The Singing Wells Project: Music of the Kalenjin

Artist: Chebonet
Date: 5th March, 2012
Location: Kapsokwony, Kenya
Tribe: Kalenjin, Saboat
Translated by: Rev Chemaswet Peter

Song 1: 'Kisete'
Sung by Frederik Cheptot who is a primary school teacher. This is a historical song from the year 1800. It's become a folk song and is sung very often to children. The Karamonjong are the greatest enemies of the Saboat. They occupied the valley of Kitale and stole many cows. The prophet Sigoria helped the men of Saboat fight by raising their morale.

Song 2: 'Tetuitui'
This is very old song about the daughter if Ketui who was from a rich family. She was to be married but she had no experience of making her own food, keeping house or looking after herself. She used bamboo to cut meat and the wrong cup to drink from. The song is about her ignorance.

Song 3: 'Tetab Grade'
This song is from the 1980s. It is about livestock and how the villages should buy higher grade cattle. It is also encourages the Saboat villagers to take up agriculture. This was when the serious revolution in agriculture took place and the Saboat stopped depending completely on cattle.

Song 4: 'Chepchelewen Niagara'
From 1900, sung in the afternoon after circumcision of men. Circumcision is done from age 13 to 21. It is in praise of their masculinity and bravery.

Song 5: 'Choliet'
Sung by Sussy Chelangat. This is sung in the morning of the circumcision of the first born, especially a girl. If she didn't cry or get upset then this song was sung in praise of her bravery, being a hero. Girls were circumcised from age 13 to 18, when they reached puberty. Now female circumcisions is illegal in Kenya and isn't done any more. There are still occasional villages where it is done but not in the Saboat.

Song 6: 'Chesegut'
A chesegut is a gossip and a naysayer. This song is to discourage a chesegut and to encourage education. Education is sweet.

Song 7: 'Teriet'
This song tries to unify the Saboat.