

# Hip Hop as Social Commentary in Accra and Dar es Salaam

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**Abstract:** This paper looks at the use of African hip hop as social commentary in Accra, Ghana and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Hip hop is by its definition a tool of self-expression and self-definition, and is often used as a tool of resistance. Young artists are using the platform of hip hop to speak out on a host of social and economic issues. A transcontinental conversation is now happening with artists all over Africa and the Diaspora. This paper focuses on the hip hop communities in Accra, Ghana and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Both nations have hip hop communities in which socially conscious hip hop is marginalized. In addition, the histories of these two nations are linked by their histories as battlegrounds in the struggle for Pan Africanism, non-alignment, and socialist ideals. These factors have influenced the use of hip hop for social commentary in both cities. This examination of hip hop in Accra and Dar es Salaam reveals important conversations occurring around politics and economics, on both a national and international level. Hip hop artists and the youth they represent are an important component of any social or political struggle towards progress. This research contributes to the need to engage with African hip hop culture and understand its growing implications for Africa.

## Introduction

Hip hop is one of the most important cultural movements to occur in Africa in recent decades and has evolved into a potent voice for African youth expression. When hip hop arrived in Africa in the 1980s it swept across the African continent like a tidal wave, starting with smaller segments of the youth population and by the 1990s becoming firmly implanted in almost every country on the continent. All over Africa, in countries like Burkina Faso, Kenya, Ghana, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda, hip hop's presence dates back to the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Today, each of Africa's metropolitan areas (and many smaller cities) has a hip hop community, a community that includes rap emcees, producers, DJs, graphic designers, musical performances, and in many cases radio stations, dancers, and fashion designers. All of these elements promote hip hop by participating in the continuation of the culture in various ways.

Hip hop in Africa has allowed African youth to participate in social, political, and economic discourse on a national and global level. This participation is seen in the lyrical content emanating from hip hop music all over the continent, providing for rich social commentary in the form of socially conscious hip hop. In looking at examples of this utilization of hip hop in Africa, Accra and Dar es Salaam provide valuable case studies as both cities have strong hip hop communities and artists that are active on the international scene. However, unlike some hip hop communities in Africa, namely those found in Senegal

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and South Africa, socially conscious hip hop does not enjoy popular support in Accra or Dar es Salaam. In addition, both Ghana and Tanzania have similar histories, histories rooted in anti-colonial struggle, socialism, and Pan Africanism. Though both countries have taken somewhat divergent paths, the hip hop coming out of Ghana and Tanzania has definitely been influenced by the histories of both countries and can be heard and seen in the hip hop music produced in both countries. As such, an examination of hip hop in Accra and Dar es Salaam provides important information on the ways in which hip hop is used for social commentary and the factors that influence hip hop's use as social commentary.

Hip hop's origins lie in its use as a tool of self-expression and self-definition. In 1988 in the United States hip hop artist Chuck D famously referred to hip hop as the Black CNN.<sup>2</sup> Meaning, if one wants to know what is going on in inner city and Black communities; one only needs to listen to the hip hop music coming from those communities. Within the hip hop of the ghetto one finds ample commentary on the conditions of the urban poor and criticisms of government policies. It is within this tradition that artists in Accra and Dar es Salaam are using the platform of hip hop to speak out on a host of social and political issues.

An analysis of hip hop songs reflects a style of social commentary that resonates with Ghanaians and Tanzanians alike. An almost essential feature of hip hop is its ability to transform the very language artists select as a mode of communication. Hip hop creates new vocabulary while redefining and transforming established vocabulary, all the while artists seem to speak in proverbs. This tradition dates back to hip hop's start as a sub-culture, a resistance to the establishment. Hip hop lyrics have always been directed to the youth in a way that is meant to reflect a genuine distrust of authority.

Hip hop artists in Accra and Dar es Salaam often critically examine government leaders, though they differ slightly in the ways in which they do this. They also deconstruct social institutions and economic oppression in songs that address urban life, migration, and the perceived failure of elders to protect the youth. A sample of hip hop lyrics from both communities shows how hip hop is used as a voice of the youth and will also show differences and similarities between hip hop music in Accra and Dar es Salaam. In addition, hip hop artists in Ghana and Tanzania often invoke the images or words of former Presidents Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere in a manner that suggests a level of reverence for the words and actions of these leaders. This is often done in such a way that artists are simultaneously expressing criticism of current regimes.

Two factors influencing these uses of hip hop as social commentary in Accra and Dar es Salaam are domestic economic and political changes, and the emergence of new pop music genres. Domestic economic and political changes provide both the inspiration for the lyrical content and influence the manner in which artists tell their stories. Meanwhile the pop music scenes marginalize conscious hip hop, impacting the perception and visibility of conscious hip hop.

The 1980s saw the transformation of the economies of both Ghana and Tanzania as leaders in both countries began to implement World Bank and IMF prescribed structural adjustment policies.<sup>3</sup> Soon after, the economies of both countries took a severe hit, and Ghanaians and Tanzanians felt the sting of neoliberal economic policies. Many chose to flee to the West, sparking explosions in African immigrant populations in many Western nations.<sup>4</sup> For example, after 1985 African migration to the United States doubled with each passing decade.<sup>5</sup> Among the factors influencing that migration out of Africa was the lack of economic opportunities at home, caused by newly implemented economic policies.<sup>6</sup> In the urban areas of Accra and Dar es Salaam the decline in the standard of living would provide

inspiration for many hip hop lyrics. As their populations faced increased poverty and a decrease in social services, frustration began to be reflected in the music.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, hip hop in both Accra and Dar es Salaam has often been confused with and overshadowed by the more commercialized pop music genres, Hip-life and Bongo Flava, respectively, distorting the conversation around urban youth music in Accra and Dar es Salaam. As a result, a search on YouTube of “hip hop in Accra” or “hip hop in Dar es Salaam” brings up results that include videos with glossy images of African youth singing in local languages, often about love and having a good time, an indicator of blurred distinctions between hip hop and pop music. Many of these artists are pop musicians and what is often labeled “hip hop” is actually pop music, but the tendency to label pop music as hip hop means there is often confusion over what hip hop actually is. While Hip-life and Bongo Flava both contain elements of hip hop culture, the confusion over the genres often leads to a distortion of hip hop in Ghana and Tanzania. For example, there have been several published works providing informative examinations of socially conscious hip hop in Tanzania, but some of them have identified Bongo Flava as being synonymous with Tanzanian hip hop.<sup>8</sup> In both Accra and Dar es Salaam these distortions have led to efforts by hip hop artists to distinguish themselves in a struggle to establish their music as separate from either Hip-life or Bongo Flava. However, the economic incentives of performing pop music have influenced a number of hip hop artists, and consequently socially conscious hip hop.

The hip hop scenes in Accra and Dar es Salaam offer insight into the ways hip hop is used as a tool social and political expression in those cities. As countries where the hip hop scene is not as politically aggressive with its content as Senegal and South Africa, Ghana and Tanzania offer good examples of hip hop’s social and political potential. The histories of these two countries and the challenges artists face also expose the impact of certain factors on the development and use of socially conscious hip hop.

### **Emergence of Hip Hop in Ghana and Tanzania**

Hip hop arrived in Ghana and Tanzania by the mid-1980s. Much of the music was initially in English, with the first artists to begin rapping often being the children of the elite, who were fluent enough in English to write hip hop verses and have access to rap cassettes from abroad.<sup>9</sup> A look at early footage of hip hop music videos shows many early hip hop artists mimicking the styles and sounds that they heard from American hip hop. By the mid-1990s, however, hip hop in both countries appears to have gone through a localization process. During this time hip hop artists in Ghana and Tanzania began to incorporate local sounds, and, more importantly, began rapping in local languages about topics of significance to local populations.

In Ghana one of the first to popularize this trend was Reggie Rockstone. Rockstone returned from living abroad in 1994 and would help usher in a new music genre, Hip-life. Hip-life contains elements of Ghanaian High Life, hip hop, reggae, and R&B.<sup>10</sup> The lines between Hip-life and hip hop are often blurred; the implications for hip hop in Ghana (sometimes called GH rap) will be discussed later. Today most Ghanaian hip hop artists rap in Twi, as well as Pidgen, Ga, and Ewe.

In Tanzania the history of Swahili hip hop is murky.<sup>11</sup> Several academic sources, however, recognize Saleh Jabir (aka Saleh J, Saleh Jaber, Saleh Aljabry, or Swaleh J) to be the first to record an album in Swahili with his 1991 album *King of Swahili Rap*, but the debate

in the Tanzanian hip hop community has not been resolved.<sup>12</sup> Jabir was primarily taking popular American hip hop songs and re-doing them in Swahili. Around the same time “organic” Swahili hip hop in Tanzania emerged. Among the early artists to begin rapping original verses in Swahili were 2Proud, Fresh G, Gangsters with Matatizo, Dika Sharp, and De-Plow-Matz.

By the mid-1990s hip hop in Ghana and Tanzania was still in its infancy, but quickly maturing into a genuine voice of the urban youth, especially the poor urban youth. The majority of the hip hop artists in both Ghana and Tanzania used local languages and dialects in the music. As well, many of the songs spoke to the plight of the poor, to life on the margins and in the “ghettos.”

### **The Rise of Neoliberalism in Ghana and Tanzania**

Both Ghana and Tanzania began their independence with strong, ambitious leaders. Under Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere both countries were led by presidents who implemented socialist economic policies and attempted to steer their nations away from invasive Western influence. Both Ghana and Tanzania saw impressive gains in the areas of healthcare and education, as Nkrumah and Nyerere focused on the development of these sectors.<sup>13</sup> Ghana’s infrastructure was developing into one of the best in Africa, while in Tanzania a strong national identity was forged with the adoption of Swahili as the national and official language.<sup>14</sup> With similar beginnings, both Ghana and Tanzania later moved in a different direction, towards neoliberal economics with free-market reforms, privatization, and the rolling back of social services.

After Nkrumah was ousted from power in 1966, Ghana endured a series of coups, ending with the 1981 coup led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings.<sup>15</sup> Following the Rawlings coup Ghana entered a period of economic and cultural repression, when many Ghanaians, including several musicians, left the country.<sup>16</sup> To the east, in Tanzania, Julius Nyerere enjoyed widespread support. In 1985 he became one of the first African presidents to voluntarily step down, handing over power to Ali Hassan Mwinyi in the 1985 presidential elections. After Nyerere’s departure from office and his death in 1999, successive Tanzanian presidents would take the country in a very different direction.

The mid-1980s saw both Ghana and Tanzania headed quickly towards capitalist economic reform as they began talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in order to help their struggling economies.<sup>17</sup> With this aid came donor prescribed structural adjustment programs (SAPs), which African states were obliged to adopt. One of Tanzanian President Mwinyi’s first responsibilities was to sign agreements with the IMF and the World Bank.<sup>18</sup> While under the leadership of President Rawlings, Ghana became a favorite of the West for its embrace and implementation of IMF and World Bank prescribed SAPs.<sup>19</sup> Both privatization and neoliberalism were at the core of the SAP formula, as was the devaluation of African currencies.<sup>20</sup> Other conditions included massive cuts in government spending, especially in public services such as education and healthcare.<sup>21</sup> These SAPs would see Ghana and Tanzania adopt economic policies, which also led to foreign penetration of local markets, and deregulation.<sup>22</sup>

Life in both Accra and Dar es Salaam became more difficult. Residents faced widespread poverty, housing problems, high rates of underemployment and unemployment, and a decrease in access to healthcare and education.<sup>23</sup> In neighborhoods like Nima in Accra and Temeke in Dar es Salaam, from which many hip hop artists would

emerge, problems include overcrowding, poor housing and sanitation, substandard healthcare and education, and high crime.<sup>24</sup> The implemented neoliberal economic policies also led to displaced rural peasants flooding the cities in search of work and opportunities, straining an already stressed infrastructure.<sup>25</sup> The ranks of the unemployed also became filled with illiterate and semi-literate youth who increasingly turn to the informal market and illegal activities to survive. The following 2006 quote from Tanzanian scholar Issa Shivji could be applied to both Ghana and Tanzania:

Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s destroyed the little achievements in education, health, life expectancy, and literacy that we had made during the nationalist period. Neo-liberal policies of the last ten years have destroyed the small industrial sector—textiles, oil, leather, farm implements, and cashew nut factories—which had been built during the period of import-substitution. Most important of all, we have lost the respect, dignity and humanity and the right to think for ourselves that independence presented.<sup>26</sup>

This is the environment in which many hip hop artists emerged. Hip hop music provided youth with an opportunity to address the problems they were seeing around them. Ironically, it would be some of the tools of globalization that would provide artists with the opportunity to have their voices heard. Privatization allowed for the emergence of a number of independent radio stations in both Ghana and Tanzania.<sup>27</sup> In Ghana there was a re-birth of the music scene, as artists returned and new ones arose. In Tanzania many citizens would purchase their first television sets in the mid-1990s as new stations emerged. This all provided an opportunity for young artists to have an outlet for their music. Stations needed local music to play, and the artists needed stations to play their music. This period also meant easier access to news, music, and culture from abroad, allowing hip hop artists to connect to global social and political movements.

The era of globalization has also meant greater access to an international audience. Every major hip hop artist in both Ghana and Tanzania now has an internet presence. In conducting preliminary research it became clear that the level of internet presence strongly correlated with artists' success abroad, and at home. As an increasing number of Africans are using social media, a scan of artists' fan pages on Facebook finds a number of fans based in Africa.

Artists are utilizing social media tools to get their music out, to control their images, and to remain relevant. Artists will often release mixtapes (free online albums), announce tour dates, and post album release information via social media. This allows artists to bypass traditional avenues that are often hostile to socially conscious hip hop. Artists will also use email and the internet to collaborate with artists in other locations. Artists in both Tanzania and Ghana have used the internet for collaborations, exchanging beats or vocal tracks with artists in other countries. Tanzania's Fid Q has an internet program called "Fidstyle Fridays" in which he has interviewed various artists, including African American artist and activist Toni Blackman.<sup>28</sup> He has used this platform to interview socially conscious hip hop artists and to highlight hip hop culture. Likewise, Ghanaian hip hop artist Sarkodie used social media to promote a recent American tour. He also has his music in rotation with online music listening sites like Spotify and Pandora, where listeners anywhere in the world can listen to his for free. The result has been incredible, as artists who were only known nationally, are now gaining international audiences. These audiences include the Tanzanian

and Ghanaian diasporas respectively, but also other Africans and non-Africans. In addition, the artists themselves are becoming more aware of what artists in other parts of the continent are doing. In interviews with several Tanzanian and Ghanaian hip hop artists all indicated knowledge, albeit limited, of what artists in other countries were doing.

### **Impact of Pop Music on Hip Hop**

As noted earlier, there is great ambiguity between hip hop and both Hip-life and Bongo Flava. These two pop genres emerged in the 1990s (Hiplife in the early-1990s and Bongo Flava in the late-1990s), and their influence on youth music in both countries would be significant. Hip hop in these countries has been overshadowed by both of these genres, resulting in different reactions. Ghanaian artists seem to have largely accepted that Hip-life outsells hip hop and have in turn used Hip-life to deliver socially relevant messages. In Tanzania, hip hop artists are fighting back and trying to challenge the Bongo Flava machine by drawing a line in the sand between hip hop and Bongo Flava.

The question of authenticity in hip hop thus becomes important, and is an issue that is debated globally. While authenticity is a core value in hip hop, it is also a concept that is difficult to concretely define as it takes “a variety of forms in a multitude of contexts,” varying significantly even within local hip hop communities.<sup>29</sup> Kembrew McLeod’s 1999 look at authenticity in hip hop ties authenticity to staying culturally authentic, rejecting the mainstream, and having knowledge and appreciation of hip hop’s traditions and values. Many of these ideas of authenticity have been expressed by hip hop artists in both Ghana and Tanzania. There are, however, debates surrounding the supremacy of content versus skill in determining hip hop authenticity. Some see social and political consciousness as a pre-requisite of true hip hop. Others look to skill in lyricism and lyrical creativity as a measure of hip hop authenticity. These are all debates that are occurring within and among hip hop communities globally, and often add another element to the debate over pop music’s influence.

Interviews with artists in both Ghana and Tanzania brought out clear differences between the two countries in the relationship to pop music and hip hop. In Ghana several artists interviewed in 2010 and 2011 identified as both hip hop artists and Hip-life artists. In an interview with Ghanaian artist Yaa Pono, the artist vacillated between identifying as a hip hop artist and as a Hip-life artist, moving easily between both identities.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, Ewe hip hop artist Ayigbe Edem also maintained a dual identity.<sup>31</sup> In fact, many were unable to give a clear distinction between the two.

Hip-life began as lyrics rapped or sung over High Life beats in Ghanaian languages. Today, music that artists and fans classify as Hip-life is rapped over a variety of beats, leading to further confusion. In 2012, 4SYTE TV released the documentary “A Documentary on Hip Hop in Ghana” that appeared on the internet.<sup>32</sup> Numerous musicians are interviewed and ultimately asked about the debate between Hip-life and hip hop. There are varying views, but those interviewed relayed the presence of a hip hop “movement,” or a hip hop community that distinguishes itself from Hip-life in Ghana. There was some belief expressed that this movement was in fact growing, though the blurred lines between Hip-life and hip hop influenced that growth.

In an interview, music producer Panji Nanoff described what he sees as some of the fundamental characteristics that distinguish Hip-life from hip hop, including free shows, social relevance, mainstream acceptance, and indigenous rhythms.<sup>33</sup> While hip hop also

addresses social issues, Nanoff says Hip-life does it in a way that is humorous, often making use of proverbs to make a point. In the end Nanoff says that Ghanaian hip hop, and by extension socially conscious hip hop, is not commercially viable. U.S.-based Ghanaian artist M.anifest concurred with Nanoff's assessment, going further by indicating that the political confrontations that happen in other hip hop communities do not occur in Ghana.<sup>34</sup> In other words, the social and political critique by artists in other hip hop communities is minimized in Ghana, a result of both the social and political climate and the influence of Hip-life music.

Tanzanian hip hop artists are openly hostile towards Bongo Flava, which unlike Hip-life contains very little social or political commentary. In fact, one of the most important distinctions between the two is that Tanzanian hip hop is often, though not always, more socially and politically conscious. Bongo (a slang word for Dar es Salaam) Flava is a term given to youth music coming out of Dar es Salaam. Bongo Flava songs are a mixture of hip hop, R&B, and reggae performed in Swahili. Bongo Flava songs are about love and having a good time. Tanzanian hip hop, on the other hand, is performed almost exclusively over hip hop beats. In addition Tanzanian hip hop lyrics are rhymes that address a variety of topics, including political and social issues.

As with Hip-life, it is difficult for many to articulate all the distinctions between hip hop and Bongo Flava. The main difference is lyrical content. Bongo Flava is almost entirely apolitical, while songs that comment on social and political issues are almost always hip hop songs. Interviews in 2009 and 2010 with twelve different recording artists in Tanzania yielded interesting results on the perceptions of pop music's influence on hip hop. Many, especially older artists like Sugu and Zavara, KBC, and Saigon, expressed a clear disdain for Bongo Flava and saw it as having a destructive influence on hip hop and the ability of hip hop artists to get their music out.<sup>35</sup> Artists Coin Moko of Viraka and Ehks B and Rage Prophotional of Rebels Sonz are all hip hop artists that produce socially conscious lyrics. In an interview with the three artists all agreed that they were resigned to an underground status because of their refusal to switch to the Bongo Flava format.<sup>36</sup>

Economically, hip hop has been marginalized in Tanzania, with many of the artists relegated to "underground" status. Radio stations reinforce this in their play lists. In a 2010 interview, Clouds FM presenter Ruben Ndege defended the station's decision to primarily play Bongo Flava, insisting that it is what Tanzanians preferred.<sup>37</sup> Like Panji Nanoff in Ghana, Ndege argued that socially conscious hip hop was not commercially viable. This has helped to fuel the tensions between the two genres as economic livelihoods are affected. According to Shani Omari, the tensions led to the emergence of slogans like "Okoa Hip Hop" (Save Hip Hop).<sup>38</sup> They have also spurred the activism of artists, like hip hop pioneers Sugu and Zavara Mponjika, who promote hip hop culture in Tanzania.

The implications for hip hop in Accra and Dar es Salaam are therefore varied. While artists in Ghana have both hip hop and Hip-life through which to tell their stories, hip hop, especially conscious hip hop, in Ghana continues to struggle to find an outlet in the face of Hip-life. In Tanzania, the marginalization of hip hop has meant that most hip hop artists are outside of the mainstream. Fid Q and Profesa Jay are among the rare hip hop artists to produce socially conscious music and find success and recognition in both pop and hip hop. While hip hop remains strong in Tanzania, its marginalization affects its reach and cripples the influence of the artists on social change.

## The Lyrics

Hip hop artists in both Accra and Dar es Salaam have utilized hip hop to respond to the conditions in their respective countries, albeit in different ways. Many artists have delivered thought provoking lyrics, providing a discourse on living conditions, political corruption, greed, and ineffective political policies. In Ghana many of the lyrics are reflections on society and the behavior of Ghanaians themselves. They are more social commentary than direct attacks on the political or economic system. After the 1981 Rawlings coup the government kept a tight control on freedom of speech. The government even passed laws that limited both freedom of speech and criticisms of the regime, such as the Preventive Custody Law (PNDC Law 4), which allowed for the indefinite detention without trial of anyone critical of the regime.<sup>39</sup> While Rawlings loosened his grip after holding and winning multi-party elections in 1992, there remained concerns around his human rights record and the amount of criticism one could direct at the government. Successive presidents have further liberalized Ghanaian society. The Ghanaian hip hop community, however, has yet to fully embrace the practice of direct criticism of the government. Instead, through their commentary on social concerns, artists indirectly address domestic and foreign policy impacts.

Tanzania also lacks a history of social protest, particularly on the mainland, but the country has never experienced the type of censorship or repression Ghanaians experienced under President Rawlings. While social and political activism is rare among hip hop artists in Tanzania, many artists do address both social and political issues in their lyrics, often pointing direct blame at political and economic systems. Many of the early hip hop artists in Tanzania influenced this tradition of using hip hop to address social issues. Artists such as Kwanzaa Unit, Hard Blasters, De-Plow-Matz, and 2Proud all set the stage for the socially conscious hip hop that would be produced by future generations of hip hop artists. Many Tanzanians see their use of Swahili as linked to a sense of national identity. A common saying among East Africans is that that “Kiswahili was born in Zanzibar, grew up in Tanzania, fell sick in Kenya, died in Uganda and was buried in Congo.”<sup>40</sup> Hip hop artists in Dar es Salaam rely on the almost poetic ways in which Swahili is employed in social critique in Tanzania when directing their own social critiques.

Ghanaian and Tanzanian hip hop provide important examples of the social and political dialogues occurring among youth in both countries. It is the voices of the artists that the youth are listening to, and artists in both countries have the potential to influence the conversations, perceptions and actions among both young Africans and mainstream social institutions.

## Ghana

One of the few Ghanaian hip hop artists to speak out openly on political issues, calling out officials by name, is A Plus. He has, in fact, released an album or song every election cycle since 2000, including the albums *Freedom of Speech* and *Letter to Parliament*. His song “Osono Ate Ahwe” (“Political Review”) addresses the election of President John Atta Mills in 2008. The song criticizes President Mills, saying that since his regime the prices for commodities have gone up and the value of the Ghanaian cedi has gone down. A Plus also comments on the greed that exists in the government, and corruption in the political process. In the song he admits to being threatened for his outspokenness but insists that it will not stop him from

speaking out.<sup>41</sup> In fact, A Plus has gained a reputation among Ghanaians for his political commentary, discussing issues most Ghanaian artists choose not to.<sup>42</sup>

### Sarkodie's "Borga"

Ghanaian artist Sarkodie is popular artist and enjoys widespread success. He released the hit song "Borga" in 2009 and caused a stir in the Ghanaian Diaspora community. "Borga" is a Twi word that refers to Ghanaians living abroad. The song (original Twi in endnote) was directed at those Ghanaians living abroad, deconstructing the image of the Ghanaian living in the West.

Do you think this it is easy? Stop we're really hustling  
 Someone is in Canada he needs to go begging for his daily meal  
 A lot of these *borga* are not truthful  
 You would have known life in the West is ugly  
 You are a tailor in Ghana and you make money  
 You have food to eat, at the very least, you have somewhere to sleep  
 You've saved money to get a visa  
 You want to travel to America just to suffer  
 Advice doesn't change a man unless he experiences it

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Whose fault is it that you are suffering?  
 Had it been you were in Ghana you would have commissioned schools and  
 been hired by *Tigo* [mobile network] to be a manager  
 Rather you are in the West sweeping the streets and after shake yourself  
 cause you don't have a place to sleep<sup>43</sup>

Sarkodie criticizes Western values and economic aspirations, which leads many Ghanaians (and Africans) to seek lives in the West. "Borga" points to the images of the West that are present in Ghana and sustained by returning Ghanaians. In doing so, Sarkodie attempts to pull back the curtain on the lives of Ghanaians abroad while touting the benefits of making a life at home in Ghana. The song is therefore not critical of conditions in Ghana; instead it addresses the desires for a life in the West among many Ghanaians. The song is an attempt to address the reality of the lives of Ghanaian immigrants in the West, from the perspective of a Ghanaian at home.

Another artist is relative newcomer, Yaa Pono, whose debut album "Nsem Kua" ("Funny Proverbs") takes a humorous spin on social commentary. Many Ghanaian hip hop artists deliver their lyrics in a style that is likened to speaking in proverbs. What distinguishes these songs is that simply taking a few lines from a song will not reveal the overall message of the song. These types of hip hop songs require the listener to hear the entire story before fully appreciating the message in the song.

The lyrics in the song "Good Morning" detail a day in the life of Yaa Pono, a man struggling to survive in the city with few financial resources. It is a story of life in urban Accra, and one that is intended reach millions of Ghanaians facing similar challenges:

It's daybreak, I feel so sad  
 It looks like my teeth have been painted  
 The woes of life have even made me forget to brush my teeth  
 Daybreak Africa, I have just seen this man with a tree around his neck  
 . . . breakfast is okay, even if I hadn't had it I will still have to skip lunch

Some say the morning is bright but I see it as blurred.<sup>44</sup>

Seeing the “man with a tree around his neck” refers to seeing a man pass by who seemed to be weighed down by burdens. Yaa Pono goes on to discuss the difficulty of getting food because of a lack of money:

I am going to see if the *waakye* [rice and bean dish] seller is in  
 If I don't get meat I'll get *wele* [goat skin]  
 I wish I could buy *koko* [a cheap porridge] but the line is long.<sup>45</sup>

This passage thus laments not being able to afford meat, and therefore having to eat goat skin, which is cheaper. Cheaper still is *koko*, where the line of people buying it is long, indicating the number of people who could only afford the cheapest option. In these passages, as in other parts of the song, Yaa Pono identifies himself as being among the many people who face similar limited daily choices because of a lack of resources.

### Tanzania

Tanzanian artists such as Sugu (Mr. II) and Profesa Jay (aka Profesa J or Professor Jay) became famous in the late-1990s and early-2000s for their criticisms of the government. Sugu's 1998 song “Hali Halisi” (“The Real Situation”) was a commentary on life in Tanzania, in the face of corruption, poverty, and unemployment. Sugu sings:

We have hard lives, even the president knows  
 And still we have smiles for every situation  
 This is the real situation  
 Everyday it's us and the police, the police and us.<sup>46</sup>

Sugu recently made history in becoming the first hip hop artist to win political office. In the 2010 parliamentary elections Sugu (aka Joseph Mbilinyi) won a seat representing the southern Tanzanian city of Mbeya. Sugu, who made a career holding government leaders accountable, ran under the opposition party Chadema. During the elections he pointed to growing economic inequality and corruption as two social ills facing Tanzania.<sup>47</sup> His decision to run was influenced by a desire to have an opportunity to address some of the issues he rapped about in his ten albums and nearly twenty-year career.<sup>48</sup>

### Profesa Jay's “Ndio Mzee”

Profesa Jay's most notable contribution to socially conscious music was his 2001 song “Ndio Mzee” (“Yes Sir/Elder”). The song deals with the false promises made by politicians, promises that are forgotten after the election. In the song (original Swahili in endnote) Profesa Jay plays a politician making a series of promises with the response of “*ndio mzee*” from the crowd.

And I will get rid of all your problems, “Yes Mzee.”  
 These things, they are infuriating, “Yes Mzee.”  
 And they really annoy me, “Yes Mzee.”  
 So, things will change, okay? “Yes Mzee.”  
 And, I will take the reins okay? “Yes Mzee.”<sup>49</sup>

As a follow up to “Ndio Mzee” Profesa Jay released “Nang'atuka” (“I Resign”) in 2008. In “Nang'atuka” Profesa Jay returns as the same politician, now apologizing to his voters for his wrong doings and abuse of power. In the song he confesses all his sins and resigns from office, a thinly veiled message to politicians in Tanzania.

Hip hop artists in Dar es Salaam have continued to use engage in social commentary. Artists like Roma, Izzo Bizness, Rage Prophotional, and Fid Q have all utilized hip hop to critique social and political issues. Roma and his song “Tanzania” reflect on post-independence Tanzania while admonishing contemporary leadership. The song reflects on the promising years of Tanzania’s post-independence period with lines such as:

1.9.6.1 Kambarage [President Nyerere] became a hero  
 Without bloodshed he made December shine . . .  
 You resigned when we still needed you  
 You didn’t want to stay in power too long, you left it to Ali Hadji [President Mwinyi]  
 Now they fight for the presidential house with raw lust.

Roma goes on to admonish current politicians in Tanzania:

Their drivers approach women for them  
 They abandon a lot of innocent children  
 Their wives go out with youth undisciplined  
 Because their husbands are busy with illegal deals  
 The price of their cars can build a school in the village  
 There are illiterate children grazing cows in villages.<sup>50</sup>

Roma’s song invokes the image and words of President Nyerere in a manner that directly criticizes successive regimes. Roma expresses a belief that successive governments failed to live up to standard set by Nyerere, who’s landmark 1967 Arusha Declaration sought in part to curb corruption and ensure that the government acted in the best interest of the people. His song is thus both praise for Nyerere and a commentary on excessive greed and corruption in Tanzania today.

Izzo Bizness directs his song “Riz One” the son of the current president of Tanzania, Jakaya Kikwete who is named Ridhiwan but is also known as Riz One.<sup>51</sup> In the song, Izzo Bizness tells Ridhiwan to pass the message to his father that people are tired of the current situation. Izzo Bizness talks about corruption and drugs, as well as electricity, water and oil shortages, all in a message directed at Ridhiwan. The song is unique in directing a message to the President’s son who is around the same age as many of the hip hop artists. The song sought to identify Ridhiwan as a member of Tanzania’s hip hop community, and in doing so asked Ridhiwan to be a bridge between the hip hop community and the political system represented by his father.

### **Rage Prophotional’s “Ugumu wa Maisha”**

Underground hip hop artist Rage Prophotional, one of the few Tanzanian hip hop artists to rap in English, was a finalist in the 2008 Channel O continent-wide Emcee Africa competition. Rage’s song “Ugumu wa Maisha” (“Difficulties of Life”) reflects on corruption and racism in both politics and society:

Days turn to nights and struggles turn to pain  
 Policies seem to change, green turns to white  
 Whites steal from Blacks and Blacks turn on Blacks  
 Blacks become like caged animals hidden like fox  
 When they came to attack, bullets sounding like symphony  
 Treating us like orangutans, showed us no sympathy<sup>52</sup>

Rage Prophetical was raised in England but returned to Dar es Salaam in recent years. His time in England is evident in his choice in language, as Rage is fluent in both English and Swahili. His period overseas is also reflected in his commentary on racism, an issue largely absent from most Tanzanian hip hop, contributes to discussions of racism and economics on a global scale. Rage Prophetical is part of the group Rebel Sonz and the only one in the group to rap in English.

### **Fid Q's "Propaganda"**

An artist who has gained both a mainstream and underground following is Fid Q. The artist recently performed at Nkrumah Hall on the campus of the University of Dar es Salaam in front of academics and political dignitaries, including the former Organization of African Unity Secretary General Salim Salim. Often paying homage in his music to "old school" artists like KBC and Zavara of Kwanza Unit, Fid Q has taken his influence seriously and spearheaded several outreach projects, such as the Africans Act 4 Africa campaign. The following is an excerpt from Fid Q's song "Propaganda" off of his 2009 album of the same name (original Swahili lyrics in endnote):

The police label me a vagrant while they know I'm an emcee  
 Then, they give me signs as if they utter *Tasbih* [prayer beads] repetitively  
 The bad that doesn't hurt me is the good that doesn't help anything  
 I'm thankful for my views being heard everywhere  
 From the counties, divisions, districts, regions up to the national level  
 I would die with no scandals; I will leave a legacy  
 These rhymes might even cause farmers to ingest seeds  
 Also, they're like liberation struggle in the eyes of Che Guevara  
 If you are gifted like Marco Chali, people will recognize you regardless  
 It's the fools, who die from jealousy because they're not real  
 ---  
 You are not supposed to trust a liar, even when he is telling the truth  
 It's a sin to use religion as a tool to con people  
 They profit under the disguise of [foreign] aid  
 They don't teach us to be leaders; but maybe leaders in following [them]  
 Controversies always start when we begin to scrutinize them  
 Instead of solidifying our beliefs in following them, secrets start to leak<sup>53</sup>

In the song Fid Q articulates the potential power of the hip hop emcee in influencing the people, and the responsibility he feels he has to pass on truths that could make, as he says, "farmers ingest seeds"; the seeds representing the tools needed for change. He also calls out politicians and religious leaders, suggesting that it is those following in the steps of past visionaries that will spark the call for change. In addition, Fid Q ties together several different elements, including Islamic imagery and links to broader social movements, in his mention of Che Guevara.

### **The Use of Images: Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere**

Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere were two African giants. They were both leaders at the forefront of African and Pan African liberation struggles, and they both left a significant presence in their respective nations, on the African continent, and beyond Africa's borders. For today's hip hop artists, both leaders left behind a legacy of Pan African ideals and

national pride. Artists in both Ghana and Tanzania have evoked the images and words of both Nkrumah and Nyerere.

The use of images and speeches from Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere are very popular among hip hop artists. Sarkodie's video for his 2009 song "Layaway" features images of the Kwame Nkrumah monument in Accra.<sup>54</sup> In addition, Sarkodie transposes images of Kwame Nkrumah giving a speech with his own image in the same video. In the video and song for "Tanzania" hip hop artist Roma included images and video clips of Julius Nyerere in the video and excerpts from some of Nyerere's speeches in the chorus. The cover photo for Fid Q's album "Progpanda" depicts him wearing a t-shirt designed by the East African clothing line KinaKlothing. The t-shirt is one of their most popular and prominently features the image of Julius Nyerere.

### **Fokn Bois' "Tenk U"**

Ghanaian hip hop artists Wanlov the Kubolor and M3nsa, collectively known as Fokn Bois, made a film that was billed as the world's first Pidgen musical. The film, titled "Coz ov Moni," was a comedy about two friends (Wanlov and M3nsa) who get into trouble due to their pursuit of money. Included in the soundtrack is a song called "Tenk u," which in the film is done in a dream sequence. The song is addressed to the audience and is on one hand a criticism of today's leaders while at the same time it is a tribute to past leaders. Below is the verse given by M3nsa in Pidgen. The verse by Wanlov was only available in English.

M3nsa's Pidgen lyrics:

I force travel small wey I see da hosslins, of da people, da women, n demma  
offsprings

Mek I dey ask questions, man for do sometin  
To contribute, to build, positive construction

---

Look wanna leaders, look wanna teachers  
Look all these so called friends dem say dem com relieve us  
Many hundred years ago dey com in da name of Jesus  
Da same people turn around den enslave non-believers  
Along with the believers da same tin dey happen today headed by strong  
deceivers

I still be very inspires even tho oppressors screw up

Wanlov the Kubolor's lyrics:

Don't sit on your ass waiting on so-called leaders  
Just puppets being led with strings by them to mis-lead us  
It's up to you to make the best in life  
Chale never ever give up. Try!  
If we don't dictate they will come and dictate to us  
They will squander everything, we won't even get a stone  
Read, think, train, get up stand up, fight for your right  
Bleed, stink, pain, no sudden flight, toil through the night  
It's not Black versus White, it's poor man versus the suit and tie  
They make the wars and we enlist to shoot and die  
The youth must try and learn about their ancestors<sup>55</sup>

The chorus of the song pays homage to numerous past leaders, inside and outside Africa. In the film images of these leaders are flashed in the background. The first line of the chorus is: "Patrice Lumumba, Mbuyu Nehanda, Nzingha, we de tank you." The chorus goes on to name individuals such as Kwame Nkrumah, Yaa Asantewaa, Martin Luther King, Thomas Sankara, Fela Kuti, Fred Hampton, and others, followed by the refrain "we de tank you." As in Roma's "Tanzania," Fokn Bois have created a tribute to past African (and Diasporan) leaders, while lodging criticisms at current leaders. For "Tenk U" Fokn Bois' took a more serious approach than they often do. M3nsa's verse, like Fid Q's, admonishes the use of religion in human oppression. Both M3nsa and Fid Q point to the deception of the people by religious leaders. These lyrics may have been inspired in part by the conspicuous presence of mega churches all over Accra, and their emerging presence in Dar es Salaam.

Wanlov's verse is more inspiration for those being oppressed. Wanlov views the problem as an economic one. Like Rage Prophetical, Wanlov lived for a time in the West, but unlike Rage, Wanlov does not see racism as the problem. With the line "It's not Black versus White, it's poor man versus the suit and tie" he makes it a point to note that the problem is not racism, it is economic. Fokn Bois has tended to take more humorous approaches to social commentary. They have also not shied away from controversy, with their provocative songs like "Sexin' Islamic Girls," which also challenges social and religious institutions.

## Conclusion

The economic and political changes of the 1980s and 1990s provided inspiration for the hip hop that emerged out of both Accra and Dar es Salaam. Those changes, as well as the popularity of pop music, have also influenced the ways in which hip hop has been used for social commentary in both cases. These changes influenced the levels and types of social consciousness found in Ghanaian and Tanzanian hip hop.

Some of the more politically charged African hip hop scenes are found in Dakar, Senegal and Cape Town, South Africa, where socially conscious artists have been at the fore of both the hip hop scene as well as social movements.<sup>56</sup> In both Senegal and South Africa hip hop emerged fairly early, in the 1980s, and was led at the outset by socially conscious groups like Positive Black Soul (PBS) in Senegal and Prophets of the City (POC) in South Africa.<sup>57</sup>

In Senegal, a casualty of the 1980s economic crisis that hit Africa was the closure of schools because of strikes. This event is seen to have led to the politicization of Senegalese hip hop.<sup>58</sup> During 2009 interviews with Senegalese hip hop veterans Keyti and Xuman, both referred to the incident as being critical in politicizing Senegalese hip hop.<sup>59</sup> In South Africa hip hop emerged under the apartheid system, which provided ample inspiration for hip hop's politicization. The early politicization of hip hop in South Africa coincided with the growing militancy of the anti-apartheid movement and the popularity of American hip hop groups like Public Enemy.<sup>60</sup>

In both countries, the early politicization of hip hop seems to have had an impact on the mainstreaming of politically conscious hip hop and hip hop artists, via radio airplay, video play and major music performances. This has given artists the means to both promote hip hop culture and participate in important social and political conversations. This mainstreaming of politically conscious hip hop did not happen in Ghana and Tanzania, and while politically conscious hip hop in those countries remains present, it is much more

marginalized. Ghanaian and Tanzanian artists have, nonetheless, pushed for the greater visibility of hip hop in the mainstream. Many artists in Ghana have included pop tracks on their CDs, while in Tanzania many artists continue to resist pop music. In both countries, however, pop music impacts the hip hop community as both genres compete for space.

The influence of the social, economic, and political environments have inspired artists to use hip hop to challenge the changes brought about by economic globalization and privatization. Artists have addressed the ways in which social and economic conditions have impacted their countries. Poverty, for example, is a big topic for hip hop artists, especially the impact of poverty on the lives of people and the prices of commodities. Using their music as a platform to address these issues, the artists speak directly to the youth, who make up large percentages of the population. Many hip hop artists in both Accra and Dar es Salaam focus only on national issues and on domestic social commentary, though artists such as Rage Prophetical and Fid Q do tie in broader struggles. Rage Prophetical, as well as Wanlov the Kubolor and M3nsa (aka Fokn Bois), all spent considerable time in the West. This has served to broaden their focus to pull in global dynamics. Wanlov lived in Los Angeles for a number of years before returning to Accra, and M3nsa spent much of his time between the London and Accra. Their music draws on figures and ideals from across Africa and the African Diaspora in their criticisms of current leaders.

Socially conscious hip hop coming out of Accra and Dar es Salaam presents important perspectives on society. In both Ghana and Tanzania there have been dramatic shifts away from the policies of both Nkrumah and Nyerere, but reflections on those policies have found their way to the lyrics and videos of hip hop artists. That many of these artists were born in post-Nkrumah and post-Nyerere eras but recall their values and ideals speaks to the important legacies of those leaders.

There are some key differences between Ghanaian and Tanzanian hip hop. Among them, Ghanaian hip hop often utilizes less direct and more subtle ways in which to address social issues in their songs, as in the use of proverbs, such as Yaa Pono's "Good Morning." In other cases this is done more directly, as in Sarkodie's "Borga" or A Plus' "Osono Ate Ahwe." Tanzanian artists have produced lyrics with more direct political content, addressing not only corruption and poverty, but also foreign aid and living conditions. Artists like Roma and Izzo Bizness place direct blame on political leaders. Since both countries face significant social and economic difficulties, the differences in content and approach could be attributed to their past political histories, as well as differences in cultural norms towards direct political engagement.

Two areas needing growth in both countries include the inclusion of gender and calls for social change. Both Ghanaian and Tanzanian hip hop fail to adequately address gender issues. This is due in part to the lack of female hip hop artists in both countries. While both Hip-life and Bongo Flava have several female artists, few females enter into hip hop. In trying to find female hip hop artists in both countries, it became clear that there was a serious lack of a female presence. In fact pop artists and singers, like Tanzania's Ray C and Nakaaya or Ghana's Tiffany and Eazzy often get labeled as hip hop. While there are female hip hop artists like Tanzania's Rah P (now based in the U.S.) or Witness, who's song "Zero" (with Fid Q) is a classic hip hop track, they are among the few. As a result women have been largely omitted from discussions of social, economic and political problems. While not as explicit as American hip hop videos, many of the hip hop music videos from both Ghana and Tanzania also tend to reinforce gender stereotypes and patriarchal structures.

Another similarity is that artists have yet to parley their lyrics into calls for change. In Tanzania artists in that country have come close, although few mainstream artists have pushed for change. While artists in both countries have utilized the images of Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere in their songs and music videos, few have actually taken steps to elicit change. Meanwhile, social and political observations in hip hop lyrics have created a space for dialogue. Hip hop culture has in fact succeeded in engaging youth in Accra and Dar es Salaam in political discussions.

Many of the songs released by artists are bought, passed around, and looked up online by youth throughout the country and in the Diaspora, drawing them in to important social, economic, and political discussions. Artists' Facebook fan pages indicate fans that are based locally, as well as in the Diaspora. Those fan pages often contain songs that can be listened to online. With online music listening sites like Pandora and Spotify, many of these artists (e.g., Fid Q, Sarkodie, Wanlov the Kubolor, and M3nsa) offer listeners an opportunity to listen to their music for free. In addition, many of these artists have music available online, either for purchase or free download. The purchase and download of these songs has allowed fans in the Diaspora to listen to those songs. Sarkodie's 2011 concert tour in the U.S. led to performances in New York, Washington, DC, and Los Angeles. At the Los Angeles performance it was clear to this author that many of the attendees were Ghanaians, who likely heard Sarkodie's music from one of these sources. In addition, Sarkodie's song "Borga" is said to have elicited response tracks from Ghanaians in the Diaspora, challenging Sarkodie's assertion that life in the West is difficult.

Ultimately, hip hop artists and the youth they represent are an important component of progressive social or political struggles. Understanding hip hop's use as social commentary is important in that it is a significant means by which younger Ghanaians and Tanzanians communicate among themselves and with broader society. Hip hop music and artists present stories of urban Africa, of young Africa. Ghanaian and Tanzanian hip hop offer stories and perspectives that are valuable for understanding social and political dynamics in those countries. Examinations of the factors influencing socially conscious hip hop reveal broader economic, cultural and political forces that impact youth expression. It is therefore important to engage with African hip hop artists and culture in order to understand better the growing implications of this culture for Africa as a whole.

## Notes

- 1 Beah 2007; Haupt 2008; Ntarangwi 2009; Cho 2010; Clark 2011; Ariefdien & Burgess 2011; Herson 2011; Künzler 2011.
- 2 Kitwana 2003; Hann 2011.
- 3 Konadu-Agyemang 2000a; Perullo 2005.
- 4 Konadu-Agyemang et al 2006; Falola and Afolabi 2007; Clark 2009.
- 5 Deane and Logan 2003; Clark 2009.
- 6 Diouf; Okome 2002.
- 7 Brydon & Legge 1996; Lugalla 1997; Bond & Dor 2003; Mawuko-Yevugah 2010.
- 8 Englert 2003; Stroeken 2005.
- 9 Perullo 2005; Shipley 2009.

- 10 Kwaku 2000; Shipley 2009; Cho 2010.
- 11 In reviewing discussion boards and interviewing some of Tanzania's hip hop pioneers [Balozi (Dola Sol) and Saigon of De-Plow-Matz (or Deplowmatz), Sugu (2Proud or Mr. II), and Zavara (Rhymson) and KBC of Kwanza Unit)] there were varying accounts of the history of Swahili hip hop in Tanzania. A few different names were mentioned as artists who pioneered Swahili hip hop and when that transition occurred.
- 12 Englert 2003; Perullo & Fenn 2003; Suriano 2007.
- 13 Frehiwot 2011; Buah 1998; Chachage C. 2010; Chachage S. 2010.
- 14 Mwakikagile 2006.
- 15 Abdulai 1992; Opoku-Dapaah 1992.
- 16 Shipley 2007; Cho 2010.
- 17 Konadu-Agyemang 2000a; Perullo 2005; Opoku 2008.
- 18 Perullo 2005.
- 19 Brydon & Legge 1996; "Rawlings: The legacy" 2000.
- 20 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 1986; Shah 2006.
- 21 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 1986; Shah 2006.
- 22 Brydon & Legge 1996; Konadu-Agyemang 2000a; Shivji 2010; Liviga 2011.
- 23 Brydon & Legge 1996; Lugalla 1997; Bond & Dor 2003; Mawuko-Yevugah 2010.
- 24 Brydon & Legge 1996; Lugalla 1997.
- 25 Lugalla 1997; Konadu-Agyemang 2000b; Weiss 2009.
- 26 Shivji 2006.
- 27 Moyer 2005; Perrulo 2005; Shipley 2007; Shipley 2009; Cho 2010.
- 28 cheusidawa.tv 2011.
- 29 Williams 2007, p. 4.
- 30 Personal interview 25 July 2011.
- 31 Personal interview 27 July 2011.
- 32 4sytetv, 2012. Parts 1-3 of the documentary can be found on YouTube. Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USJALxUv1II>, Part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWcVDPj6Cow>, Part 3: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7XjwBYR9JY>.
- 33 Personal interview 23 July 2011.
- 34 Personal interview 6 September 2011.
- 35 Information on individual interviews is provided in the references.
- 36 Personal interviews 16 August 2009.
- 37 Personal interview 22 August 2010.
- 38 Personal communication 22 August 2010.
- 39 Anokwa 1997; "Rawlings: The legacy" 2000; Hasty 2006.
- 40 Mungai 2011.
- 41 A Plus 2008. Translated by Kwame Benjamin Appiah.
- 42 Ghanabase.com; GhanaWeb. 2007.
- 43 Sarkodie 2009. Translated by Daniel Arthur and Emmanuel Donkor. The original Twi lyrics below can be found at [www.museke.com/node/3998](http://www.museke.com/node/3998).  
*Modwene s eda fom, gyae nipa rebre / Do you think this it is easy? Stop we're really hustling / Obi te Canada, nee obei koraa, osre / Someone is in Canada he needs to go begging for his daily meal / Burgers yi bebre na entaa nka nokore / A lot of these borga are*

not truthful / *Anka mobehunu se amanone mpo ye foo kyere* / you would have known life in the West is ugly / *Wote Ghana pam adee nya wo sika* / You are a tailor in Ghana and you make money / *Nea wobedi, woanya koraa wowo beebi da* / You have food to eat, at the very least, you have somewhere to sleep / *Woaboa sika ano de akogye visa* / You've saved money to get a visa / *Wope se wotu kwan ko America ko bre kwa* / You want to travel to America just to suffer / *Afutuo nsakyere nipa na koso hwe* / Advice doesn't change a man unless he experiences it / --- / *Amanehunu kwa, wei eye hwan na fault* / Whose fault is it that you are suffering? / *Obre a wote Ghana anka woabie sukuu ama Tigo afa wo manager* / Had it been you were in Ghana you would have commissioned schools and been hired by Tigo [mobile network] to be a manager / *Na wote obi man so pra kwan ho* / *Ewo se woso ho, efiri se wonni beebi da* / Rather you are in the West sweeping the streets and after shake yourself cause you don't have a place to sleep.

44 Yaa Pono 2011. Translated by Kwame Benjamin Appiah.

45 Ibid.

46 Mr. II 1998. Lyrics translations come from the following sources: Perullo Alex 2005; Hulshof Carolien 2008; Africanhiphop.com 2002.

47 Clark 2010.

48 Ibid.

49 Profesa J 2001. Translated by Perullo Alex 2005. The original Swahili lyrics are: *Na nitafuta shida zenu zote, "Ndio Mzee."* / And I will get rid of all your problems, "Yes Mzee." / *Hivi nanii, ni vijimambo, "Ndio Mzee."/* These things, they are infuriating, "Yes Mzee." / *Na vinanikera kweli kweli mimi, "Ndio Mzee."/* And they really annoy me, "Yes Mzee." / *Basi hali itabadilika, sawa? "Ndio Mzee."/* So, things will change, okay? "Yes Mzee." / *Na hatamu tutaishika, okay? "Ndio Mzee."/* And, I will take the reins okay? "Yes Mzee."

50 Roma 2010. Translation provided at <http://www.eastafricantube.com/media/36875/ROMA-TANZANIA> and edited by author.

51 Izzo Bizness 2011. Translated by author and Kibacha Singo.

52 Translation of title and lyrics provided by author.

53 Fid Q 2009. Lyrics and translation provided by artist and edited by author. The original Swahili lyrics are: *Polisi huniita mzururaji, na wanajua mie ni emcee* / The police label me a vagrant while they know I'm an emcee / *Kisha hunipa ishara kama wanavuta uradi kwa Tasbih* / Then, they give me signs as if they utter *Tasbih* [prayer beads] repetitively / *Baya lisilonidhuru ni jema li'so na faida* / The bad that doesn't hurt me is the good that doesn't help anything / *Nashukuru kote nasikika napotoa haya mawaidha* / I'm thankful for my views being heard everywhere / *Kuanzia kata, tarafa, wilaya, mikoa hadi ngazi ya Taifa* / From the counties, divisions, districts, regions up to the national level / *Nikifa siachi skendo, nina uhakika nitaacha pengo* / I would die with no scandals; I will leave a legacy / *Kwa hivi vina hata wakulima hujikuta wanameza mbegu* / These rhymes might even cause farmers to ingest seeds / *Pia ni kama liberation struggle machoni mwa 'Chegu'* / Also, they're like liberation struggle in the eyes of Che Guevara / *Ukiwa mkali ka' Marco Chali, raia wata-feel tu* / If you are gifted like Marco Chali, people will recognize you regardless / *Wajinga nd'o hufa kwa wivu sababu hatwako real tu* / It's the fools, who die from jealousy because they're not real / --- *Haupaswi kumuamini muongo hata kama akiongea ukweli /*

You are not supposed to trust a liar, even when he is telling the truth / *Ni dhambi kutumia dini kama njia ya kututapeli* / It's a sin to use religion as a tool to con people / *Wanajiingizia kipato kwa kivuli cha misaada* / They profit under the disguise of [foreign] aid / *Hawatufunzi tuwe viongozi, labda viongozi wa kuwafuata* / They don't teach us to be leaders; but maybe leaders in following [them] / *Utata huja, tunapoanza kuwachunguza* / Controversies always start when we begin to scrutinize them / *Badala ya kuwafuata, ndipo siri zinapovuja* / Instead of solidifying our beliefs in following them, secrets start to leak.

- 54 Images can be seen in Sarkodie's video for "Layaway" at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxkmIaJmYtQ>.
- 55 English translations found on the Fokn Boiz video "Tenk u" can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODQcOeuXiik>: "I force travel small way I see da hoslins, of da people, da women, n demma offsprings / I have managed to travel and see the struggles of the people, the women and their offspring / Mek I dey ask questions, man for do sometin / It's got me asking questions, I must do something / To contribute, to build, positive construction / To contribute, to build, positive construction / --- / Look wanna leaders, look wanna teachers / Look at our leaders, look at our teachers / Look all these so called friends dem say dem com relieve us / Look at all these so called friends who claim they came to relieve us / Many hundred years ago dey com in da name of Jesus / Many hundred years ago they came in the name of Jesus / Da same people turn around den enslave non-believers / The same people turned around and enslaved non-believers / Along with the believers da same tin dey happen today / /Along with the believers, the same thing happens today / Headed by strong deceivers Headed by strong deceivers / I still be very inspires even tho oppressors screw up / I'm still very inspired even though oppressors screwed up." Pidgen lyrics were provided by the artist.
- 56 Haupt 2008; Herson 2011.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Herson 2011.
- 59 Individual interviews were conducted with each artist in Dakar in 2009: Keyti on 2 August and Xuman on 7 August.
- 60 Haupt 2008; Ariefdien & Burgess 2011.

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