SONG: AN AGENT IN SOCIAL DECONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

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Abstract
The song is an essential part of many Kenyan communities. It carries serious implications of societal values and inspirations. While other oral art forms are controlled by traditions in content and form, songs possess unique freedom. The song is the most flexible genre of oral literature. This characteristic hinges on the fact that the song is capable of taking new ideas or words and fitting them into the song without changing its structure, rhythm or body movements (Kabira and Mutahi, 1988). This enables the song to be a genre, which is responsive to change in every day life of the community. It is in this light that the paper explores the role of the song in gender socialization and how it can be used as a harbinger for change in addressing gender stereotypes.

Introduction
Songs are one genre of oral literature. In this paper, songs refer to pieces of poetry especially set to music, which are expressed using oral words. The word folk is taken to mean a group of people, in this case the Gikuyu people, whose cultural, economic, and education differences are less pronounced. Their lifestyles, customs and literature including songs, are known and shared throughout the community (Lusweti: 1984: 57).

Songs and poetry are an essential part of life in many communities. Societies, which adhere to traditional customs, have songs, which are used in various rituals. Songs are cultural symbols used to establish order and meaning. Songs can tell us about a community’s cultural values. Songs have been used as vehicles of transmitting a people’s philosophy, beliefs, values and sometimes their historical development.

Songs are socially significant as they carry serious implication of society’s beliefs. The song is probably the most prolific of all forms of African oral performances. While other oral art forms are controlled by tradition in content and form, songs seem to possess a unique kind of freedom. The song is the most flexible genre of oral literature. This characteristic hinges on the fact that the song is capable of taking new ideas or words and fitting them into a song without changing its structure, rhythm or body movements involved (Kabira and Mutahi 1988: 18). This enables the song to be a genre, which is responsive to changes in everyday life of the community. Traditional poetry has been a very forceful tool in communicating messages.

In Gikuyu society, songs are classified into various categories. There are songs for various age groups (Marika). There are songs for each sex at each age group but some combine both sexes e.g. ‘mucungw’u and muthungucu’.

The songs for youth include songs for both boys and girls who are not circumcised and are therefore considered as children since they have not been initiated into manhood or womanhood. The songs performed by these groups include “ngucu muthuu, urigu, and kibuiya”. (Kabira and Karega 1988: 7).

The songs were performed mainly during the dry season when there was no rain to disrupt the performances. Songs were also performed during circumcision. Young boys and girls would gather together and perform songs as a gesture to send off their colleagues who were about to be circumcised.

Songs for the young people comprise songs of boys and girls who have been circumcised and also those who are in their early years of marriage. However it is important to note that after getting married, women would not dance...
with unmarried men. The songs for this age group consisted of ‘mucungw’a’, ‘njukia’, ‘gicukia’, ‘mugoiyo’, ‘nduumo’, ‘kibaata’ and others. Young women performed “Ndumo” only while young men performed ‘kibaata’. The rest were performed by both sexes.

Songs for the old are for those men and women who have reached the age of having grandchildren. The songs in this category include ‘muthunguci’, ‘mugoiyo’, ‘kibaata’, ‘nduumo’, ‘gitiro’, ‘kiriro’, ‘gicandi’ etc. These songs were performed during dry season and on special occasions like during marriage ceremonies, reception of new babies, and also at beer parties. Marriages are celebrated with nuptial songs. People also sing while performing their daily chores. Nandwa and Bukenya 1983: 94 argue that the value of a song is judged in four parameters:

i) The meaning of a song and appropriateness to a situation
ii) Its verbal inventiveness (the beauty of words)
iii) Its melody and rhythm (what it sounds like, usually including its danceability).
iv) Its performance including its accompaniment.

From these parameters we get various categories of songs according to:

i) Their structure and their mode of performance
ii) Their content i.e. subject matter or what they deal with
iii) The occasion on which they are performed

It is obvious that some of these ways of classifying songs have their own shortcomings. For example if one classifies songs according to their subject matter, one is likely to experience problems since there are so many topics covered by songs that it would be impossible to cover them all. (Bukenya and Nandwa 1983: 95). The most common method used in classifying songs is according to the occasion or purpose of their performance. Many African societies have songs and chants suitable for every occasion. Songs are the most adaptable of all genres of oral literature.

Functions of songs

Songs serve as carriers of education. Through songs, the singers pass on information, which is important for social stability of the community. Historical information as well as the accumulated wisdom of the people is transmitted through songs and dances. For example, Gikuyu society has a large number of Mau Mau songs, which urged people to resist the grabbing of their land by colonialists.

Songs also serve as a means of social control. Songs abuse or ridicule cowards. Majorities of these songs are circumcision or war songs. War songs are used to encourage people to fight bravely. Songs also praise or express satisfaction or approval of good behaviour. For example, war songs can be used to praise or honour men who display bravery or inspire others to fight in defense of their community. These kinds of songs help to correct people who misbehave in society. Songs also serve as a reservoir for the culture of the community. People sing and dance songs, which have been transmitted, from one generation to the other.

Through such songs, the societal cultural values customs and traditions are perpetuated. Marriage songs record people’s marriage practices. The same is true of burial, initiation, divinations or naming songs. Songs that transmit and perpetuate people’s cultural practices accompany every ceremony.

For example, in political meetings songs are used to enhance a sound political climate and therefore enforce political stability. Political songs can be used to protest against some form of injustice in the community. Political songs can also be used to praise political systems or leaders. Songs can be very useful means of propaganda since people outside the community cannot easily detect their meaning. Songs can also be used for entertainment purposes. In most political meetings songs are used to entertain the leaders and the participants. Dirges or lament songs are used as a means of consoling bereaved families. These songs are sung at funerals or memorial services. They are also sung around the corpse when it is being prepared for burial or when it is lying in the traditional morgue. Women
mainly sing these songs. Finnegan (1970: 148) reckons that the fact that these songs often involve wailing, sobbing and weeping, makes them particularly suitable for women in Africa as elsewhere these activities are considered typically for women. Another function of a song is to induce or lull children to sleep. In this category of songs we have children’s songs and lullabies. Children also sing their own songs to entertain themselves. Children’s songs apart from lulling children to sleep can also be used to express feelings and also to comment on life in the family as well as the community at large.

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kira Wanja ii</td>
<td>Keep quiet Wanja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mami athire ii</td>
<td>mother went</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwenja ngwaci</td>
<td>to uproot sweet potatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na nieguka ii</td>
<td>and she will come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iyo iyo iyo</td>
<td>iyo iyo iyo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this song, we derive the message that it is the women’s role to feed their families. Once a song has been composed, it spreads fast and rapidly and becomes the property of the community and the name of the composer is usually forgotten. However, by the time a song has spread over a large area or through a generation or two, it almost becomes a new song because of being repeated over and over again. No wonder songs are said to be functional only in the communities in which they emanate.

Having looked at the definition, categories and functions of songs, we can argue that songs are cultural symbols used to establish order and meaning. Songs therefore can tell us about the African cultural values.

They reflect cultural beliefs and attitudes of a people at a particular time in history. They are said to move with times as they change both in form and content as the society changes socially, politically or economically. Gikuyu society has been a man’s world dominated by male values, ideas and symbols. How are women portrayed in the songs and how do they react towards those images? What are the disparities in the portrayal between men and women?

**Images of Women In Gikuyu Folk Songs**

In songs as in other genres of oral literature, women are portrayed in various images. The images point at the discrepancies in gender issues between boys and girls, men and women.

**The Image of Girls**

Little girls are often charged with the responsibility of baby-sitting for their young siblings while their mothers are cultivating in the field, fetching water or fire wood or doing other domestic duties. Girls who do not live to the expectations of the society in regard to their domestic roles are depicted as irresponsible.

(Song 1) Portrays the image of the woman as irresponsible.

In this song a young uncircumcised girl is portrayed as foolish, immature and irresponsible (Kabira and Karega 1983: 23). A circumcised girl was supposed to take her responsibilities, roles or duties seriously especially in regard to minding children or in the garden. Hardworking girls were the targets of bachelors who wanted to acquire wives. Circumcision served as a transition where a girl left behind her childish behaviour like climbing trees. Missionaries who infiltrated into the Gikuyu way of life and started preaching against female circumcision interfered with this rite. Through this song, the society castigates the white man’s culture, which barred girls from getting circumcised. As a result of that infiltration, girls who were irresponsible and immature were created. This song was used to resist all forms of foreign domination.

Once circumcised, girls were ripe for marriage upon payment of dowry. The images of girls as commodities for sale are prevalent in the songs. Girls are forced to marry the highest bidders may they be old, ugly, lazy or deformed.
However, contrary to the image of the woman as submissive, we get the image of girls as resisting forced marriages.

**Girls as Resisting Forced Marriages**

*In song* (Wakini baba araraga akinuma - Wakini my father spends the whole night abusing me), a marriageable young girl is lamenting/complaining to her age group about her father (in some variants her mother) keeps rebuking her in his/her attempt to persuade her to marry Waigoko, an oldish hairy chested man. Girls are always warned that they should never consider physical attributes when choosing a man for beauty is not eaten. The society contends that a man should be judged by whether he can feed/provide for his family rather than how he looks. Contrary to that ideology, beautiful girls are the target of every suitor. Beauty, which is considered positive in women, is considered negative in men. This manifests double standards as far as ideologies are concerned. Father/mother will not let the girl choose a young feeble man in whose presence she would always behave feminine.

Society is insensitive to the feeling of the women. Choices have to be made for them for it is assumed that men (husbands, father, brothers) are better endowed as far as decision-making is concerned. In r song 3 we also have a newly married woman who is lamenting against her husband’s failure to live to his expected image of a man. In this song, the woman laments that she is in danger for there are two men who are posing a danger to her life. Her husband has failed to live to his role of protecting the family. Due to that failure, the young woman swears that she will not have her grey hair shaved in her husbands home i.e. she will not live there till old age, implying that she will desert her husband.

The man admits that he has nothing to add to the accusations leveled against him by the wife. However, he still shows concern for his wife hence he reminds her to carry foodstuffs, which she will need in her long journey. In song 4 similar sentiments of a young married woman complaining against the man she married are expressed. In this song, a woman is lamenting that her fate was sealed with that of a lazy man. She reckons that she cannot live with such a man and is therefore planning to leave him.

The man in this song is portrayed as exploitative, irresponsible, lazy and abusive to his wife. He does not contribute to the well being of the family but instead, times when food is ready so that he may be fed. In the event of him finding no food, he uses abusive language calling his wife lazy and a gossiper. The woman begs the husband not to abuse her for she is instrumental to his well being. If she was not feeding him, he could be dead. In this song, contrary to the image of the woman as dependent, it is the man who is dependent on the woman for his upkeep.

However, she reckons that she has no choice but to desert her homestead for she is unable to live with a lazy man. Before leaving, she reminds the man that he will live to remember her. He will try to look for her in vain. She even goes further to tell the man that he can go for his dowry from her parents. She does not care how much the dowry was. She does not even care whether the animals paid as dowry are producing twins. She tells him that even if he wants additional he will get, for her father is rich. This gives us the image of a woman who resists oppression and exploitation. She has already identified her cause of action and she will not be thwarted by anything including the dowry, in her endeavor to fight oppression and exploitation.

**Women as Commodities for Sale**

The image of a woman as a commodity for sale is well reinforced in most songs. In marriage songs, men emphasize that the beer they are drinking is rightfully theirs for prospective in-laws pay it for it. Girls in most Gikuyu songs are advised to safeguard their chastity for that will determine their price when getting married. Good girls have to be “bought” using well-fattened goats. One has to use goats and cows to acquire a wife. Through songs, men are reminded that they cannot take stock of their wealth before getting married for they will have to surrender some of that wealth to pay dowry. Girls are also warned that in the event of them refusing to marry, their fathers cannot acquire goats and cows. Brothers also remind their sisters that they need to marry fast before the price of girls fluctuates.
“Mwari wa maitu
hika narua bei
ya airtu itanagwa
nguigwa ta ikuma
king’otore na hela
mugwanja”

My sister get married
Quickly before the
Price goes down. I
hear it will reduce
to seventeen cents

This verse was sung after the Gikuyu society had entered into the money economy. Apart from money, dowry is also paid for in terms of beer. Those girls who are unmarried are referred to as potential assets and are referred to as beer, which is still in the crates that is, not ready for drinking.

Due to this commercialization of women, most parents do not care about the fate, which awaits their daughters as long as the dowry is paid. In some songs, the women acknowledge the fact that after the dowry is paid, they become the property of their husbands. While dancing women warn their partners that they should not touch their private parts for they belong to the one who paid goats (dowry) for them. In that sense, they also acknowledge the fact that they are their husband’s property.

In other songs women reject to be treated as commercial assets. In song 5 Ndumiriri ya mihuni we have both young women rejecting the bride price. In the song, the youth are decrying that the bride price is exploitative and is used for personal aggrandisement. Through bride price, women are reduced to a chattel that a man can buy provided that he has money. The social aspect of the bride price has been obliterated to emphasize the commercial aspect of it. On the other hand, men are objecting and rebelling against exploitation in form of bride price. They reckon that they would rather remain bachelors. The girl on her part is also against the practice, which reduces her to a chattel. When her parents demand more than her fiancé or suitor can afford, she reckons that if that man will not marry her, she would rather become a prostitute.

**Women as Sources of Evil**

Women in Gikuyu songs are portrayed as temptresses who pose a dangerous threat to men. In song 6, the artist asserts that while dancing muthuu he does not like girls. He laments that they were instrumental to leading him to jail where he served for six months. After serving the jail term, he went home in the seventh month. By then he had changed so much that people could not recognize him for he had grown a lot of hair on the chest. Female relatives are also blamed for brewing trouble. In the same song, the man laments that he lost his feather in Kamba land where he had followed his sister.

In similar song, another protagonist laments that he almost drowned by a river in his attempt to follow a girl. The ideology that women are dangerous is highly perpetuated in many songs. Women are blamed for most evils that bedevil society. Men are portrayed as innocent victims of women’s machinations.

**The Image of A Woman as A Mother**

The primary role of a woman in Gikuyu society is to be a mother. This role is inculturated into girls right from birth through adulthood. The role of motherhood is the only one, which gives women any status in society. The songs have been used to reinforce this role.

As a mother a woman is adored. She is praised for duty in childbearing. It is the desire of every woman to have a child so as to acquire the noble status expected of her in society. After getting children, women are expected to be responsible. They are expected to feed their families. As such, it is emphasized through songs that they have to work hard in order to meet the family needs. Their companions become pangas and kiondos (baskets), which are symbolic tools of agricultural production. These are tools they need to farm and harvest for the family material needs. In song 7, the woman is being praised for having played her role well as a mother. She gave birth and reared her children well. She carried them on her back, chewed bananas for them and the singer is seeking for blessings from God for the mother.
This song reinforces the fact that women are only valued in society due to their reproductive roles. When they give birth, they are given special treatment. They are exempted from difficult tasks like weeding or carrying heavy loads and are also treated to special diets of meat and gruel. Other songs also highlight the fact that women will even go to places where they do not go on account of their children, that is through marriage.

However, other songs warn women that in their bid to play the mother’s role, they are likely to encounter problems. For example, when fetching firewood, they are warned not to cut certain tree, which may hurt them. In order to live to the societies image of a good mother/wife, women are expected to be very hardworking. Lazy women are often criticized through songs. As pointed earlier, one of the positive attributes searched for in women was hard work. When young men were looking for wives, they would hide somewhere and observe a girl/girls as they cultivated in the fields. Girls were expected to remain bent when cultivating from morning to evening without even a lunch break if they had to pass the test for hard working. If a girl stood up now and then to straighten her back, that implied she was lazy and no man wanted to marry a lazy woman, for women were also economic assets. They were expected to plough and cultivate large tracks of land so as to feed their families. The money accrued through the sale of surplus foods was used to acquire goats and cows which in turn would be used to acquire new wives for the husband. A man with many wives and children was considered wealthy and had prestige and status in the community. In one of the songs, a lazy woman is being admonished for being lazy. She is accused that she keeps standing looking up as if she has her goat in heaven. Moreover, women are being criticized for having a lot of fleas that is, spends their day killing fleas. This song implies that a lazy woman is also dirty and therefore unhygienic.

The mother of lazy girls is also admonished. Mothers are blamed for the negative attributes of their children. The song insinuates that the lazy girl could have inherited the laziness from her mother. The mother also is being blamed that she does not know how to treat visitors. She asks them to go and fetch firewood and come and roast “maguanyiri” for themselves. Gikuyu society believed in visitors being treated hospitably.

Due to the important association to motherhood, any woman who does not fulfil the role of a mother is treated with contempt. In the Gikuyu proverbs and narratives, barren women were mistreated, abused and often ostracized. Contrary to that image, in songs we find barren women being treated with sympathy. In one song the singer is saying that the barren woman should not be abused for the co-wife has given birth on her behalf. This song rejects the mistreatment of barren women. They are not barren by choice. It is God’s wish and therefore nobody should blame them.

**Women as Wives**

As wives, women have their role and expectations. They are supposed to give birth, look after their children and husbands, fetch water, firewood, sweep the compounds, cook and cultivate the fields. If women do not live to these roles and expectations as wives, they suffer both socially and psychologically and nobody appreciates their efforts.

In song 8, we have a young woman who is lamenting to her grandmother that her husband does not appreciate the way she prepares her tea, porridge, green vegetables, arrowroots, and is psychologically tormented. She feels that she is despised because she has failed to live to the society’s expectations. In the Gikuyu society, any woman who failed to live to role expectations, especially where cooking was concerned, she was returned to her mother for further training in domestic issues. Such a girl was not only an embarrassment to her family but also to other girls and her clan as a whole. In order to alleviate the problem, the grandmother embarks on advising the girl on how to prepare the various foodstuffs so that her husband can appreciate them. The grandmother in this song is portrayed as a wise advisor of the youth.

**Women as Adulterous/Unfaithful**

The image of a woman as unfaithful is very prevalent in many Gikuyu songs. Women/girls are depicted as “weak”, easily cheated, and untrustworthy. It is emphasized that due to their weak nature, women are easily cheated and flattered by men. Its emphasized that women do not have a strong heart, and what men need to do to induce them
into unfaithfulness is to flatter them and their thinking goes out of their heads. Many songs emphasize the fact that women are bound to be unfaithful no matter what you do to them. In another song, we have a man who is lamenting that he has done everything to please his wife but despite his efforts, the wife wants to leave him. The message in this song is that women are difficult to please and due to their weak biological make up; they are likely to fall into unfaithfulness no matter what you do to them. Men are warned that women should be treated with caution for they are untrustworthy.

The image of a woman who is powerfully aware of the unfairness of the system and who tries to assert herself and seeks to be accepted as a full human being, and not a man’s appendage, replaces the picture of the cheerfully contented woman cheerfully accepting her lot.

Observations, Conclusions and Recommendations

The songs register the woman’s disgust at male chauvinism and dissatisfaction with what considers being unfair, unjust and cruel oppressive system. Through songs, the woman shows that the society is unjust towards the female lot. The society has designed ideological machinery through vehicles such as narratives and proverbs, to intimidate women to accept those injustices. Women have been reduced to tools for procreation. Their worth is determined by their success in fitting into jackets designed and tailored for them by the society.

In Gikuyu society, the father’s responsibility to choose a husband for his daughter was taken for granted. However, in the songs we find daughters questioning why fathers should choose husbands for them. It is assumed that a woman cannot possibly hate a man chosen for her by her people. Songs register protest against the stereotype images normally associated with women. Traditional arrangements such as marriages and motherhood lead to chauvinism and irresponsibility on the men. Men have shown that they can also be irresponsible and unreasonable especially in their decision-making where gender issues are concerned. The female voice in the songs bemoans the fate of all womankind. They are expressing their desire for their total liberation from customs and tradition, which lead them to enslavement. Through tools such as songs, it is obvious that women have been subjected to years of acculturation, which have brainwashed them to accept dehumanizing images and positions in society. It is obvious that from the images associated with women, they are harshly treated in societies. They have been brainwashed to accept conventional stereotypes, which brutalizes and degrades them. The women in the songs are trying to make their way in a male dominated society. It is expected that these women will become fore runners in women liberation in the Gikuyu society, Kenyan community and Africa at large. The message emerging from the women in the songs is that women have been dominated, disadvantaged, exploited and excluded in the mainstream of decision-making. The songs appear to be the pioneer genre of oral literature to spearhead female emancipation. Submission in the face of suffering is discouraged and the victim is demanding for a reform in the social structures, which perpetuate the degradation of more than half of its population.

Women in the songs have rejected being treated as slaves and beasts of prey. They have even pointed out that their parents have no right to choose husbands for them. Dowry, which reduces women to commodities for sale, is also being questioned. Gikuyu is not the only community where women use the genre of the song to protest their lot. The Maasai women have also used the same tool (Kipury 1983:8). Mwai [1997] has also shown that Swahili women use songs to express sexual dissatisfaction. This is a taboo topic in many African communities and women are socialized to believe that men are beyond reproach and in bed it is an abnormality to utter anything against his performance. Due to lack of avenue to express their dissatisfaction women use songs as a vehicle to air their feelings and constraints.

The images associated with women are a reflection of established societal patterns of behaviour expected of women. Women need to break away from the male stereotype and ideas of female roles. They need to fight traditional forces, which have enhanced their relegation to inferior exploited position. Women need to question the structure and social relations that have facilitated their marginalization.

They need to find out how they acquired the negative stereotype images, which have been used to sideline them, leading them to occupy downtrodden status. Women constitute a force that can no longer be ignored, ridiculed or
dismissed as negligible. It is in this regard that songs emerge as harbingers of change in gender stereotypes as they have accorded women the voice they need to redress their low status in society. Songs can therefore play a crucial role as agents in social deconstruction of gender.

APPENDIX

SONG ONE

Kiriguni gikigu
No umenye ni gikigu
Mwana agitwo ni irigu
Gikagwa na mitheko
Rwenji na ndangwa
Twarigirwo ni irigi

Kiriguni gikigu
Kiriguki andikoni
Kierwo githii mugunda
Gikahaica mwariki

SONG TWO

Ii wakiri x 2
Ndune karu nguhe uhoror
Ii nguhe uhoror x 2
Baba atindanga akinuma

Ii akinuma x 2
Akiningiria waigoko
Ii waigoko x 2
Mundu uri nd eru githuri
Ii githuri x 2
Ndangireka ndiyethere
Ii ndiyethere
Kamongonye ka mwanake

Ii kamwanake
Karuminaga ngakira
Ii ngakira
Ngainamia maitho ta ngari
Ii ta ngari x 2

Kana ng’ondu ikiria nyeki
Kiarie witu no ndakwiraga
Guku gwaku nii ndikenjerwo mbui

Ni ninguturukia karima ngagua
Ii na Kiarie witu no ndakwiraga

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Uncircumcised girl is foolish
You know she is because
When a child gets choked by
Bananas she bursts into laughter
Rwenji and ndangwa were passed
To us by Iregi generation

Uncircumcised church girl is foolish
When sent work in the garden
She goes to climb castor trees.
Kneel down I give you a story

I give you a story x 2
My father keeps abusing me
Abusing me x 2
In bid to persuade me to marry waigoko

Ii waigoko x 2
A man with a hairy chest
Hairy chest x 2
He cannot leave me to choose for myself
To choose for myself x 2
A feeble looking man
Feeble looking man x 2

Who will abuse me and I keep quiet
I keep quiet

And bend my eyes like a leopard
Like a leopard x 2

Or sheep eating grass
Ii waigoko goko goko gokoo
Gathoni have nothing to say
Ndiri have nothing to say except
Go but before you go
Take this maize and put in the stomach
it is nearly daybreak
Take this porridge in a calabash
And drink on the way
Take this arrowroot and put
In the stomach for it
Is day break iyu
Ii ii it is daybreak ha ha ha
It is day break iyu

SONG FOUR
Uyu ni uriru uyu ni uriru
Wa mundu muka kwohanio
Na njamba ya mundu murume githayo
Ni nguthi ni nguthi nyumbuke
Njeherere thina wa muthuri uyu
Unyumagirira orira ahuta arie
Na riria akora irio ti nduge akarumana
Akinjiraga ati ndigutu at njui o mucene

Ui tiga kunuma tiga ni nii
Ndungiri nucii uyu
Wee ungiakuire tene
Mwana ni wao waganire ii tiga kunuma
Na riu ukoiga ati ndi wa cu cu cu
Ii tiga kunuma

Wui wui nguthii ndihota
Guikara na githayo
Ii nii no muhaka thi
No ugakira uguo wee undirikane
Ii nii ni nguthi
Ukageria kunjetha unjage
Ii nii ni ndathii

Indo iria wararicrie
Thii ugire gwiitu
Akorwo ni mahatha I
Thii ugire gwiitu
Thii ugire ciothee........
Na wenda kuongererwo
Baba ni ndongga

Gathoni I have nothing to say
I have nothing to say except
Go but before you go
Take this maize and put in the stomach
It is nearly daybreak
Take this porridge in a calabash
And drink on the way
Take this arrowroot and put
In the stomach for it
Is day break iyu
Ii ii it is daybreak ha ha ha
It is day break iyu

This is shocking x 2
For a woman to be joined
With a lazy man
I will go I will go and fly
To escape from the problem
Of this man
Who only comes to me
When hungry
And if the finds no food cooked
Abuses me calling me
Lazy and the only thing
I know is to gossip

Please stop abusing me
If it were not for me
You would not be in this home
You would have died long
Time ago
Whose child is this who
Became naughty a long time ago
Please don’t abuse me
Please please I will go
I cannot be able to live
With a lazy man

I must go
But you will live to
Remember me
I will go and you
Will try to look for me
Without success

The things you paid for my dowry
Go to our home and get them
Even if they are twins
Reference
Paper presented at AAWORD Seminar