

ASCH RECORDS AH 8504

BAIJUN BALLADS

Somali songs in Swahili

With Haussein Shiekh and Radio Mogadisco Swahili Singers

COLLECTED BY CHET WILLIAMS, WITH HASSAN HUSSEIN



M
1838
S7
S555
B153
1970

MUSIC LP

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SIDE I

- Band 1. Pumbao, Fun, or Enjoyment
- Band 2. Furaha, Happiness
- Band 3. Kikombe Cha Zari, The Decorated Cup
- Band 4. Leo Ni Leo, Today is Today
- Band 5. Gungo, Wedding Invitation

SIDE II

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- Band 3. Sini Mwana, I Have No Son
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Southwest Monsoon!
- Band 5. Randa, Farmers' Chant

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701 Seventh Ave., N.Y.C., N.Y. 10036, USA

Library of Congress

Catalogue Card No. 77-751706

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

COVER PHOTO: SOMALI MUSICIANS IN INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE, JULY, 1962

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Recorded in the U.N. Compound, Mogadiscio, Somali Republic, Horn of Africa, May-June, 1962, by Chet Williams, Unesco, assisted by Hassan Hussein (Wireless), Ministry of Education, Somali Republic. Instruments: lute, tambourine, drums, adaptation of flute, and violin.

Here are eight classical pieces of the Baijun folk, or Island Peoples, yet living for the most part on islands near, and along the coasts of, Northern Kenya and Southern Somalia, from Mombassa to Chisimaio. Of Bantu, Arabic, Persian, and Somali people, the singers of this striking material, living in Mogadiscio, Somali Republic, have as ancestors an ethnic sea-faring group who pre-date the Somalis, themselves on hand to greet ancient Chinese explorers of the East African coast. Two modern songs by Hussein Sheikh, tunes also composed in this coastal Swahili dialect, provide contrast.

The first five folksongs (SIDE ONE, 001-420, according to European tapecounter numbering) were done by (1) Hussein Sheikh Jama, singer and lutist, Capo Gruppo of Radio Mogadiscio musicians, (2) Asha Abdu Suleman, Radio Mogadiscio singer on Swahili-language programs, (3) Hassan Shahib, radio singer, guitarist, lutist, flutist, and (4) Shali Ali, free-lance singer.

The second five classical Baijun pieces, including two antiquated chants (SIDE TWO, 002-287) were performed also for the most part by professional members of Radio Mogadiscio: (1) Bacari Omar Adi, musician and news-announcer of Swahili language programs, (2) Hassan Shahib, singer, violinist, flutist, and, as on Side One, general all-'round performer, (3) Marloow, whose fiddling techniques rival those of a U.S. "Down East-erner", and (4) Omari Bwana, drummer and student, as much at home on the bongo (kigoma) as the large oblong wooden drum (chapua).

SIDE ONE

Band 1. Pumbao, Fun, or Enjoyment, is a modern ironical song by Hussein Sheikh, the form fitting the style of older Baijun material. "First I caressed you like a little baby, as if I were healing your wound," says Hussein in a Swahili dialect strongly flavored with Arabic. "When you became cured you turned on me like a snake and betrayed me."

Band 2. Furaha, Happiness, another new song by Hussein but in a completely different vein, is a prayer to God to care for a bride, her children, and her country.

Band 3. Kikombe Cha Zari, The Decorated Cup, a beautiful old song written in catchy classical Swahili, bears a tune reminiscent of the Middle East. At least the words were composed on the island of Ciula by a member of the Chungwaya, a Baijuni tribe now living in the village of Chungwaya, in Tanga District, on the Tanganyika seacoast. The Decorated Cup is a sweet young thing who warns her lover to stay close by:

(1)

The decorated cup is good for tea.
It needs milk and much sugar.
If you go away, others will take your place.

Kikombe cha zari kizuri kwa chai,
Kutiya maziwa nanyingi sukari,
Ukiteka wewe mwengine tayari.

(2)

For a long time I have been telling you
to stop pretending you don't care;
Otherwise you will spoil our love.
Don't be like the captain of the dowh who by mistake
went down with his ship.

Nali kiku-ambiya si leo kichambo,
Ata miujiza taharibu mambo.
Nadudha mesoza mesozesha chombo.

Band 4. Leo Ni Leo, Today is Today, a very old tune once a n'vugi, a form somewhat reminiscent of the fox-trot, has lately been somewhat modernized in Mombassa. Saidana is the counterpart of the young lady in Pumbao (No. 1).

(1)

Today is today -- we will see the light of truth;
I was caressing you like a baby and cleaning your sores
with medicine.
Now you are poisoning me and want to kill me.

Nali kikuangacha na kukwangachua,
Nali kikuangacha na kukwangachua.
Jarah ki-oshia ki-kwandika dawa,
Umenipa sumu wataka niuwa.

Chorus:

Leo ni Leo Leo, Leo no Leo Leo,
M'ta uwona m 'pam 'banuko si urongo.

(2)

Saidana, you are the light of my two eyes.
When I see you I become upset.
Whenever you are away I am distraught.

Saidana, buru za macho mawili,
Saidana, nuru za macho mawili.
Ki-kuona hungiwa na mashughuli,
Hudangana muhibu ukiweko mbali.

Chorus.

Band 5. Gungo, Wedding Invitation, is a ruwasha, a type of tune hundreds of years old. As a part of a series of events preceding a wedding, the Gungo may be sung during the initial, invitation rites, or maaliko, precisely at the time when during a week of ceremonies the women, having cut the hair of the intended bride and bathed her, gather in song before each doorway of the village.

A father is praising his daughter who will soon be married:

(1)

I did not send this girl, Saada, to be a slave.
I did not give her a hoe to cultivate the field;
I gave her a book to read, to learn knowledge,
the Koran.

E hee Kijakazi, Saada, si-kumchuma,
Howaa Sikumpa jembe kwenda kulima;
Nimpee chawo kwenda kusoma,
Kupacha elimu na Quruwani.

Chorus:

Howaa kupacha elimu na Quruwani,
E hee kupacha elimu na Quruwani.
Sikumba jembe kwenda kulima,
Ni impe chuwo kwenda kusoma,
Kupacha elimu na Quruwani.

(2)

My daughter is very delicate. May God protect her
from the eyes of all evil people.
She is like the mvunde tree and gives brightness
to the branches of all other tall things growing.

Howaa Kijana changu ke-enge enge,
Jito la hasidi lisimkumbe.
Pwani kuna m'chi huichwa mvunde,
Hunawirisha tandu na mashinaye.

Chorus.

SIDE TWO

Band 1. Bembea Mtoto, another rewasha-type song, is,
in this instance, a lullaby:

(1)

Mazoweya, mazoweya, na mahaha hunikera;
Naumiya, naumiya kuzikosa lako sura,
Kwakuliya, kwakuliya, hata macho yanifura.

Chorus:

Bembeya hee leo, Bembeya hee,
Bembeya hee leo, Bembeya mtoto,
Ukiliya waniliza, Bembeya mtoto.
Sina mwana mimgaliya, Bembeya mtoto,
Bembeya hee leo, Bembeya hee,
Bembeya hee leo, Bembeya mtoto.

(2)

Husikitiki mpenzi labuda huna imani?
Killa siku ni hasira hiyo ni tabiya gani?
Kusema nawe nataka hebu mwapuse shetani.

Chorus.

(3)

Wa haiba, wa haiba, nyuka chwandame upepo,
Matilapa, matilapa, ni hoko tuonanapo;
Ukishiba, ukishiba, ndipo akili ziyapo.

Chorus.

Band 2. Safaridi, Martin Bird, an enchanting and poignant fragmented love-poem, is an invocation to both bird and flower:

(1)

Will you help me and my Love when we meet?
You are not like the m'kadi flower but are the
flower itself.

Knogomile is not more beautiful than you, the
Safaridi bird;
Indeed, you devastate me, your wings flapping
in the night
worshipping God.

Safaridi, ni ndege, mjuzi m'no,
Safaridi, ni ndege, mjuzi m'no.
Ni saidi katika madirikano,
Ni m'kadi, ni m'kadi, harufuye si m'fano.
Kongomile hamshindi, safaridi,
Kongomile hamshindi, safaridi.
Ndege yule menitiya itikadi,
Hata mbale, hata mbale, usiku huta-abadi.

Band 3. Sina Mwana, I Have No Son, is another lullaby:

(1)

La waridi, la waridi, (haa, haa, haa) Shada lema,
la haiba, (haa, haa, haa)
Maridadi, maridadi, Dawa ya nafusi tiba,
Jitahidi, jitahidi, tuonane kwa kuiba.

Chorus:

La waridi, la waridi, (haa, haa, haa) Shada la mti
raufu, (haa, haa, haa)
Yamezidi, yamezidi, (haa, haa, haa) Mahaba
kunikalifu.
Yabaidi, yabaidi, (haa, haa, haa) Barua nakuarifu.
(Haa, haa, haa)

Band 4. Kasikazi Vuma, Oh, Wind of the Southwest Monsoon! is a powerful sailors' chant once voiced to the stroke of oars as seamen, having cast off, struck out for the strong steady breeze that would carry them when, once gaining momentum, they outreached the lee of the harbor.

Blow, Oh Wind of the Southwest Monsoon! (Ch: 2x)
Let us pull the oars of our master's drowh
and keep it from drifting aft.
I was gone, but now I am here; the painters have
painted my boat well.
Everything in it is poised and the ship well-balanced,
not listing to port of starboard.
When it was finished I could master the sea
and make it like a road on the land;
Even if I were to sail in the jungle the desert
would spread out before me.

Blow, Oh Wind of the Southwest Monsoon! (Ch: 2x)

Kasikazi Vuma, Na umande mwema,
Chukivuche kidau, che bwana kisireje nyma! (Ch: 2x)
Saliko ni meze kuya, Sambo mavedha, Sambuko,
Kituzwata kikatwa.
Kisende, Huko, na Huko, Nitakacho kanunua niizapo,
Kusurufu, Bahari ka towa ndiya mwichu kafanya
ututku.

Kasikazi Vuma, Na umande mwema,
Chukivuche kidau, che bwana kisireje nyma! (Ch: 2x)

Band 5. Randa, Farmers' Chant, another Baijuni old-timer, tells us of the toil just passed and of the repose to come before the next planting. The first farmer to finish burning the scrub trees and bush on his land throws down his simple tools and runs through the village, singing this song. Of course, everyone stops what he is doing and follows him, joining in and thus starting off the season's festivities. As with the sailors' song, Kasikazi Vuma, no instrumentation is called for in this farmers' work piece. Smart hand-clapping and a bit of footwork is all that is required. In reality the chorus is the song:

Chorus: (Several times)

M'chwana wa Salim boco, Uliye kivamba vamba,
Haikubakiya kich, illa ivu na mtanga.

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(1)

Kulima kuchema, Kuva ni maeme,
Na ibada lema ni Msikitini.

Chorus: (Several times)

(2)

Mchama ni iembe, mnazi n'gombe,
Harusi ni pembe ndipo ifanapo.

Chorus: Several times)

M'chwana wa Salim boco, Uliye kivamba vamba,
Haikubakiya kichu, illa ivu na mtanga.

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