depicts the willingness of the children to be double performers. This double entity performance is that one, in which children are willingly playing their own games from afar and also their willingness to be filmed in a staged performance. The grey- brown coloration of the screen in which we view the performance captures the essence of the past in which we as the viewer’s

remember as back in the days. It is this essence of back in the days also captured in Hip Hop by the artists. Dagbovie calls this the central point of Hip Hop artists, the phenomenon of “back in the day” in which they recount their personal histories of resilience, which mirrors the overall theme of perseverance (302). To us the viewers, not only is this back in the day moment but additionally draws us to the back in our days, thus an active memory recollection of not just the artist but us the viewers. It is for this reason that Dagbovie pinpoints and calls for the need for “inquiries into Hip Hop as representing a generation deserving to be elaborated upon (302).

The infusion of the two Hip Hop and Children play song in “Skamaress” takes us to the “abandonment of positive cultural values held by our parents, elders and ancestors” the past and the new contemporary values that Bakari Kitwana sees lost at the “expense of achieving wealth by any means necessary, as more important, hence the obsession with the materialistic and consumer trapping of financial success” (c.f. Dagbovie 303). In this insistence Kitwana understands Hip Hop as “a lot of things, the post soul generation, the post-civil rights generation, the post-industrial generation and even “soul babies” (303). Hip Hop in Kenya can also be said to be a lot of things too, it is a post soul generation, “Zilizopendwa, Benga and Twist” age, it is a Post-Moi and Multiparty civil rights generation. We the audience/viewers together with the old man looking at the kids and the catchy tune of the guitar, which can be from Soul, Benga, Zilizopendwa or Lingala, we are taken back to the space of our past memories of our childhood and the music that we used to listen to. The positive memories of our African cultural values, rhythm and life are thus brought to the fore when this tune is heard trans-positioning us in the past and present time and space moments. The performance and play pause by the children playing their games can be interpreted to be one that stuns the new hip hop generations and (post babies) to a past and history they know nothing about or have heard, or could be a recollection of the past by those who lived it, the adults, who later as the children congregate to form a circle and dance to the tune and child play song “Skamaress” to which is also the chorus of the song.

Chorus (Madtraxx) Skamaress
 skamaree skamaress, skamaress x 4
 Na mamanzi wa Nairobi
 wanapenda kujiringa
 wanapenda kujiringa
 na wakishika floor bado wadunda
 wanadundadunda, kadundadunda, kadundadunda kaduu. X 2

The chorus of the song not only incorporates the traditional children play song and verse, but also, touches and incorporates newness by including the contemporary space of the city, Nairobi. The artist uses the element of Hip Hop by introducing himself thus doubling up as an MC, saying where he is from, Muranga; his ethnic identity, that of Kikuyu, thus offering a different insight of what Mwangi calls “the grappling with their sense of self” (2004, 7). Even though this might be true, we cannot fall into the trap of unifying grappling experiences with the splitting of identities to coalesce a whole entire generation of Hip Hop artists. Evan Mwangi states the following that in East Africa,

Hip-Hop does not have a mainstream language because no single language can be spoken by the whole population....Swahili is spoken in Tanzania but in Kenya

and Uganda it is the language of the army, police and other authoritarian forces. In the three countries, English is spoken by the educated elites.... hip-hop artists mix different languages, liberating the music from the monolingualism of earlier forms to express tolerance and desire for diversity.... Those who have a mastery of single languages are aware of the status of their audiences who would prefer the mix of tongues. In fact, there are moments the artists seem to be going out of their way to speak any single language badly (10).

His analysis of English language not only in the Hip Hop tradition but in East Africa scene is informative when he points out that it is viewed and used as an elitist language. However, in a bit of a hasty and overly generalized outlook of the region and in Hip Hop, his understanding of the use of Kiswahili as a language is incorrect. His insistence that besides Tanzania where Kiswahili is a national language, he forgets that in Kenya too, Kiswahili is part of the national language and is not the language of the army, police and other authoritarian forces but maybe one which is adopted in Uganda. Far from it, most Hip Hop artists in Kenya and other genre musicians rely heavily on Kiswahili and/or Sheng or their native language that they are well accustomed with.

Madtraxx uses and appropriates language by interweaving English, Kiswahili, Sheng, Gikuyu and a douse of Congolese words like Ndombolo, not only to create an ambiance of a metropolitan culture but also that which transcends physical boundaries in the hope to reach a wider audience, not just through the invocation of childhood memories alone, but, also through language.

This appropriation of different languages can be understood as partly a resistance to the hegemony of the Western culture and language to creations of newer identities in its return to Africa, both as a space for language appropriation and a site for language creativity and the merging of histories, the past and the future. A sense of African Nationalism is invoked through the mentioning of states like Nigeria, Guinea, Angola, Zambia, Bongo (Tanzania), Uganda but one which sounds fictional and trivial so is understood in this African Nationalism to be a performance and an exploitation of the nations, to create its own popularity (Mwangi 9). By thus infusing the children play songs and verses and verses into the Hip Hop or the other way around, the past is projected into the present and in this instance, the African play songs and verses for children revitalises our sense of the past to the present giving a fair chance of the survival within the contestations with contemporary times and futures. However, like other highly commercialised rap and Hip Hop generations and artists, women objectification comes across in the song and the past (values and cultures), which were can assume and understand through the old man by virtue of age, seems lost and perturbed when in contact with modernity. Even though the song has ended, the old man enters through a door looks at the new scene of the house, an imagery of the fashionable aspects of commercialized Hip Hop and turns back to leave, making us assume many questions without answers.

Music especially Hip Hop is viewed by Manning Marable as a matrix for the empowerment of blacks (2002, 269-270). Oral literature functions the same way in creating environments that are conducive, not only in playing the dictatic role but also empowers through the aspect of entertaining. Through Orality, griots recalled the long histories of a person infused within the history of a people. Cheryl Keyes has

highlighted the relationship between emcees and griots, oral historians from bardic West African traditions suggesting that modern rappers were influenced by their African oral history predecessors (2002, 18-19). Both the griots and the rappers were and can respectively reach far back into the moments of the past and refract them into the present moments to be remembered by those present. This however was no easy fete as memorisation and facts recalling was a key issue used and heavily employed. From the moment a child is born, communication is singing is key according to Chesaina, where not through singing does the community mark the sex of the child, throughout the development of the child, it helps exercise not just the body but also the mind. In her articulation, she notes that oral literature helps the child cognitively by harnessing a child's whereby it helps the child call to mind situations they have experienced, and those not yet. This thus enable them to learn relationship between the form of the world they live in simultaneously carve for themselves a place within the social and geographical environment they exist in. Through Marable's understanding of the role Hip Hop plays on blacks and Chesaina's understanding of the power and the role Oral Literature plays in the psycho-social development of the children (and the adults), the infusion of the two, Hip Hop and Children play songs and verses thus correlatively enforce their roles double fold.

Within the coastal area of the East African region, a child play song and verse exists known as "Ukuti wa mnazi" in which the children congregate in a circle holding hands, and the leader calls and sings, while the rest of the children responds. It goes as follows:

The leader calling: Ukuti ukuti

Respondents (as rest of the children): Wa mnazi wa mnazi

The leader: ukija upepo

Rest of the children: watetetetema (or all) Watetetetetemekaaa (fall down)

Not only does this song account for the childish and innocence of children, but it is prudent to note that it creates a bond of together and friendship, bonds taught to last much later into adulthood life. The playfulness, freedom and abandonment of the children also accentuate a communal living and responsibility that exists within the community. The children thus can understand their natural environment, the palm tree, which is an important tree and has numerous uses within the coastal community. Children who are not versed with the palm tree additionally may invoke trees known to them or the palm tree.

Mr Nice (Lucas Mkenda) with his TAKEU style as we had earlier understood to stand for the countries acronyms of the East African community which was Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda and as his Hip Hop style which transcends beyond the political boundaries of the three nation states, This is what is perceived and can be termed as a "deep horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1983, 7). Incorporating the same children's play song and verse in his song "Sasambua" goes as follows,

(Chorus)

Aburichichichi

Ukuti ukuti ukuti ukuti ukuti ukutiiii

wa mnazi (merebalabu mzee wa TOT mama Queeny V)X2

Ukija upepo watetema

Ukija upepo watetema
 Ukija upepo watetema maaah maaah maimaaa aaah
 mwenzetu kagongwaaaa
 na nini? Na niniiii?
 Na gari na gari
 Haya tumpeleke hospitalini asije kupigwa na baba yake
 Yenzaa yenzaa yenzaaaaa....

Sasambua is a Kiswahili word which means: one, to carefully take out gifts packaged in a brides case; second, the act of undressing clothing piece by piece, one after another and lastly, the act of verbally abusing someone in a public space. It should be noted afore hand that all these meanings are also sediment to the meaning and performance of the song, except, the unwrapping of gifts. Sasambua, additionally, through the performance of the song could mean the gyration of the woman. The hyper sexualized performance and dance in the song is almost like that of the children, whereby, in the children play song, the children's answer in the last verse of the song, they throw themselves down. This similarity in the performance of innocent abandonment of children and gyration in the song creates a new perspective of performance and performers from that of a childhood world to a metaphoric adult world. TAKEU style not only incorporates an East African audience but also its production is a mix of the Hip Hop genre from the way Mr Nice is dressed, baggy jeans, chains and sunglasses and the female dancers who are skimpily dressed; with borrowing of African jazz sounds and drums.

Mr Nice not only incorporates children play songs and verses but also utilizes the short form oral genres like, proverbs and wise sayings. For instance he says:

“wamoja wamoja hawaezi kuwa wakumi;
 “Mla leo mla leo , mla jana kala nini?”

He also goes further to the point of deconstructing proverbs and counters them with what Remi Raji calls it the post proverbial form. He says, “Mtaka cha mvunguni asiinue kitanda.” deconstructing the strict form of the proverb which is “Mtaka cha mvunguni sharti ainame.”

Hip Hop's perception as a western musical genre and the incorporation of language and the African Orality forms we can analyse a rise of not just a bending of cultures with offers a position of dialogue and interweaving but also a continuity of Orality on Africa. This continuity thus acts as an empowering factor to the experience of Africans and their culture in the face of changing times of Contemporariness, modernity and industrialisation. Through this continuity, we can thus analyse the matrix of changing mediums of Orality and their performance as reinforced to suit newer challenges that face the old forms of Orality. By incorporating and emerging different songs from different historical times and with different performance (Hip Hop and Children songs and verse) and also other oral short forms the contesting environment for African forms within Africa not only find a newer space within the modern African space but also additionally brings a different perspective of understanding Hip Hop from the setting of African American to African- American- African.

From our analysis, Children play songs and verses are innocent and are filled with childhood abandonment and freedom, this innocence is at time a conducive environment for budding intimate relations later in life between the opposite sexes. We can thus call this the first socialisation space of future marriages. Abu Abarry sees children songs as an innocent simple space for budding flirtatious relationships in which he notes that when in the isolation, children themselves have activities, songs and rhymes of their own, which is performed with interests and orientations categorically different from those of the adults in the society(4). On the hand, he notes and continues to state that despite the difference in orientation and interests those of adults, children games between boys and girls, creates an emotional situation that provokes innocent flirtation, an opportunity for good natured teasing and funny gyrations and improvisations (208-209).

Such a continuity of role playing between innocent flirtations in children play song has been infused into a serious and adult world perceivable through Hip Hop. This can be seen for instance, in Rhaptaz featuring Jimw@t song – “Paulina” and Mr Nice’s “Kidali Po”. In Rhaptaz featuring Jimw@t – “Paulina” is a song sung to a woman with the same name as the title of the song. The rappers talk about the beauty of the lady, how she walks, talks, smiles and how much he loves her. He flirts with her by telling her she should choose him as he is the best option because other men would use her sexually and leave her, but nothing as he would cherish her. These flirtations are also part of an invitation of the lady to dance with him “come kwenye floor tuziende” (verse 1, line 18). The words and the rhythm of the chorus of the song Paulina is the same as that sung and performed in nursery school or during play time at home by children.

Paulina Paulina Paulina
 hebu cheza kwa maringo tukuone
 say bam chiki cha, chiki cha, chiki cha
 hebu cheza kwa maringo tukuone
 say Paulina Paulina Paulina
 hebu cheza kwa maringo tukuone
 say bam chiki cha, chiki cha, chiki cha
 hebu cheza kwa maringo tukuone.
 (Rhaptaz ft. Jimwat, “Paulina”)

Mr Nice “Kidali Po” is a song also about love and how a lover cannot wait for the night to end so that they can meet again and be together. The longing of the lover is accentuated and heightened through the dream motif and metaphor. The lover dreams that his partner is standing in front of him and uses metaphor and euphemism to pass a message of sexual desire.

jana nilipolala niliota ndoto eti
 kasimama kasimama kasimamaaaa dee dee (yelaaaa) x 3
 kasimama pekee yake mbele ya mchumba
 mpe mkate wake iwe zawadi yake
 kasimama pekee yake mbele ya mchumba
 mpe mkate wake iwe ni zawadi yake.

Unlike the chorus in “Paulina” which is word for word of the children plays song, “Kidali Po” uses a repetitive rhythm of the verse “Kalale nacho, tutaonana kesho” (sleep with it, we shall meet tomorrow), which is a coastal Swahili children verse played by children when the darkness is approaching and it is time to go home and end the games. Ironically, Mr Nice uses the song to signals an aspect of play and continuity in the courting process. The continuity of play where the children chase one another hoping if one is tapped (caught), then, they have to give chase till they caught somebody or they will continue the same game the following day. This game continues until it is dark to play or the children are called by their parents signalling the end of play to be continued the following day.

The innocence of children’s play songs and verses as a site for budding flirtations is understood through the practise of morality infused to them. Their understanding of relations is that affairs of love exist only to the adults and this is taught through the social, religious, moral conduct dictated by them by their parents and the collective society. Through euphemisms, metaphors, similes, proverbs, Mr Nice can mask the sexual message to children. Even when the children sing along to his lyrics, the innocence of the message to the children is still maintained. However, that is not the case in Rhaptaz and Jimw@t’s song “Paulina.” Even with the use of sheng which unless one is versed to understand the meaning of the words used, the sexual message at times is plain, and can be understood by the children. For instance, “...nikipate nyumbani na hata kitandani, kitandani.” To any discerning child, the disconnection of the message put across in the chorus and the messages passed in the verses are plain and clear easily understandable to them.

Conclusion

The futures of Orality in Africa within the contemporary society and modern space can be said thus involves a contestation for survival, appropriation, evolutions and preservations. All these elements are involved through the collaborative intersectional of Hip Hop shared with and by children play songs and verses. Hip Hop though viewed as a “foreign” and heavily Americanized genre thus “modern” in terms of its age when compared with African Orality has led to the immense creativity and dynamicity in African Traditional Songs, especially, that of children play songs and verses through the interweaving and interconnections of both genres. The vigour, ability to learn, flexibility in play and nimbleness in creation and entertaining aspect characteristic of child’s plays and songs, thus additionally, have infused a new rhythm into Hip Hop On African soil, enabling it to also partake in the telling of the experiences within the space and time of Africa.

The similarities in function of Hip Hop and children’s play songs and verses captured through its orality, rhythm and paralinguistic elements like clapping and the beat is useful in the enjoyment; socialization, didactic, historicizing of not just the performers experiences but also creation of a collective consciousness and community. Through the infusion and interweaving of the two (Hip Hop and Children play songs and verses) new meaning are arrived at, new spaces created and additionally an dialogue between American experience and the African experiences and sound of what was once a fading art is revitalized and assured on a future.

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