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Winners, Cheats, and Witches: East African Soccer Cartoons

By Jigal Beez

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The year 2006 is definitely a soccer year. The soccer world cup is hosted in Germany and five African teams have qualified to participate in this big sports event - unfortunately none from East Africa. The East African nations Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda are no soccer powerhouses. The last qualification of the Taifa Stars, the Tanzanian national side, for the African Cup of Nations dates back more than a quarter of a century. At least Kenya's Harambee Stars qualified for the Africa Cup two years ago. The biggest East African soccer triumph was when Uganda's Cranes reached the final of this tournament in 1978 and lost to Ghana's Black Stars. But not even professional optimists or notorious soothsayers dream of an East African team qualifying for the world cup. Nevertheless this region is soccer crazy and an event like the world cup is reflected by East African cartoonists.



Picture 1: GADO on the 1998 soccer world cup in France. In: Daily Nation 10th June 1998

In East Africa every child knows how to create a kind of football out of rags, old plastic bags or corn leaves and a little cord. Those who prefer are more sophisticated playing device join one of the countless street soccer teams, where there the team members collect money to buy

a real soccer ball. People kick the ball everywhere in East Africa, on the beach, in the backyards or on the hard reddish laterite soil, out of which most public sports grounds consist. There is also a strong supporters' culture in East Africa. Every country has its big clubs which rule the local championship and cup-tournaments. In Uganda the big arch enemies are Villa SC and Express from Kampala, whereas the old rivals of Kenyan soccer are Gor Mahia and AFC Leopards, who have an ethnic fan-base. Gor Mahia is the club of the Luo, the second largest Kenyan ethnic group, whereas the Leopards are supported by the Luhya, the third biggest. Traditionally these groups mock each other as the Luhya circumcise their men and the Luo do not. This rivalry is also used in the famous *Kazi Bure* cartoon from Philip Ndunguru. Kazi Bure is a trouble making drunkard with a notorious sharp tongue.¹ With a football under his arm KAZI BURE is asked for which team he is playing. He leaves his companion confused by answering: Don't you know that I am a famous striker for AFC Leopards while at the same time I am an unbeatable defender for Gor Mahia..



Picture 2: "Kazi Bure tell us, you are a player for which team?" "Don't you know that I am a famous striker for AFC Leopards while at the same time I am an unbeatable defender for Gor Mahia." In: Kenya Leo 1980

Tanzania is divided into green-yellow and red-white. Green-Yellow is the team of the Young African Sportsclub, which is popularly known simply as Yanga. This is the club with the longest tradition in the country. It was founded in the year 1938 long before Tanzania or Tanganyika as it was called in those days, gained its independence. In those days the African population started founding its own organisations, including sports clubs. In the Yanga logo there is the map of the African continent to be seen together with a big torch, representing the light of freedom. Furthermore there are two boxers, a basketball- and a soccer-player depicted.

¹ Kazi Bure is of Tanzanian origin. In Tanzania this character appears as Ndumilakuwili in the *SANI* magazine. As the artist Philip Ndunguru left Tanzania for Kenya he continued to publish this cartoon in Kenya under the name Kazi Bure (Beez forthcoming).



Picture 3: The logo of the Young African Sports Club as seen in the *Yanga Imara* magazine No. 68, 13th Feb. 2004

Red and White are the colours of Simba Sports Club. This team was founded in the 1980s by a rich businessman. In those old days of Ujamaa, African Socialism, most teams were run by state companies. Therefore it happened that Sigara, Swahili for cigarettes, had a clash with Bia, Swahili for beer, when the team of the Tanzanian Cigarettes Company played against the side of Tanzanian Breweries. Having a lion, simba in Swahili, among the line-ups of public enterprises made things more interesting. These days both teams reside in the Kariakoo neighbourhood of the Tanzanian capital and share the same stadium. From the Granny to the toddler, nearly every Tanzanian supports either Yanga or Simba. In every little village there are fans of both teams and if there is a big derby among them the streets of the country are empty because everyone is glued to the radio to listen to the live report. Yanga and Simba also have their own newspapers which are distributed country wide to inform their fans about the latest news. And of course these newspapers contain comic strips as every Tanzanian paper does. But we will deal with soccer comic strips later. At first after a short introduction into East African cartooning we will have a look at commercial soccer cartoons. Then soccer in political cartoons will be examined. And finally there will be an analysis of soccer cartoons in newspaper strips and in comic magazines.

Swahili Cartooning

Swahili cartoons can be divided into various categories. Firstly there are different formats. In the daily newspapers appears the classical strip format (e.g. *Kingo*, *Bi Mkora*) and political cartoons (*katuni za kisiasa*). Moreover there are comic magazines (e.g. *SANI*, *Bongo*, *Tabasamu*) which are a collection of various comic series that fill a handful of pages per issue plus short works of only half a page. There are also magazines that are entirely dedicated to one serialised story only (e.g. *Kisiki cha Mpingo* or *Titanic*) as well as a few albums (e.g. *Abunuwasi*). Concerning the content most of the strips are funnies, humorous works which make the readers smile (*katuni za vichekesho*). Popular are also romantic comics (*katuni za mapenzi*), which tell love stories. There are also comics that advertise products (*katuni za kibiashara*) or religious ideas (*katuni za dini*). A similar function have cartoons which are used by development organisations to educate society (*katuni za elimu*).

To make statements about the history of Swahili comics means moving on thin ice as these pulp magazines never made it into any library collection making an exact dating impossible. But for sure comics have a tradition in East Africa which is older than fifty years. Knigge, who wrote a history of world comics, traces the beginnings of African comics back to the 1940s, where the strip Mbumbulu appeared in a colonial newspaper in Belgian Congo.² The oldest example of a Swahili comic which is known to me is an advertisement for tea from the year 1940 published in *Rafiki Yetu*, a mission paper from Mombasa. But who can rightfully claim the merit to have drawn the first Swahili comic, or being the first East African to draw a comic cannot be said for sure yet. In October 1951 the Tanganyikan monthly government paper *Mambo Leo* introduced “picha za kuchekesha” (pictures which make you laugh), a regular Swahili strip whose artist did not sign his works. Therefore the first known East African artist is William Agutu who published a strip called Mrefu in the Kenyan *Tazama* magazine of 1952. Also the Belgian Congo where the strip Rukukuye was published in the mission paper *Hodi* in the early 1950s is a source of early Swahili comics. Another pioneer of East African cartooning is the Tanzanian Peter Paulo Kasembe whose strip Juha Kasembe was published in the 1950s. From 1967 onwards a Tanzanian party newspaper published Christian Gregory’s Chakubanga cartoon whereas the longest running Swahili strip is Juha Kalulu, which is drawn by the Kenyan Edward Gitau since 1955.³

The first Swahili comic magazine was founded in the early 1980s by Saidi Bawji and Niko Yambajo. They merged the first two letters of their first names to call this magazine *SANI*. In

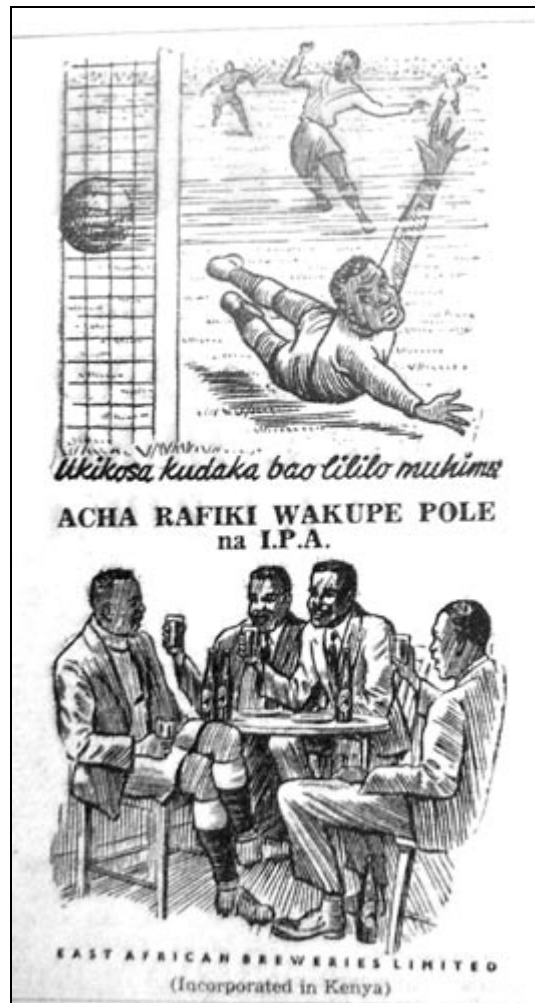
² Knigge 1996: 238.

³ More details on Swahili comic history can be found in Beez (forthcoming), Packalén (2001), Gikonyo (1986) and Konde (1984). Other works on Swahili comics are Beck (1999), Beez (2003, 2004a), Beez and Kolbusa (2003) Graebner (1995) Friedrich Ebert Foundation (2001), Knigge (1996), Obonyo (2004a, 2004b) and Kyungu (1991, 1993).

spite of the economical hiccups in Tanzania and quarrels among the heirs of the founders *SANI* survived the last twenty years though it changed its format from a magazine into a tabloid in 2003. *Mageuzi* (changes, reforms), the Tanzanian version of Gorbachev's perestroika, liberalized also the media sector and gave it in the mid 1990s a big push. It was the beginning the golden days of Swahili comic magazines when up to the early 2000s more than fifty magazines gave their debut. Some never made it beyond the first issue but others printed more than 80 issues within a few years. Their colourful covers are displayed on the tables where the newspaper salesmen present their wares along the dusty streets of the Tanzanian urban centres, where each magazine is sold for 500 or 600 Tanzanian Shillings, 50 to 60 cents, which is the equivalent of a bottle of beer.

Soccer in commercial cartoons

Beer is also a product for which commercial cartoons were used to boost its sales. In the 1950s cartoons were a modern medium which was used in marketing campaigns, East Africa being no exception. For mass products like beer it was important to get attention of a big audience therefore Swahili, the lingua franca of East Africa, was used to promote brands. On December 1st 1957 appeared an advertisement of East African Breweries Inc. in the Tanganyikan weekly paper *Baragumu*. It consisted of two drawings in vertical order, separated by two text lines. The upper one depicts an unfortunate goalkeeper who is diving in vain after a fast shot ball, whose speed-lines cross the picture from right to left. The subtext reads: *Ukikosa kudaka bao lililo muhimu... acha rafiki wakupe pole na I.P.A.* (if you miss to save an important goal ... let your friends solace you with an I.P.A. (a beer brand)). The bottom picture finally shows how the beaten goalie, who is still wearing his soccer boots and shorts, gets consoled by three friends in suits sitting around a round bar table full of beer bottles.



Picture 4: Beer advertisement in *Baragumu* 1st December 1957

Another example of how close sports and drink and tobacco are is the cartoon-character of Tomasi Tembo. Tembo, which means elephant in Swahili, is a sports-hero. In an advertisement campaign for Bears' Honeydew Cigarettes he is featured in various four panel strips called "The exploits of Tomasi Tembo". Though the title of the stories and the brand name is English, all the text under the panels is in Swahili. These short stories tell of stunning and amazing victories which Tembo wins in various sports competitions, like boxing, cycling and of course soccer. The Kenyan *Tazama*⁴ journal, which had a circulation of around 17,000 (Whiteley, 1969: 67) and was distributed throughout East Africa, published an advert on January 5th 1955 in which Tembo secures victory for his team in the last minute of the match.

⁴ The Kenyan *Tazama* Journal of the 1950s and early 1960s should not be confused with the *Tazama* tabloid which appeared in Tanzania in the 1990s. *Tazama* means to look at or to gaze in Swahili.



picture 5: *The exploits of Tomasi Tembo: The winning goal.* In: *Tazama* 5th January 1955

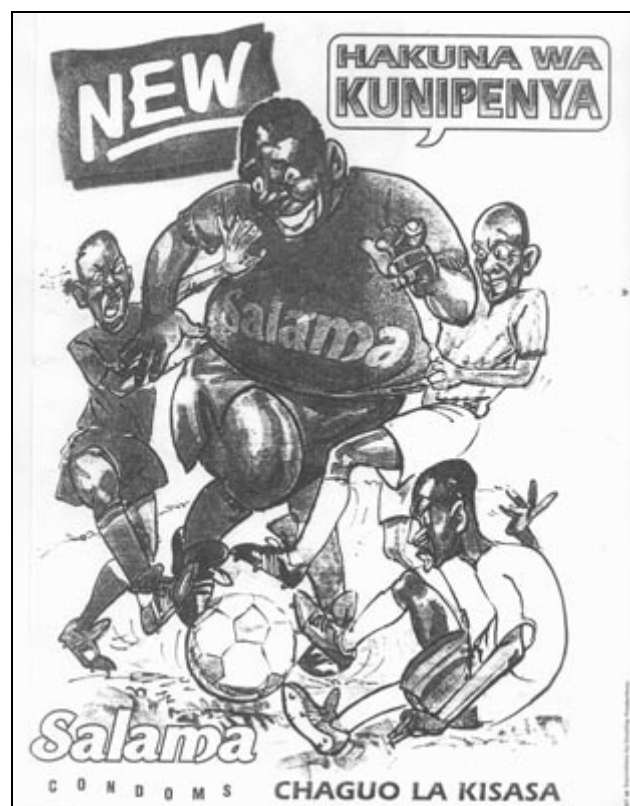
In the first picture he waits cool for an opponent to dribble past him, his hand casually placed on his hips. Then he takes the ball away from the bewildered rival and is outdoing the complete adversary team before he finally thrashes the ball into the goal with such a hard kick that even the keeper is flying in his own goal in an ill attempt to save. Under this sequence there is a post scriptum explaining Tembo's secret of success: Smoking Honeydew cigarettes is giving Tembo the strength and cleverness for such outstanding performance. The connection between tobacco and sports last till today. In all the East African countries one of the most favourite cigarette brands is called Sportsman.

In the Ugandan paper *Taifa Uganda Empya* which is published in the Luganda language of August 22nd 1964 there was an advertisement cartoon of a sick soccer player who got cured by Phensic painkiller tablets and finally scored a tremendous goal. The colonial mood still prevails in this cartoon though it appeared two years after Uganda's independence. It is a European looking doctor who hails the effects of Phensic, though he speaks Luganda, whereas the other characters of the cartoon are Africans, representing the target group of this pharmaceutical product. In those days African doctors were not common in Uganda.



picture 6: Phensic advertisement in Taifa Uganda Empya of August 22nd 1964

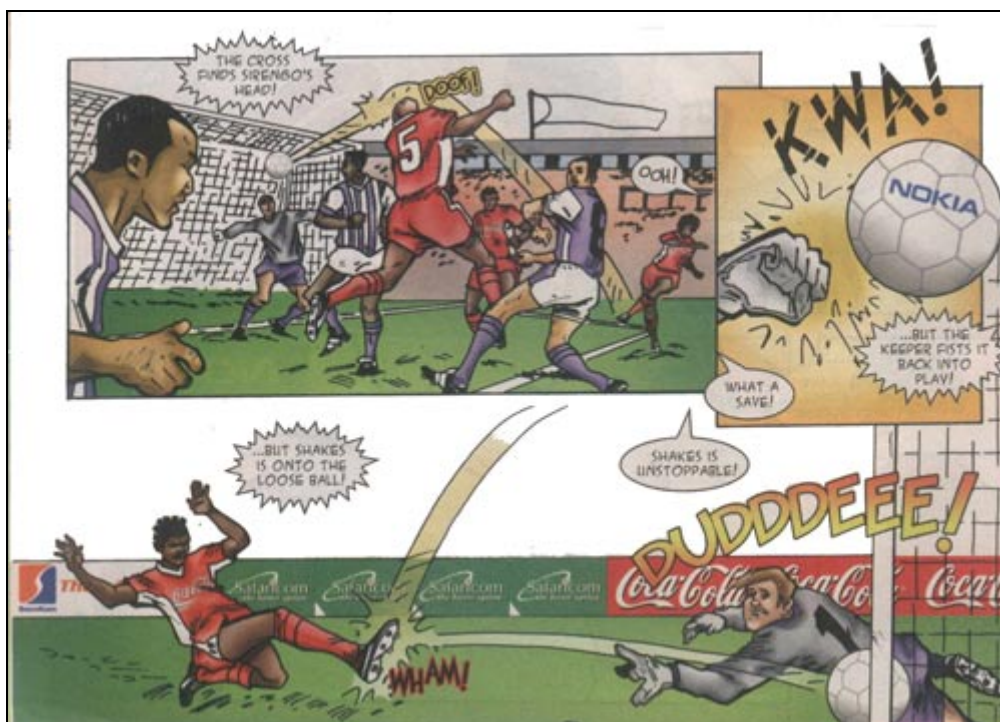
In more recent times cartoons are also used to propagate other pleasures besides drinks and tobacco. The Tanzanian *Kingo* cartoon magazine had a soccer cartoon as a condom advertisement in July 1995.



picture 7: Salama Condoms, the modern choice: There is no way of passing me. In: *Kingo* July 1995

Hakuna ya kunipenya (There is no way of passing me) says a bulky soccer player with a smile while he is being attacked by players of three other teams and still retains ball possession. The message is: to play safe and to avoid sexually transmitted diseases you better use *Salama Condoms – Chaguo la Kisasa* (the modern choice). Salama, Swahili for peace, is a condom brand which is propagated by the US non-profit organisation Population Services International in order to fight the spread of HIV/Aids in Tanzania. For funny and educative campaigns PSI has successfully used cartoons and other popular media like rap songs to raise HIV/Aids awareness in the country, especially among the youths.

A last example for the use of soccer cartoons for advertisement purposes is the cartoon “Supa Strikas” which is published once a week in the Kenyan English speaking newspaper *Daily Nation*. Once in a month there is even a free “Supa Strika” magazine as a supplement to the *Daily Nation*. The strip as well as the magazine tells the adventures of Shakes, a young talented striker in the world of professional soccer. The sequences are drawn very dynamically and are printed in colour.



picture 8: Supa Strikas December 2003

Shakes does not promote a product as such but as he acts in the environment of professional sports he is surrounded by lots of commercial banners. Therefore this cartoon offers many opportunities for product placement, which are sold to telephone companies, soft-drink brands, banks or shoe shine products. The promotion of a product is not done directly by the

protagonist but indirectly. The concept of Supa Strikas as sponsored entertainment comic has been developed in South Africa⁵ but names and places have been adopted into a Kenyan environment to reach the Kenyan target group.

Though cartooning as well as advertising has changed through the last fifty years it is remarkable to note that cartoons as a medium for marketing is still very popular in East Africa. Moreover sales can still be boosted by placing a product in a soccer environment.

Soccer in political cartoons

Taking the popularity of soccer into account it is not surprising that also political cartoonists use soccer metaphors in their works. In the year 1998 the Tanzanian cartoonist Ali Masoud Kipanya depicted the relationship of the ruling party CCM to the opposition parties as follows.



picture 9: Tanzanian Politics. In: Friedrich Ebert Foundation 2001: 116

Each party represents a soccer team that is just entering a stadium, led by their captains, the party chairmen. It is obvious that the teams of the opposition are thin, slender and barefooted, all attributes of the poor people in East Africa. But the team captain of the ruling party the Tanzanian president Benjamin Mkapa is a well fed giant, symbolising a rich man who has eaten well. In an East African context “to eat” means to embezzle funds and being corrupt. But to add it is not only that Mkapa is the only one wearing soccer boots, he is also the owner of the ball. Furthermore he has the referee’s whistle in his mouth and holds the flags of the

⁵ There is fine web site, www.strika.com, where this concept is introduced.

linesmen in his hand. It is quite evident who is going to win the match. Not only that the ruling party has better equipment than the opposition, as referee it is also interpreting the rules of the game in its own interest. Tanzanian politics are depicted as a manipulated game whose result is fixed even before the game has started. It is interesting to note that there is a mouse wearing a referee dress on the right side of the picture who is watching the scene in anger. Here the artist Masoud Kipanya is portraying himself. His nickname is “Kipanya,” meaning little mouse. As a mouse he is often appearing in his drawings giving comments on the scene. In this case he displays the concerned look of a neutral referee who is upset about the unfair spectacle. Such a picture full of bitter irony is appreciated by Tanzanian readers. Politicians on the other hand do not always like being criticized in this way. Up to the 1990s it was a taboo in East Africa to draw cartoons of prominent political leaders.

But it is not only that soccer is used to comment on politics. Also soccer politics are a topic on the pages of political commentators. An example is the wrangles of the two big Tanzanian clubs Simba and Yanga about a Tanzanian soccer player. In the Tanzanian daily *Majira* of January 24th 2004 the prominent page three cartoon of Masoud “Kipanya” is dedicated to the player, who is juggling two balls on one foot, one labelled Simba, the other one Yanga. The observing little mouse comments the scene: Sasa naanza kumwelewa Kadugudah kuhusu umbumbumbu (Now I understand what Kadugudah (a local soccer official) said about being stupid). The indecisiveness of the player to choose between the offers of the two teams and his tactics in negotiating a contract are not approved by the cartoonist.



picture 10: A player cannot decide whether he wants to play for Yanga or Simba. In: *Majira* 24th January 2004

A similar incident was commented by the Tanzanian weekly *Risasi* with a cartoon on page two. In this case not the player is blamed over contract wrangles but the two clubs Yanga and Simba who are fighting over this footballer who is caught in the middle. Each of the two clubs has grabbed one of his arms and claims: *Huyu ni wetu* (This one is ours). The cartoonist drew the representative for Simba as a lion. This is an obvious choice, as the club name translates as lion. Yanga is drawn as a sandal. The sandal as symbol for Yanga dates back to the 1970s when the club split into two factions. One called Yanga Raizoni after the then fashionable platform shoes, the other one, that finally won the quarrels, Yanga Kandambili (sandal). Since then Yanga is popularly known as Kandambili, sandals. In the front of the drawing lies a soccer ball and gives his comment, the view of the cartoonist: *Hao wachezaji mnawagombea kwa kuwa mnawahitaji kwa dhati kukomoana au kutishana?* (Are you arguing over these player because you sincerely need them, or because you like to humiliate each other or you just want to scare each other?). Just like in the *Majira* cartoon the *Risasi* cartoonist condemns the way the participants in the soccer business treat each other. Therefore soccer politics, just like other politics, are revealed as a dirty business.



picture 11: "Huyu ni wetu" (This one is ours) In: *Risasi* of 21st January 2004.

But soccer metaphors can also be used in a broader socio-political context as Gado's cartoon in the Kenyan *Daily Nation* of 2nd December 1998 demonstrates. The cartoonist is making a

statement of how HIV/Aids affects mankind.⁶ Mankind is represented by a soccer player who is desperately chasing after a ball, which is labelled “research”. He is on his way to score the winning goal in the fight against the pandemic. Alas Aids depicted as black-death, a skeleton in a black robe and wearing soccer boots, is carrying the goal in another direction while it is laughing. The artist GADO tells the readers that Aids is deadly and mean. It does not play according to the rules. Once mankind after hard efforts in research thinks it is close to success in fighting the disease, Aids is changing position. Once again GADO as master of his profession can explain a difficult and complicated topic with a few strokes of his brush, this time using soccer metaphors.⁷



picture 12: GADO on HIV/Aids research. In: *Daily Nation* of 2nd December 1998

Soccer in Comic Strips

Whereas soccer in advertisements and political cartoons is mainly used to capture a topic outside of the soccer world, to market commercial products or to explain political contexts, there are also many cartoons that have soccer as such as subject. It is the whole soccer culture which is covered by East African comic artists. The role of witchcraft, the coaches, the supporters, corrupt officials, the life of the players and the game itself is reflected in many funnies, which appear as strips in nearly all East African newspapers.

⁶ For an analysis of how HIV/Aids is depicted by Kenyan cartoonists see Obonyo (2004b).

⁷ GADO loves to use soccer metaphors or to comment on soccer issues. On his webpage you can find a special site which is dedicated to his soccer cartoons:
<http://www.gadonet.com/gcart.asp?w=,108,13,80,137,22,185,20,36,45,63>

As seen above soccer was a topic for advertisement back in the 1950s. But already in those days soccer was not constraint to commercials only. Also the then emerging medium of Swahili cartooning soccer was used as subject. Some papers like *Baraza* on January 3rd 1953 or *Mambo Leo*, a Swahili monthly journal published by the administration of the Tanganyika Territory and on sale since 1928,⁸ of November 1951 used soccer cartoons to illustrate articles on the rules of the game and on soccer training lessons. Furthermore they published soccer related funnies. In May 1954 *Mambo Leo* there was a soccer cartoon about an unlucky referee.



picture 13: An unlucky referee. In: *Mambo Leo* January 1953

The story called “Kusimamia mpira” (supervising soccer) is drawn by an anonymous artist. In the first panel the referee is asked if he could blow the whistle in this match. In the second panel the match starts. Then, panel three shows how the referee gets a ball on his mouth. Finally in the last panel the referee is falling on his behind and can only say: “mmmm”. Player Hasani asks him if he has lost his teeth. But player Isa concludes: The ref has swallowed the whistle. In this strip no speed-lines were used to indicate the movement of the ball or the players. But as the shadows of the figures are drawn in grey lining the players seem to hover in the air as they run. Compared with the advertisement comics of Tomasi Tembo or the beer company, this drawing is less dynamic. Nevertheless the reader gets the joke. An example from a cartoon without words on soccer has been drawn by Heriz. It is part of a series called *Alnacha Mpendaspoti* (*Alnacha the sports’ lover*) which appeared in the *Tazama* magazine in 1954 and depicts how *Alnacha* jumps for a header. But instead of heading the ball properly he bangs his head against an opponent’s head, which causes a quarrel.

⁸ Whiteley, 1969: 63



picture 14: *Alnacha quarrels about a header. In: Tazama 1954*

Also in this cartoon speed and movement of the players are not indicated by lines. There are only a three short lines for the flying ball. Therefore the players seem to be frozen in their motion. But the artist used lines to illustrate the banging of the heads and the resulting bumps. In both cartoons of *Alnacha* and the one in *Mambo Leo* the soccer players do not wear boots. This is striking, as the players in the advertising cartoons in the 1950s do wear them. The strip cartoonists are closer to reality, as in the 1950s African soccer players did not wear shoes but played bare-foot.⁹

Referees and their whistles continue to be the subject of many soccer cartoons. In the February 3rd 1969 edition of *Uhuru*, the paper of the Tanganyika African National Union,¹⁰ the ruling party of Tanzania, there is a referee to be seen who runs off the pitch exclaiming: “Lahaula kumbe saa ya kuanza mpira imefika!!! Basi ningojeni kwani nimesahau filimbi nyumbani.” (Good god, it is already time to start the match. Just wait for me, I forgot the whistle at home) Also in this cartoon there is an absence of speed-lines. But the artist drew the studs of the soccer boots with great care which reveals a love for this detail.

⁹ A photo-report in *Tazama* of January 26th 1955 on a match between an Austrian and a Kenyan team in 1954 shows that the Kenyan player only had bandaged feet, though it was a high-level international match.

¹⁰ TANU, later it changed its name to CCM Chama Cha Mapinduzi, Revolution Party.



picture 15: Good god, it is already time to start the match. Just wait for me, I forgot the whistle at home. In: *Uhuru* 3rd February 1969

As mentioned above, nowadays big clubs as Simba and Yanga publish their own papers. But there are also other Tanzanian weeklies like *SANI SPOTI* or *Mwanaspoti* that cover sports and entertainment issues from a general point of view. In one strip called *Mchemsho* drawn by Ibra Radi Washokera, which appeared in the *Mwanaspoti* on January 17th 2004, the role of Tanzanian coaches is depicted. An affronted guy is sitting on a soccer ball, his back turned to an open door and grumbles: “Nje hatutakiwi, ndani hatutakiwi” (we are not wanted outside, we are not wanted inside). The writing on his shirt identifies him as “makocha ya *Bongo*” (Coaches of *Bongoland*, colloquial for Tanzania). The depression of the coach is visualised by several stars and a spiral line above his head. The darkness of his mood is emphasised by thick black strokes surrounding the speech balloon. The open door is labelled as “nje ya nchi” (out of the country). This drawing describes the situation of Tanzanian coaches. They are not very popular in Tanzania where the important teams recruit foreign coaches. And also abroad there are no job opportunities. The capture of the strip asks: “... hivi ni kweli soka letu haliuziki, limedoda?” (It is true that our soccer does not sell, has it deteriorated?). Therefore this cartoon criticises the falling standards in Tanzanian football and questions its quality.



picture 16: It is true that our soccer does not sell, has it deteriorated? In: Mwanaspoti January 17th 2004

Robert Mwampembwa, GADO's brother, is the inventor of the famous Bibi Mkora character, a woman who has witty comments on various aspects of daily life. Her strip appears in various Tanzanian publications. In one Bibi Mkora strip, which was published in the *Kingo* magazine in July 1995, her husband, who is a soccer supporter, sits on the loo and holds a small portable radio in his hand. He is listening to a live-report of a soccer match. The commentator is covering the last minutes of the match: "dakika ya thamanini na tisa hiyo ndugu wasikilizaji ... anakwenda sasa kimvi ... la ... la ... la ... la ... goooooo" (This is the 89th minute, dear listeners, now he is going and goooooooal). In the second picture the listener gets so excited that he runs out of the toilet to celebrate the winning goal for his team, and he forgets to dress. Only as his children start laughing about him and his wife stares at him in wonder, he realizes his nakedness and stops immediately. His rude awakening is indicated by the artist by dusty skid marks which carry the word "breki!," meaning "brake".

Bibi Mkora

na Robert Mwampembwa



picture 17: Bibi Mkora Cartoon. In: *Kingo* July 1998

Robert Mwampembwa's strip focuses on the passion which soccer fans develop for their beloved game and the way they forget everything once they enjoy the victory of their favourite team. Serious people suddenly become lunatics when it comes to soccer. crazy soccer fans. The boy in Mwampembwa's strip even calls his father "baba ka-go crazy" (Father went crazy).

Soccer in Cartoon Magazines

Whereas in comic strips only short funny incidents are depicted the format of the comic magazine offers wider possibilities to cover soccer. An example is the *Kingo* magazine. *Kingo* is the name of a famous East African Cartoon character, which was created by James Gayo.¹¹ Gayo used the name for a satirical magazine as well. The *Kingo* magazine always chooses one topic which is covered from various angles. The issue of July/August 1995 focuses on soccer. Already the colourful cover indicates what the reader can expect: Three players are fighting over the ball but instead of looking at the ball they look at the sidelines where two men are sitting. One is dressed in a suit and has suitcase which is bursting because it is stuffed with cash. Moreover he clutches banknotes in his hands. The other guy looks a bit obscure. He is wearing a black cape and holds a small magical container in his hand which reveals him as a ritual expert, a so called witch-doctor. It is not only that the players eye these men at the side

¹¹ It started as a cartoon for *Uhuru* before moving to the *Majira* paper. Nowadays it appears in various Tanzanian papers like *Mtanzania* or *Bingwa* as well as in Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia (Packalén, 2001, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2001:120 and Manyire, 2002).

but also a linesman, who is watching from behind. The headline says: Ligi ya vichaa! Simba na Yanga! (League of madmen! Simba and Yanga!)

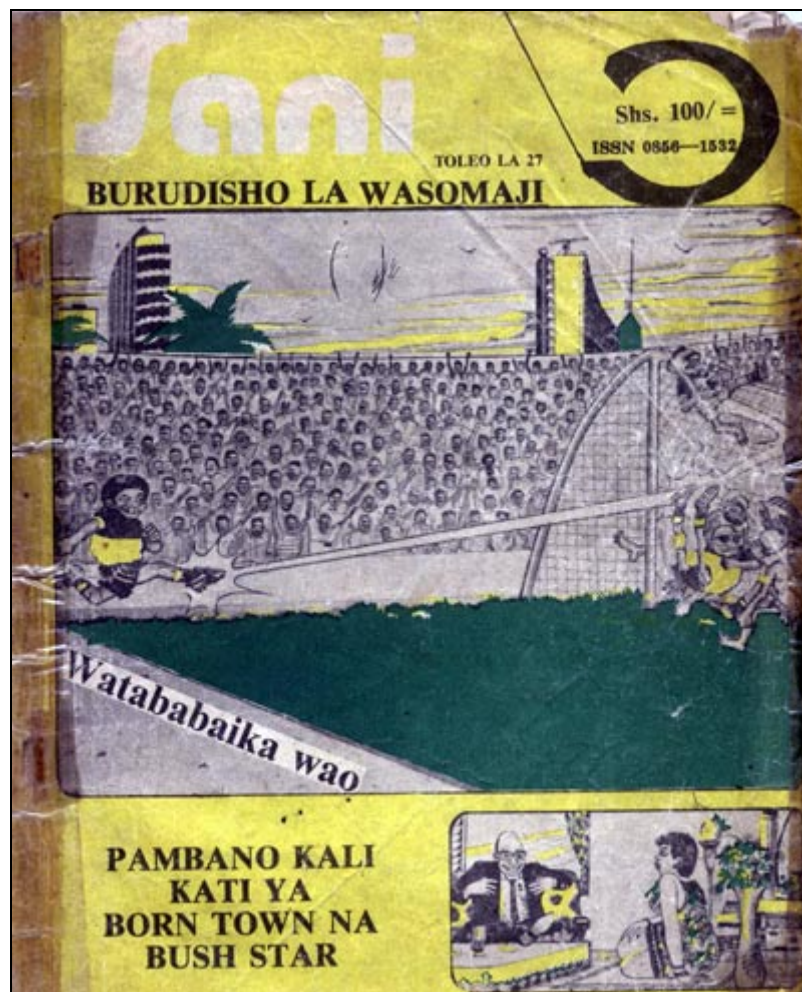


picture 18: Cover of Kingo Magazine July 1995

. This cover artwork shows clearly that this *Kingo* issue criticises the soccer practices in Tanzania. On the one hand officials make lots of money out of soccer and use part of it to bribe players and referees. On the other hand ritual experts have a great influence on the teams. In the first comic of the magazine *Kingo*, as a radio-reporter, investigates the preparation of the team Kasheshe Staaz (Trouble Stars) for a big match. As he manages to pass a fierce bouncer he only finds an empty stadium and a depressed coach. The coach has no comments on the match as he is still waiting to be paid by the club. The club chairman finally brings Kingo to a secret training camp in the bush where the players dance naked around an open fire. As a magician, portrayed as a witch, sees Kingo the ritual expert smiles because Kingo is the stranger, who is still needed for a human sacrifice to assure victory in the next match, has finally arrived. Kingo smells the rat and runs away. The artist James Gayo condemns in this comic that ritual practices are given more priority in Tanzanian football than proper training. The use of magic in Tanzanian football is very important. For example in September 2003 both teams Yanga and Simba were fined by the Tanzanian Football

Association to pay 500 US\$ because of using magic in their clash (Muga 2003). Another comic story in this magazine is “Kaumbwa” by Paul Nduguru. It is an adventure in which the rouge chairman of a club plans to kidnap the wife of Kaumbwa, who the most important player of a rival team.

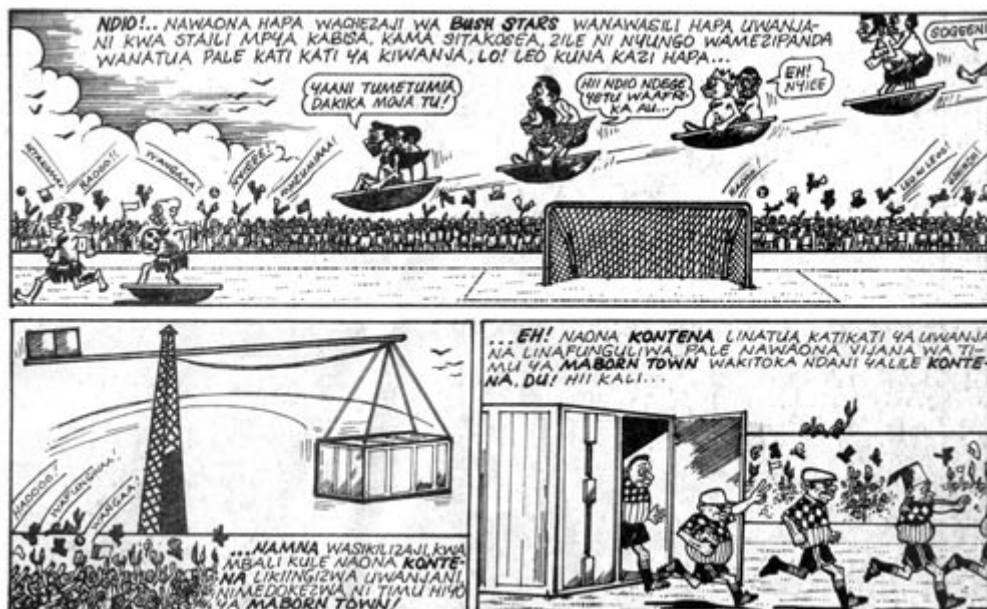
The longest running soccer comic in Tanzania is the everlasting battle between Bush Stars and Born Town in the *SANI* Magazine, which is traditionally the last story of nearly every *SANI* issue. This rivalry started way back in the 1980s and appeared even on the cover of *SANI* No. 27, presumably in 1989.



picture 19: *SANI* No. 27 (ca. 1989) *Watababaika wao: pambano kali kati ya Born Town and Bush Star* (They will stammer: Tough competition between Born Town and Bush Star)

The teams constitute of all characters appearing in the *SANI* magazine. The players for *Bush Stars* are the rural folks like Komredi Kipepe or Madenge whereas their urban counterparts like Lodi Lofa or Ndumilakuwili form the team of *Maborn Town*. Usually it is a radio reporter who explains the action on the pitch to the readers. His comments are written as text in the

bottom or top of the panels. For this series the pages often are stuffed with more than twenty panels per page, which are arranged in five rows. This huge number of panels is necessary to feature the complicated action on the pitch. Most of the other stories in the magazine have only around a dozen panels per page. The humorous soccer cartoons of the *SANI* magazine do not care about morale imperatives like the ones in the *KINGO* magazine. Here people are made to laugh about the various ritual exercises through which both teams go through. The Bush Stars rely more on traditional magic, for example they entered stadium on *nyungo*, traditional winnowing baskets which witches as said to use to fly, whereas the Born Town team relies more on sophisticated technology. In the same match they entered the stadium in a container with the help of a cargo lifter. Though their matches are tough the artists make fun out of both teams. On one hand the Bush Stars are portrait as backward hillbillies but still admired for their knowledge of old traditional secrets. On the other hand the modernism of the Born Town team is not only admired but their snobbism and arrogance is used for various jokes. The matches of both teams are a humorous analysis of the ambivalent relationship between city life and rural life which most Tanzanians experience as they have roots in their home villages but depend on the city as a provider of jobs, medical and educational services.



picture 20: The Bush Stars fly on the pitch on winnowing baskets, the Born Town club enters the stadium in a container. In: *SANI* 45

After *SANI* stopped appearing as a comic magazine and continued as a tabloid the fierce matches are now shown in the *SANI SPOTI* edition as Wamasa-Primia-Ligi. This league is

named after the publishing company, Wamasa Publications, and the English Premier League.¹²

The legendary clashes between the teams of Bush Stars and Born Town inspired various other football comics in Tanzania. For example the appropriation of the soccer theme in the *Shabaha* magazine is at first glance a spin off of the old rural-urban rivalry theme. The title *Shabaha* translates as “aim” or “target” from Swahili. It is also the name for a Tanzanian transport company which has big advertisements in the paper which suggests a business relationship among the two. The *Shabaha* magazine started appearing in the year 2000 and their main comic artist is Chris Katembo who also works for *SANI*. Therefore resemblances between the *SANI* and the *Shabaha* soccer comics are not too surprising. In the *Shabaha* The Fresh ya Shamba Team, Swahili for fresh from the farm, represents the villagers. They enter the pitch by riding bush pigs. Whereas their opponents, the Wowowo Stars, are a the posh team which is equipped with latest fashion gear. The Wowowo Stars stand for the city dwellers. Wowowo is the description of a voluminous female butt, a beauty ideal. As a new invention Katembo created a women soccer team which appeared on the pitch to replace their brothers as they faced a match penalty after playing too rough. Much to the pleasure of the male readers the Fresh ya Shamba women team is wearing the same dress as their male counterparts, just a loincloth.

Also in the *Bongo* magazine there is a regular serialised soccer comic. *Bongo* means “brain” in Swahili and is used as common nickname for the Tanzanian megalopolis Dar es Salaam, as it needs “brain” to survive there. *Bongo* was founded in 1996. Though it is obvious that many cartoon characters of *Bongo* are definitely inspired by *SANI*, the *Bongo* soccer cartoon “wapinzani wa jadi” (arch-rivals), which is drawn by Hamisi Adballah, has developed a story line beyond the everlasting city-village theme. The main protagonists of this comic are the players of Mlimani Rangers who consist of *Bongo* cartoon characters like Njomba Nchumali or Mapung’o and their local arch enemies of the City Bulls team with players like Kiokote or Jua Kali. But the *Bongo* soccer stories go beyond local rivalry as they also face global challenges. In one of the first adventures the Mlimani Rangers travel to South Africa for an international match in the famous Ellis Park Stadium. Around forty issues later two players, Mapung’o of the Mlimani Rangers and Chepe of City Bulls, are signed by the Spanish side Real Madrid where they play side by side with international soccer heroes like Roberto Carlos or Raul. But in Spain the action on the pitch is not covered much by the comic artist. Hamisi Abdallah focuses more on the life style of international soccer celebrities. The readers see

¹² Wamasa is an abbreviation of Watoaji Maandishi wa *SANI*, which means publishers of *SANI*.

how Mapung'o and Chepe travel by plane, stay in five star hotels, drive expensive cars and get admiration from beautiful ladies. Another soccer adventure starts in 2002 when again Chepe and Mapung'o received tickets to travel to Japan where they end up in wrangles of officials of two Japanese clubs who try to sign them. In general "wapinzani wa jadi" is less comical or humorous than the *SANI* soccer comics. The story does not cover as many scenes on the pitch but more the glamorous jet set life of famous soccer players including women, dubious managers and other sharks. The way people think successful soccer players live has become the topic, the wish to escape Tanzanian poverty and make riches abroad. Here *Bongo* follows the dreams of the readers. For many Africans from a poor background the life of George Weah is the only way success. This famous Liberian striker who is said to have only a poor school education played for famous European clubs, was voted best world soccer player and later became even presidential candidate. Soccer is more than a game. In this case soccer becomes the hope for an African dishwasher to millionaire fairy tale.

Conclusion

When soccer and cartooning meet it is a merger of two very popular themes in East Africa. Soccer is the most popular sport and is definitely the most popular print media. A comic artist can use the soccer theme to tell different stories. Jokes around soccer are the theme of uncounted funnies. But soccer can also be used just as a marketing trick to sell products. More sophisticated in the use of soccer images in political cartoons. As everybody knows soccer it is easy to translate political issues into the soccer language to point out that the politicians do not care about fair play. Obviously as every match is different many soccer matches are narrated in East African cartoons like the everlasting battle of Bush Stars against Maborn Town. The interesting point is that the characters that play in these matches are known to the readers from their own strips. In these matches various comic characters meet just like in a megabattle of super-heroes. All these characters have different backgrounds, some are rich others poor, some are thugs others good ones, some are hillbillies others are city dwellers. On the one hand this fact demonstrates how soccer and comic reach a broad audience of all walks of life. On the other hand it shows how many different stories can be told around soccer which reach far beyond the game as such. Soccer is the hook for love stories, adventure stories, glamour stories or political stories. Therefore cartoons are a perfect media to embody social relevance of soccer.

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