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Document: Kalewa songs from Baleni Village

File reference: SW/PC/I3005

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Kalewa songs from Baleni Village, 1966

I spent 3 months living in Baleni village from later 1966 to early 1967. The songs here, mostly women's impromptu kalewa songs, were not tape-recorded but written into my notebooks (NB), together with a literal translation of each followed by its 'inside' meaning. The dominant theme is flagged up in bold

Wedding 24/11/66, NB21:126. Kalewa songs

Fundi yule, kaomba sidiria, ne neno limeingia

The expert wanted a bra, and the word got out

Meaning: A man wanted a woman and everyone heard about it- **male desire**

Jamaa kafanya kazi yake, anataka kwenda zake

This relative is doing her work and she wants to go home

Meaning: This referred to me because I wouldn't dance and was in a hurry to leave

Sitaki dada ufanye kilele, kilemba changu mwenyewe

I don't want you to make a fuss, older sister, this turban is mine

Co-wife don't make a fuss the husband is mine – **polygyny, jealousy**

Mimi sijapiga kilemba, na miye sijaenda

I have yet put on a turban and I haven't been there

I haven't had that man (yet)

Hakuna mchezo wa kipole, bado shingo na mkono

There is no slow game/dance, only neck and arm

In love-making there is nothing slow **pleasure of sex**

Watoto wa mashehe wamepinda gari, madereva mbalimbali

The children of the sheikhs have measured the vehicles, the drivers are far away

Formerly the daughters of sheikhs were not prostitutes, now they are the first

Kama unavyoona kwa magomvi na kilele, sitaka kusema naye

As you can see from the quarrelling and shouting, I don't want to speak to her (i.e.

the woman who took her husband) **quarrel over husband**

Na mgeni katusaidia, na neno limeingia

And a stranger helped us and word got out

Na mgeni katuweka baraza, buku lake kalijaza

The stranger (me) put us on the verandah and filled her notebook

NB22:64.Kalewa

Itoka barua Nduruni, ifike Kipandeni, Baleni kaja mgeni

A letter came from Nduruni (Utende), it reached Kipandeni, that a stranger had come to Baleni.

(The stranger is probably a government official who had formerly worked in Utende and been posted to Baleni)

Kafika mgeni mbona, nafuu yetu sote

If a stranger has come, it is for the advantage of all of us

(The reply of the wife to the song above)

Ameweka nadhiri, akinao karani, nitachinja ng'ombe pangani

She made a vow that if she got the government official, she would slaughter a cow at the spirit shrine.

Bt. Ali wanted to marry Ngweshani **getting a man through spirit** (another reply to the first song)

Malimu Silima kajitia kinuni, na yeye si mtwanzi

Teacher Silima has put himself at the pestle, but he is no pounder

Silima was a party official said to chase women but he is impotent. **Jibe at politician**

Malim Silima kajitia mtaani, la ajabu neno gani?

Teacher Silima has put himself into the town (quarter), what is surprising about that?

He is a notorious fornicator – **jibe at politician**

Utamshangalia na kupambie sanduku, lakini bure unajisumbua

You might rejoice and decorate the trousseau box for him or her, but you are putting yourself out for nothing

This means either that the man can't do it, or the woman doesn't want to (**lack of desire or impotence**)

Hawi mtu ila aende ukindu, kakushinda, nirudishie mwenyewe

She is not a human being unless she goes to cut raffia, he has beaten (defeated) you, I will get you to return (to your natal home) myself

The mother of a neglected wife complains about her son in law's neglect of her daughter who has to make her own living by cutting raffia. (**husband's failure to support wife**)

Mume anaposa, karibu ataoa, anachoka kulala chini

The husband is betrothed, soon he will marry again. He is tired of sleeping on the floor.

The sister of the above husband claims that his wife constantly refuses him sex (**refusal of sex to husband**)

Nakwenda hospitali, kila saa kumi namena aspro, kukilimbia kongoro

I go to the hospital, I eat aspro every 4 o'clock, to run away from the penis

The wife says she is **not well enough to have sex**

Shuka yao ukuju, mbovu kofia pakacha, miye atanipe nini?

If his cloth is worn out, and his hat is like a basket, what will he give to me?

If the husband dresses like this, what hope is there that he will ever give her (neglected wife) anything? **Husband's failure to support wife**

Nilisikia harufu, nadhani kafa panya, kumbe mbeleko wa mtoto

I smelled something, I thought a rat had died, but it was a child's carrying cloth

The singer is disgusted by the smell of someone looking after a young child and not washing the cloth in which she carries it

(can also mean that her husband didn't give her money to buy soap)

Utasema utamwambia na wenzio, taksi inakwenda mbio

You will say that you will tell you friends, the taxi goes quickly

(Bt. Ali wanted to sing this in reply to the song above 'ameweka nadhiri'. The 'taxi' is her husband now)

Nalia miye, napita nikijiranda, lakini Peugeot nitapanda

I am crying, I pass by dancing in a showy way, but I will get into that Peugeot
The new government official is supposed to sing this song about a woman he hasn't yet had but intends to

Nalia na wana waya, pesa za ukindu, hazina si wetu, wenyewe nakwenda uchawa
I am crying for those who have earthen pots, (but) money from raffia, the treasury is not ours and I go naked (i.e poverty stricken)
A man in Banja took people's mats, pots and ukindu to sell but gave the owners no money) **embezzlement of money**

NB22: 114 Kalewa

Kutwa leo gari limeharibika, turn boy kashuka, kamwita mekanika, dereva kisha mshinda

The whole day today the vehicle was broken down, the turn boy got down to call the mechanic because the driver couldn't fix it

Nasema kaniweka hasara, mpaka kesho karibuni, wallahi nakuwapa amini, mume sinayo mimi

I say that he has caused me loss, until tomorrow in the grave, by God I swear that I do not have your husband

(A woman sings this to a jealous wife) **(denial of adultery)**

Kalewa of jando 20/1/67. NB22:140

Hogo la N. nilidhanja kigoma, hivi imenitia homa

I thought that N's penis was just (like) a little cassava plant, but it has caused me fever (i.e. his penis was too big and it hurt her)

(N was a senior government official who arrived from the mainland with his wife and children but later married a local young girl after previously preaching against polygyny) **(jibe at politician)**

Alisema anahongwa noti, mbona anapenda shilingi?

She said she could only be seduced by notes, so why does she like shillings?

(She claims that she only gives her favours for paper money but in fact accepts coins) **(selling sex for little)**

Ningalistuka, nipunguzia kidogo, ningali mwana mdogo

I would have been surprised, make it smaller for me a little, I am still young – **a big penis**

Could be another reference to the marriage of the senior government official N

Kaja huyu aseypiga mswaki, kwa uwongo umepasi

That one came without even cleaning her teeth to spread her lies – **a gossip**

Bwana Nyerere katuletea barua wenyewe kasha tambua

Nyerere has brought us a letter, we ourselves have already recognised it

President Nyerere visit Mafia in early 1966. **Nyerere**

Nifue nivai nini? Nguo yangu moja, ikauke nikavae

If I wash my clothes, what shall I wear? I have only one dress, let it dry so that I can wear it again

(A woman whose husband neglects her – **neglected wife**)

Ukiona udada na udugu sitawi, ujua pana hatari

If you see sisterhood and brotherhood flourishing, know that there is danger!
(Your best friend will steal your husband) **friend stealing your husband or wife**

Mwenye tenga, mimi niko peke yangu, na riziki yangu

I am separated and alone, it is my destiny
(Her enemy has some help in the singing contest, but she is all alone)

Dawa ya kupigisha kilele, ni dhiki yako mwenyewe

A medicine for making people shout, that is your problem
(A man has gone to get love medicine, but that will rebound on him)

Umwambie kweli, usiwambie zihaka, uso wako kama paka

Tell him truly, don't tell him jokingly, 'your face is like a cat'
(Tell him truly, don't tell him jokingly (zihaka = jutani), that you are no more afraid of him than you would be of a cat)

Kipini, nitanunua kipini, sahani nitanunua sahani, au ajabu neno gani?

A pin, I will buy a pin, a plate, I will buy a plate. What is there surprising about that?
(If I fornicate I will get jewellery and household utensils, what is surprising about that?) **Selling sex**

Dada nakumabia usicheze simako, utagombana na watu

Elder sister, I tell you, don't play with the handle (penis) or you will quarrel with people
(Warns her sister not to steal other women's husbands or there will be trouble)
warning rival off her husband

Dada nakumabia ukijua, bure nitajisumbua

Sister I am telling you so that you know, it is no good you making a fuss (because I've already got him) **reply to above**

Dada amesema maneno imeyanafika mbali, mwenyewe hana habari

Elder sister spoke some words which reached a long way, but she herself did not know about it
(She told someone something in confidence, and it spread) **confidence leads to gossip**

Itiwa chumvi, itiwa na bizari, ukoro una hatari

(If you put salt and spices on it, the penis is fantastic!) **Good sex**

Haiiti chumvi, haitii sukari, utamu wake hatari

(You don't need salt, you don't need sugar, its sweetness is fantastic!) (reply to above) **good sex does not need additions**

Ulisema uzinzi kapata safari, unaona hukupata mali?

You said fornication would get you a journey, don't you see that you don't get any wealth for it? **sex for nothing**

Baleni imeingia uwanjani. Siri nitampa nani?

In Baleni it came into the courtyard. To whom shall I tell the secret?
(The secret is the killing of the illegitimate child which everyone knows about now)
killing of illegitimate child which became a scandal and a court case

Furahi, upunguze moyo wako, uongee na wifio

Rejoice, calm your heart, talk to your sister in law (again) (i.e. with whom she had quarrelled) **making up quarrel**

Ondoka, ujanja umekwisha, analia akiona

Go away, cleverness has finished, she cries when she sees it
(The song of a woman whose husband has taken another wife and divorced her)
divorced wife

Kongoro, halipiki mchuzi, inabaki kuniudhi

The penis cannot be cooked into a curry, it remains to bother me
(The song of a wife who husband has upset her by wandering; she wishes it were like cassava so that she could put it away safely until he gets back)

Hogo linukia samaki, paka kaja na mwanawe

The penis smells of fish, so that cat and its kitten have come
(Just as the cat is attracted by the smell of fish, so are you by a penis) **attraction of penis**

Siku ya dhiki, atakuja nyumbani, kitoweo nyumbani

On the day of problems, she will come, she will come to the house (to get) relish from the house
(Someone who is always coming to borrow) **borrowing**

Paka anakufa, panya atalala

If the cat dies the mouse will sleep
(The story of the cat who feigned death is in the adult literacy book)

Shilingi kumi ameumpa Yahaya, pita akisimulia

Yahaya (her lover) gave her 10/- and she goes around telling everyone - **getting paid for sex**

Tumbo limeniuma, linakatika uchungu

My stomach is hurting me, bitterness (longing for sex) is cutting me up - **desire**

Nipige debe na kalewa kiwanjani, kikaribushe wageni

Let me beat a debe (kerosene can) for the kalewa in the courtyard, and invite the guests

Ningali mwana mdogo, haliwezi hogo

I am still a small girl, I can't manage your penis – **penis too big**

Mchana kaleta barua, sijapata kuiisoma

In the afternoon, s/he brought a letter, but I haven't had a chance to read it yet

Wastuka, walidhania kigoma, walipata kumchoma

They were amazed, they thought it was a little one, but in fact they got burned – **large penis**

Ulisema mwana mdogo, mbona hogo unacharanga (= untafuna)

You said you were a little girl, so why do you want to eat cassava (penis)? **Wanting sex**

Mama yangu kaniambia nadai talaka, na mume wangu ningali kumtaka
My mother said I should get a divorce, but I still love my husband
(Reference to a case in Kilindoni when a mother tried to break up her daughter's marriage) **interference of wife's mother**

Mali inaliwa we, yako mikelele, nenda ukasema mbele
You said that your wealth is being eaten, that is your shout, go and say it in front of everyone (mali = penis)

Sherehe ya ngoma hataka barua, yakutana uwani
The rejoicings of a dance do not need a letter, people meet in the courtyard

Kino changu kizima, nitwanga nitakavyo, medhali nitoke kwangu
My mortar is in a good state and I will pound it as and when I like, even if I go outside to do so (kino = kuma) **defiance of woman**

Hodari we, ujifanya hodari, kupanda juu ya dari
You are brave, you do brave things, to climb up on the roof (i.e. to get women) **praise of man who gets women**

Nipanda dari, kazi nimezoea, bendera nipepea
I climb up on the roof, I am used to this work, so that my flag gets the breeze (i.e. my penis gets cooled) (man's reply to above)

Buguza, imeniudi buguza, lakini roho ipo papo
I have heard a few rumours, but my heart is still there (i.e. in spite of rumours of infidelity, wife still loves her husband) **wife still loves H**

Nikila samaki, miiba nitatema, nipata nifaidi tena
If I eat fish, I will spit out the bones, so that I may get profit again
(If a woman commits adultery and keeps quiet about it, she can do it again.
Or, if I keep quiet about my husband's adultery, I may profit from it later (he may remember that I am not a shrew and recall me) **committing adultery**

Untatangatanga, roho yako iko huko, unasema neno gani?
You keep going to and fro, but your soul is still there, so what are you saying?
(A divorced woman who goes around a lot but still wants her husband) **woman caught between desire for husband and for lovers**

Niende chini kwa chini, niende Marimbani, niondoe nadhiri yangu
Let me go secretly to Marimbani, so that I may fulfil my vow
(Marimbani has the grave of a Sharifu, she goes there to fulfil her vow)

Dada nakutuma, nenda kwa Akpirali, kuondosha hatari
Sister I want to send you an on errand to Akpirali to get rid of the danger
(Akpirali is the MP and this refers to a quarrel after the election which nearly led to fighting) **another political reference**

Dada nakutuma, sitafute kilele, na yeye kaja mwenyewe.
Sister I am sending you on an errand, don't make a fuss, he came of his own accord
(She tells her co-wife, don't think I called him, he came [to me] himself) **jealousy of co-wives**

NB22:154

Unapaa kama misili, mwewe, safari ina mwenyewe
You fly like a missile or a hawk, the journey has its own (expert)
(You know how to make love well) **good lover**

Unapaa kama misili, mwewe, lakini bahati zina wenyewe
You fly like a missile or hawk, but the experts get good luck
(The ones who know how to do it are the ones who get it) **good lovers get good sex**

Jahazi kubwa kuganga, mbona imepanda mwamba?
To fix the big dhow, why has it climbed into a rock?
(The holes of the dhow are stopped up, but if they are unstopped, water comes out – women are the same) (this explanation is unclear to me)

Nilitoa hasho, mwisho nilitoboa, nikuonyeshe uganga
I got you a menstrual cloth, but in the end I made a hole in it, let me show you witchcraft
(A woman who is bewitched put on her menstrual cloth, but it does not suffice to contain all her blood (because she is bleeding profusely) – this could be used for witchcraft)

Utapiga kelele, mwisho mlambe nyayo, itakuwa yake yayo
You will make a fuss, in the end you will lick the sole of her foot, but you will still be crazy (yayo = wazimu)
(A woman makes a fuss (claiming that someone has stolen her husband) then she asks for forgiveness, but she is still jealous)) **co-wife and jealousy**

Utapiga kilele mpaka chini ulambe, wala hakusamini
You can make a fuss until you lick down there (ask for forgiveness), but he still won't want you (kusamini = kujua)
(The reply of the co-wife **reply of jealous co-wife**)

Bt. Ahmed NB24:63

Nitaoa mimi, limbuke kuwitwa bwana, nichoka kwitwa mtwana
I will get married, so that I may be called 'bwana' I am tired of being called a rogue

Baleni watu wanabongonyoa (= kuzini), na riziki wanatoa
In Baleni the people are fornicating, and God's providence comes out of it

Ilisema kifurukwe hakuoi, mbona unamwita bwana?
You said that the ugly man should not marry you, so now why do you call him husband?

NB24:19. More kalewa songs from jando

Tutacharanga umate wa Mohammed, hukunikangia maji
We will ?? the saliva of Mohamed, you did not heat up the water for me
The wife is angry with her husband and did not heat his bathwater, he said that two can play at this game

Nakwenda mweituni, nikitisha kidoro, nikija nyumbani, nasema lahaula

I went to the bush, I frightened a little animal, when I came home, I said 'good gracious'

(A woman went to fornicate in the bush but got frightened by an animal so she missed her lover, when she came home she found she had missed her husband too)

Utasema we utapiga kilemba, taifa nitajenga

You said you would put on a turban and build the country

(Kupiga kilemba also means taking up office (e.g. chair of UWT), as well as 'having a man'. An office-holder in the UWT has a bad reputation) **jibe against female politician**

Sifai miye, naambiwa sifai, moja moja nafaa

I won't do it, I am told I won't do it, but little by little, I am doing it

(I am told I am useless, but somehow little by little I get what I want (The UWT's office-holder's reply) **politician's reply**

Konde konde, nani asiyejua, mwana kua?

Field, field (??), who does not know, that she killed the child?

(Refers to the famous case of the murder in Baleni of a newborn illegitimate child)

Baleni murder