EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEIVED ROLES OF THE FEMALE MUSICIAN AMONG THE ISUKHA

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MUSIC

BY

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented in any other university.

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ABSTRACT

Studies carried out in various countries on music and gender portray women as people whose music making activities are dictated by their role and status in their various communities, among other factors. For example, women’s dance styles have been perceived by scholars to reflect their sex roles. Campbell and Eastman (1984) for instance say that among the Swahili of Kenya, women are taught dancing styles, which involve hip rotations, a reflection of their sex role.

This study examined the implications of gender upon music composition and performance among the Isukha people, a sub-tribe of the Luyia community of Western Kenya. It addressed explicitly, two central questions. First, to what degree does the Isukha community’s gender ideology and resulting gender related behaviours affect its musical thought and practice? And second, how does music function in the Isukha community to reflect or affect people’s attitudes towards women musicians. The study, in the long run, outlined the role played by women in music and articulated their values in music making.

In the endeavor to achieve the above, a descriptive research design was adopted. Questionnaires, interview schedules, and observation schedules were used as research tools to get people’s views, expectations and attitudes towards female musicians in the Isukha community.
This resulted in a number of factors, which both directly and indirectly affect these women's music making activities. These, as shown in the study are a reflection of the society’s perception of these women, both just as women and as women musicians. Their place in the society, their role and value in music making is also articulated.
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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Female musician........Women and girls of any age who take part in music making activities like singing, dancing, playing of instruments and composition. ‘Female musicians’ has been used interchangeably with ‘women musicians.’

Gender..................Socially constructed and maintained arrangements between men and women.

Griots.................West African musicians, whose work is praise singing, history and story telling. They are referred to as wordsmiths or artisans of the word.

Griottess..............Female counterparts of the Griots.

Male musicians........Men who take part in musical activities like performance and composition.

Sex roles...............Biologically constructed arrangements assigned to men and women due to their nature.

Kata...............A Swahili word for ‘cut’ which in this case means ‘dance’

Viama...............Men or women groups which consist of five to about forty Members with different aims, such as contributing money for each other’s personal use.

Tsinyimbo..........Songs or Music.

Makuru...............Village elders/ leaders.

Wilikuru..............Singular of makuru.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION ........................................................................................................... II

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................... III

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ............................................................................................... V

DEFINITION OF TERMS ............................................................................................ VI

TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................................... VII

LIST OF PLATES, TABLES AND CHARTS ................................................................ IX

CHAPTER ONE .......................................................................................................... 1

INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................... 1
  1.0 BACKGROUND .................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM ................................................................... 5
  1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS ................................................................................. 6
  1.3 OBJECTIVES ..................................................................................................... 7
  1.4 ASSUMPTIONS .................................................................................................. 7
  1.5 RATIONALE ....................................................................................................... 7
  1.6 SIGNIFICANCE ................................................................................................. 8
  1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS ......................................................................... 9
  1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .................................................................... 9

CHAPTER TWO ......................................................................................................... 12

LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................ 12
  2.0 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................... 12
  2.1 GENDER IDEOLOGY AND ITS EFFECT ON WOMEN’S MUSIC MAKING ACTIVITIES ....................................................................................................................... 12
  2.2 ROLE OF WOMEN IN MUSIC ..................................................................... 16

  2.3 SCHOLARSHIP ON WOMEN MUSICIANS ................................................ 17

CHAPTER THREE ..................................................................................................... 20

METHODOLOGY ....................................................................................................... 20
  3.0 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................... 20
  3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN ....................................................................................... 20
  3.2 LOCALE ............................................................................................................ 20
  3.3 STUDY POPULATION .................................................................................... 21
  3.4 SAMPLING PROCEDURES .......................................................................... 21
LIST OF PLATES, TABLES AND CHARTS

Plate 1 - A map showing the locations of the Abaluyia groups in Western province of Kenya

Chart 2 - Chart showing the types of music education and training of female musicians in Isukha

Table 3 - Genres of Music

Table 4 - Roles of Women in Music.

Plate 4 - Gertrude Mwendo Rehearsing with her troupe.

Plate 5 - Gertrude busy in her office as a secretary.

Plate 6 - Sophie outside her house after a choir rehearsal.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Isukha people are a sub-tribe of the Luyia community found in the Western Province of Kenya. The Abaluyia tribe consists of eighteen major sub-tribes, which include:

- Bukusu Kisa Maragoli Isukha
- Wanga Bunyore Tiriki Idakho
- Batsotso Tachoni Banyala Kabras
- Samia Bakangala Bakhekhe Bakhayo
- Marachi Basonga

(Osogo, J.N. Pg. 13)

Osogo (1966) says that all these sub-tribes are alike, in that they have a common background, common customs, and speak the same language, though dialects vary according to locality. The locations are as shown in the map below (Plate 1).

Both Isukha and Idakho, who are found in Kakamega district, contain clans, which for the most part are not immediately related by blood, and which entered this area from different directions. Each of these sub-tribes is a political alliance of such clans. Unlike many tribes, the names they bear are not of some distant ancestor of a major clan. Isukha means ‘first’ or ‘forward,’ Idakho means ‘lower’ or ‘backward.’
The Isukha sub-tribe is mainly a collection of the following sub-tribes: Abamilonje, whose founder was a Maasai called Chobololi, Abitsende, who originally came from the Kabras group, Abayokha, an offshoot of Abamweche of Butsotso, Abamakhaya, who are descendants of a man called Wibalu from Wanga. Others are Abarimbuli, abatura, Bakhombwa, Bakhaywa, Bashisalachi, Bamahalia, Baruli, Bikina, Bilitsa and Bakukhumi. (Were, G., 1967)

Though with different backgrounds, the Isukha people have lived together for a long time and have similar customs and ways of life. They consist of a society with men and women whose duties and roles are divided according to gender. This was a system in which this society defined what a man is and what he can do and what a woman is and what she can do. This was a strategy for enforcing stability, peace and harmony.

This division of roles was not unique to the Isukha people but happened in communities in Africa. Maimela (1994:38) states that

*In Africa, ...both patriarchal /Patrilineal and Matriarchal / Matrilineal societies had and some still have, clearly defined gender roles.*

This has then affected women’s participation in many areas due to the societal roles assigned to them and societal expectations about them.
In the recent past, the issue of participation of women and girls in areas such as politics and education has become a subject of intense discussion. In many researches it is evident that there is a disparity in the participation of women in these areas. These include researches like those done by UNICEF (United Nation International Children’s Education Fund) (GOK/UNICEF, 1998) and Nthamburi (1986). This is attributed to the way women are viewed by the society or their place in it.

According to Nthamburi (1986), in the traditional African societies, women were regarded as second hand citizens, used and handled like personal property of men, exploited oppressed and degraded. If this kind of a situation would exist among a group of people, it would them in the field of music, among other fields.

In ancient Greek civilization, it seems that there was little or no prejudice against women musicians. However, this situation gradually changed, presaging a cycle, which was to revolve throughout the remaining history of the woman musician. During the fourth century women were discouraged and eventually prohibited from singing in the church. Only nuns were allowed to sing in the chapel of the convent. (Bowers and Tick, 1986).

One of the most unfortunate facts of the history of music is the non-recognition of women composers. Although performance of music has been regarded as a genteel avocation for women throughout the centuries, there are few women composers whose works have survived (Cohen, 1981). Sperber (1996) noted that ‘women composers’ is a controversial and topical subject in many countries. She adds that there have always been women composers but rarely were they granted an artistic
breakthrough and most were forgotten. This phenomenon is certainly the outcome of the long predominance of a patriarchal social structure in most parts of the world, defining women’s role as it wishes.

There has also been a controversy in the history of music concerning whether, how much, where and when women should or should not be allowed to sing. They have all the times been

...free to sing than to play and considerably more free to sing than to compose, but not to the extent of being wholly licensed. (Green 1997:126).

Green goes on to say that if under any circumstances, the women took part in composition, they would not be fully recognized, and their ownership questioned.

A further observation abroad suggests that many women composers have used male pseudonyms in the hope of getting their compositions published.

In Kenya, for instance, there is still a controversy over the ownership of the song “Kaunga Yachee” as regards who arranged it. Mrs. Kilimo claims to be the original arranger while Mr. Bonface Mganga also claims to have been the first to arrange it.

(Cohen 1981:17) observes;

...It is my firm belief that women have a great gift of creativity as men. There is no doubt that if women were given the same exposure in the musical world as men, through publication, performance, recording and broadcasting of their works, their creative abilities would receive the full acclaim they justly deserve.

The image of the paid female singer who puts body and voice on public display has been inevitably been associated in practically all known societies with that of a sexual temptress or prostitute. In this case she is a threat, and as such is open to abuse
A private singer gives a different image. That of a mother privately singing to her baby, a practice which is allowed in all cultures, and which must be one of the few universal customs of humanity. (Born, 1992).

This is an indication that women are a disadvantaged group of people whose activities, are circumscribed by the society. Kenya as pre-empted by Kilimo, is one of the societies in which there is lack of full recognition, license and exposure for female musicians, resulting into dominance by men in music, among other areas. Among the Isukha, which is a sub tribe of the luyia community found in Western Kenya, this could be the case. This study therefore sought to confirm this stereotype status of women among the Isukha.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Among the Isukha people, like in the rest of the communities that exist in the world, female musicians take part in music both as composers and performers. While their male counterparts and their musical works are recognized in writings, the women’s efforts are not recognized. In writings about them, either few women are recognized or left out completely. For instance, Bender (1991) writes on Kenyan musicians and only writes about the male musicians like Daudi Kabaka and Fadhili Williams among others and completely leaves out the female ones. Kenya’s own Ng’ang’a Mbugua (2002), in an article, “Black Women Singers Shine” does not mention anything on the Kenyan women musicians. Otiende (2001) writes about Musicians among the Isukha and Idakho communities, but fully dwells on the male musicians like Peter Ukutu and Jacob Luseno and mentions no female musician.
A casual observation of the two groups of musicians, men and women, seems to indicate that women take part in performances as singers and dancers, a role thought to be subordinate in music performance (Nketia, 1974), while men play the leading roles such as music directors, instrumentalists and soloists. Composition, which is done by both men and women, is believed to be the men's work. All the above is believed to be an outcome of the social structure which views women as a lesser social group and defines their roles as it wishes.

There is hence a discrepancy between the actual role that women play in music making and the role the society relegates to them. This study therefore seeks to unravel and clarify the discrepancy between the perceived role and the actual role of the female musician, thereby articulating the value of the female musician, specifically in the Isukha community.

It is in the light of the above background and statement that the study sought to answer the following questions.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the society's prescribed roles and expectations of women?
2. How do these affect the participation of Isukha women in music?
3. What do Isukha women musicians perceive as their role in music making?
4. In what areas of music making do Isukha women participate actively?
5. How can women fully realize their potential in music?
1.3 OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the expectations and perceived roles that the people, both men and women, of the Isukha community have of their female musicians.

2. To establish the effect of societal expectations on participation of women in music.

3. To articulate Isukha women musicians’ perception of their role.

4. To determine the extent to which women in the Isukha community participate in music performance and composition.

5. To determine the genres of music that women participate in.

6. To outline ways of enhancing the participation of women in music performance and composition.

1.4 ASSUMPTIONS

This study is based on the assumption that:

1. A society’s view of women determines their role as musicians.

2. Women musicians see themselves through the eyes of the society in which they live and operate.

3. Most problems encountered by women musicians in the Isukha community are due to their social rank in the society.

1.5 RATIONALE

In Kenya, extensive studies have been carried out on women and their participation in fields such as politics, education and many others. These include researches like those done by the United Nations International Children’s Education Fund (GOK/
UNICEF, 1998). In music there are studies of this kind and mostly done in western
countries, such as one done by Barbara Hampton (1982) and Kealinowsky (1967),
describing female dance genres in Polynesia. In Africa, they have been done, but
mostly in West African countries like Ghana. The researcher therefore thought it wise
to carry out a similar study in one of the sub-tribes in Kenya.

The few studies that have been carried out in Kenya about women and music, like one
by Campbell and Eastman (1984) among the Swahili have continued to be marked by
the views of men. Data in the present study includes views by women.

In addition, most studies that have been done in Kenya about women’s music are
mostly descriptive, in the sense that they describe only song and dance. They rarely
look at the reasons for women’s participation in this field or their lack of
participation, or the factors affecting their work as musicians. The present study
aimed at finding out the factors in the society both external and internal, which affect
the women musicians in composition and performance and later to determine the
place of female musicians among the Isukha people. The study found out the causes
of their plight and the possible remedies to their problems.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE

This study is hoped to be of assistance to scholars since it will provide the most
current information as regards the place of the female musician in the Isukha
community. It is also hoped to shed some light on possible policy responses towards
the predominance of women musicians.
The findings of this study will hopefully be useful in providing a stage for further study of the emerging trends on the musical scene, and in other communities in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa.

The study will also be useful in understanding the Luyia culture by those within and outside it. The research will provide an important stage for further study on Music and Gender. It is hoped to awaken scholars to serious intensive and extensive research in this area.

1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This study confined itself within the geographical area of Kakamega district. More precisely, the researcher collected data from the Isukha sub-community, whose population stretches across Shinyalu and Khayega divisions of the same district. It was also carried out on Isukha people found in urban areas and who are involved in musical activities.

The researcher would have wished to carry out a similar study in the entire Luyia community, but due to lack of finances, she was compelled to confine the study within this region. Another limitation is lack of sufficient documented materials on the subject under investigation.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was grounded on two theories. First is the sociological theory of career development, which was advanced by Green, (1997). The other proponents of the
theory are a group of sociologists, Hollingshead (1949), Miller and Form (1969) and Blau (1977). The theory holds that, in a career, decision-making cannot and does not occur within a complete freedom of choice. According to this theory, an interaction usually occurs between the individual's personal characteristics, abilities and interests and a variety of social factors, some of which the individual has control over and some are beyond his control.

In this theory, the proponents reveal that an individual's eventual career does not depend on a single factor, say, his personal choice, but a combination of many factors. These factors in themselves greatly reduce the degree of freedom one has in both the career choice and decision-making in the career.

The sociological theory is particularly applicable to the study of the roles and expectations of the Isukha female musician in their society, since they belong to it and their extent of their participation in music making is always dictated by interplay of various factors, both personal and external.

The theory gives a number of factors, which may influence choice of, and decision-making in a career, that:

(i) Limited or limiting familial perspectives impinge on the individual's career decision making process.

(ii) Socio-cultural mores affect the type of decisions to be made.

(iii) Societal expectations, conflicting with the inner self determine the kind of person one will be in his/her career.

(iv) Inheritance of the occupation.
(v) Geographical and economic factors.

These, Green says, are significant elements in the sociological theory of career development and have a direct bearing on occupational choice. These factors in general may affect the career of women as musicians among the Isukha people.

This study is also premised on the functional theory of social inequality, as formulated by Kingsley Davis (1948) and by Davis and Wilbert E. Moore (1945). The theory holds that in every society, there are different social positions. These are neither equally important (valued) nor equally pleasant. The different positions in society cause unequal distribution of power, influence and prestige, among others. This theory sees inequality as a natural consequence of value consensus in societies on one hand and of differences between individuals on the other.

The functional theory of social inequality is particularly applicable to the study of the place of female musicians since they belong to a class in the society, which is seen as lower.

The theory implies that women, whose way of life was dictated and defined by the society, would be disadvantaged in their endeavor to work as musicians compared to their male counterparts. A further implication of the theory is that due to unequal distribution of power and influence, women who are on this unfavoured side will suffer more. The two theories therefore form the basis of this study.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

References to women’s music and musical practices are not uncommon in literature. When ethnographies focus on female initiation rites, birth, or childcare, women’s musical activities associated with such events are frequently noted. Usually these are descriptive in nature. Many of them do not explicitly address issues of women’s status or the effects of a society’s gender arrangements. Avery (1977), Burrows (1958) and Winsdstrand (1969) in their studies hint some women’s musical activity.

2.1 GENDER IDEOLOGY AND ITS EFFECT ON WOMEN’S MUSIC MAKING ACTIVITIES

There is a difference between the biological categories of sex (male/female), and socially constructed categories of gender (woman/man). The gender structure of a society reflects socially constructed and maintained arrangements between men and women based on culture-specific gender ideologies.

Koskoff (1987) points out that although gender structures theoretically range from total male to total female dominance, in no known society do women dominate men. She adds that although there are generally two culturally recognized sex/gender categories, gender structures and ideologies vary widely from society to society and from group to group within societies.
According to Taylor (1973), each society has its own way of doing things and a commonality that is an important attribute to culture. He adds that not everyone in the society behaves in the same way. Men behave differently from women and young from old, according to patterned expectation of those around them. Therefore in any society, men and women are expected to behave differently due difference in gender. This behaviour is also reflected in their musical activities. Hoffman (1976:116), writing about the concept of music and gender in society says that

*This sexual division of expression is as basic to the organization of musical life as sexual division of labor and leisure is to its economic and social life.*

Ralph (1973) states that social significance lies in what each gender and individual does to the rest of the members of the society. A woman, for example, may not be able to train her son on societal attributes, but will be able to train her daughter, whom she expects will follow her footsteps. The societal roles and functions are either biologically or physically determined.

From the above, it is evident that women have a role to play in the society. Ralph outlines the actual description of occupation along sex lines. This pattern of division of duties along sex lines extends to music activities and has its own effects on it. Whereas anthropologists such as Ralph views sex as a determining factor in music performance, he does not explain how it affects performance and why.

Many authors have noted the links between women’s sexuality, their culturally perceived sex role and music behaviour. Some describe performances, which include licentious sexual behaviour. For instance, among the Swahili of Kenya, Campbell and Eastman (1984), describe all-female gatherings where young women do hip-
rotations in their dances so as to learn the ‘right’ sexual movements. This is said to be a role they play in the society. Cadar (1973) describes the Maranao Kulintany tradition of Philippines where women performers must learn the ‘correct’ female body position. In this case, the head should be in a position that should pass the test of letting a water-filled glass stand on the top of the head without spilling the water. All these examples point to musical behaviour associated with heightening female sexuality, specifically citing gestures, erotic dance movement, and various constricting yet “correct” body positions for women performers.

Other authors have commented upon the association of women’s musical activities with implied or real prostitution. Mcleod and Herndon (1975) describe how Maltese concepts of women and music intersect creating two basic categories: women who do not sing in public places and those who do, and by that very act are considered prostitutes. Sakata (1976) notes the association of the professional singers in Afghanistan with the courtesan tradition. Won Lee (1979), tracing the changes in role and status of Korean female performers, delineates a three-tiered hierarchy, used traditionally to rank such performers, ranging from one, the highest (women of correct moral behaviour who receive the most status and remuneration), two, the second, women in the society who would make mistakes due to various reasons, to three, the lowest, prostitutes.

Performances by young (mostly unmarried) women tend to heighten sexuality, while those by older women (past childbearing years) often downplay this aspect, (Koskoff, 1987). Frisbie (1967) among the Navaho, Hampton (1982), among the Ga and Kealiinohomoku (1967), describing female dance genres in Polynesia, among others,
comment upon the changing musical roles of women as they advance in age. These women may change the types of music that they participate in, and the roles they play in music, like dancing and singing. "Women are socialized to respond to changing family circumstances with shifts in vocal expression, from songs of carefree youth to musical restraint and laments of middle and old age". (du Boulay, 1974: 29)

Acceptable environments for women's musical performances of all kinds have also been noted by researchers who, by moving away from public, male dominated domains to private domains of women, have discovered a variety of musical traditions. Ames (1973) working among the Hausa of Zaire, Mackay (1955) among the Nigerian Muslim women, Junghare (1983) in India, and Koskoff (1976) among the Hasidic women have described separate all-female performance texts, styles and genres. According to them, women in various societies take part in performances more in the private domains as opposed to their male counterparts in the public domain. They also have different text styles and genres of music in the all-female performances as compared to the mixed and all-male performances. In this study, the researcher also sought to find out the different genres of music that women take part in and the roles they play in them.

Some attempts at cross-cultural examination of sex-role on its relation to music behaviour have also been made. Sachs (1940), after describing a number of musical instruments associated with males and females in performance, uses a predominantly Freudian interpretation when he notes,

The player's sex and the form of his or her instrument, or at least its interpretation depend on one another. As the magic task of more or less all
primitive instruments is life, procreation, fertility, it is evident that the life giving roles of each of them are seen or reproduced in their shape and their playing motion. (Ibid:50)

Merriam (1964:248) too has noted that music “reflects and in a sense symbolizes male-female roles.”

The majority of existing descriptions of women’s musical activities and rationales for their behaviour focuses on their primary social roles, for these roles are central to woman’s gender identity in many societies. These social roles are what are referred to as gender ideologies of a society. Each society has its own constructed ideologies. These affect their participation in areas such as music.

2.2 ROLE OF WOMEN IN MUSIC

Women play a variety of roles in music. These roles vary from community to community depending on the expectations of the communities in which they live and perform their music.

Omondi (1987) mentions entertainment dances found among the Luo of Kenya, and stresses the fact that the only role that women play in these dances is ‘entertainment’. Oppong (1981:65) sees the role played by both the male and female in marriage ceremonies among the Pokot of Kenya as equally important. She indicates that both men and women take part in the processes of composition and performance at equal levels.
Durrant and Welch (1995:17) wrote about composition, where the traditional image of a composer, even to musicians, has been that of "an intellectually gifted person (to most people, male) sitting at a desk with pencil and manuscript writing music." In such a case, it seems most people think that composition is a task performed mostly by men, and not women. Also that, it requires one to have had training in music notation and writing. Among the Isukha people, the study sought to find out if composition is one of the roles that women play in music, the meaning of composition among these people and if it is recognized as a role played by these women.

Nash (1961) states that where male and female roles are less differentiated and where specialization in the field of music is not far advanced (for example, Trinidad or the society of the Medieval Troubadours), one may find women composers of note. However in societies where specialization in the creation of music is more advanced (for instance, Bali, Chopi and Modern America), one rarely finds women among the ranks of eminent composers, presumably due to their time-consuming occupation of child rearing.

The researcher found out that women among the Isukha also compose music, which they take part in as a profession. The majority of them compose music in their endeavor to express their feelings like during laments in mourning, which, according to this society is a female’s role. The society does not recognize this as composition, instead, they term it as improvisation.

Ralph (1973) in his writings mentions the teaching roles of women, that women play a major role in training girls in music making. As it is, societies have divided roles
according to sex lines. This then dictates that women teach girls while men teach boys.

These authors in their studies have mentioned the above descriptions. They did not look at how these affect musical behaviour of women.

2.3 SCHOLARSHIP ON FEMALE MUSICIANS

Women in various communities have taken part in music making, but very few have been recognized in writings like their male counterparts. Hale (1998) observed that when an American anthropologist called Alex Haley searched for links to his heritage in Gambia, he focussed his efforts on male Griots. Haley noted that there were no references to female Griots in his book, 'Roots', in the video or in the written narratives. This lack of any images of Griottess stems in large from a deeply rooted and functionally based gender division in many parts of Africa, as well as a very limited amount of research on them.

Jatta (1985) notes that the paucity of scholarship on female musicians and women performers in general seems to be symptomatic in a larger sense of the basic gender bias that has marked much social science research by many scholars.

Mamadou (1989:110) describes the distortions that affect the external perception of people on female musicians:

*The first distortion occurs within the context studied; for this remains, even in matrilineal groups, a men's society, where women, under the sway of the dominant male ideology, do not often proclaim themselves as historians.*
The second is due to the fact that African studies, regardless of whether research is carried out by men or women, continue to be marked profoundly by male point of view.

Hoffman, an American anthropologist who did a four year research in Mali, and Mamadou, whose research subjects were both men and women from different levels in the society, sees an even greater and more fundamental distortion in research to date, stemming from differences in class. Both found that for the noble, musicians are an inferior class, which is a source of discomfort and embarrassment.

Kenya’s own Ng’ang’a Mbugua (2002) writes about a number of African women singers and their music. He mentions no female Musicians from Kenya.

Wolfgang Bender (1991) wrote about stars and producers in Kenya, but only alludes to Daudi Kabaka and gives the life history and works of others like Daniel Kamau, Slim Ali and Fadhili Williams among other male musicians. No female musicians are mentioned.

In the light of the above literature, the researcher found out that there exists a discrepancy between the actual role that women play in music making and the role the society relegates to them. In the present study, she sought to articulate the value and roles that women play in music making and therefore exemplified two female musicians, their biographies, styles and musical works.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an explanation of the research instruments that were used in the field, during the collection of data and also the secondary sources of data. It also shows the scope of the study and the sampling procedures that will be used.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used the descriptive survey method, which according to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) determines and shows the way things are. According to Gay, 1981, it is a process of collecting data in order to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects in the study. Data was collected in order to answer questions on the status of the female musicians in the Isukha community, the perceived role and expectations of a woman in this society and the subsequent effect on their participation in music. The researcher felt justified to use this method because it attempts to describe things such as possible behaviors, attitudes, values and characteristics.

3.2 LOCALE

The study was carried out in Shinyalu and Khayega divisions of Kakamega district. It was also carried out in Kawangware slums in Dagoretti division, Nairobi province, among the music groups in which the Isukha people who live in this area take part in.
The researcher chose these areas because they encapsulate a microcosmic version of a wider social network of the Isukha community. They represent a multi-faith, multi-social class and a community of people with different perspectives. They gave information on the role of women in their society, their expectations of a female musician and perceived roles of these musicians. Kawangware was chosen so as to represent the Isukha Musicians in urban areas.

The researcher also hails from around Khayega, and understands the languages used by the dwellers in these areas, thus English, Kiswahili and Kiisukha. This therefore made communication easier during the research process.

3.3 STUDY POPULATION

The target population for this study included men and women in the Isukha community.

3.4 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

Two techniques were used in selecting the study sample:

- Purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting the female and male musicians, village elders, chiefs and parents.

- Random sampling was used to select the other members of the society.

The researcher interviewed 60 women, 60 men, 10 female musicians 5 male musicians and 5 village elders. This, the researcher thought is a sample, representative enough of the target population.
The total number of respondents was 140, which is 10% of the population of the men and women who were targeted in the study. Peil (1982) suggests that any size from 10% to 50% is an adequate sample size depending on the homogeneity of the population.

3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND EQUIPMENT

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) state that in descriptive research, data is typically collected through a questionnaire, an interview schedule and observation.

The effectiveness of this research demands the use of all the three tools mentioned above together with document analysis. The verbose questionnaire items were both open-ended and closed-ended. They were given to randomly selected members of the community.

Interviews produce in depth information, which may not be possible with a questionnaire (Gay 1976). Interview schedules were used to conduct interviews on the randomly selected female and male musicians. Interviews were conducted in English, Kiswahili and Kiisukha. The researcher also used group interviews and observation. Refer to appendices for the questionnaires, interview schedules and observation schedules.
3.6 DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected both from primary and secondary sources.

3.6.1 Primary Sources

The research employed participatory observation to get first hand information regarding the role of women musicians in various musical performances. Audio and visual recordings of the proceedings were carried out, besides note and photograph taking. Key female musicians, village elders and male musicians were interviewed. The questionnaires were administered to the randomly selected literate members of the society.

3.6.2 Secondary sources

Information relevant to the research topic was collected from libraries and the Kenya National Archives. Reference to and reviews of the following documents were made:

- Books and dissertations related to the research topic
- Relevant journals and periodicals.
- Audio-visual material
- The Web.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher employed both descriptive and statistical research methods, which involved re-examination of information and first hand observation.

Information collected from the field through research instruments was organized in a narrative form. Data collected from questionnaires was coded so as to establish any common aspects from the responses. The coded data was then analyzed through the use of percentages and tabular representations.
CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the study findings with close reference to the research questions and objectives. An analysis of the research findings is also presented. Conclusions and deductions about the female musician among the Isukha community are drawn from the data collected and presented.

4.1 TRAINING AND EDUCATION OF FEMALE MUSICIANS AMONG THE ISUKHA

Chart 1. Chart showing the Musical Education and Training of the Female Musicians in Khayega and Shinyalu Divisions

4.1.1 Formal Musical Education

This is the type of musical education in which the musicians have gone to school up to different levels of education, and have been taught music as a subject, which includes music aurals, theory, history and analysis and practicals.
The smallest percentage, thus 8%, of the female musicians have had formal musical training either up to High School, Diploma Colleges or Universities, or have gone to Schools of Music. They use this academic knowledge in their musical profession. Thus they are able to notate music and read it. Some are able to play and give instructions in some African and Western instruments. Some of the Western instruments are the recorders, piano, flute, guitar and violin, which were found in Mukumu Catholic Church, Khayega Division, and in some secondary schools taking music as a subject. The African instruments were the Isukuti drums (isukuti isatsa, isukuti ikhasi and isukuti mwana or shitindi), Mulele (a flute), Kayamba, wooden sticks and the Ikengele (a metal rod and ring) the last two are hit together to produce sound. Most musicians in this category are choir trainers, conductors, instrumentalists, composers and choir directors.

4.1.2 Informal Musical Training and Education

This group of musicians may or may not have gone to school, but have learnt music through imitation, observing other people perform and practicing it. From the data shown above, a high percentage, thus 50% of the women musicians have an informal kind of musical training. These had their training from the environment in which they stay.

Music education for these women started at an early stage. They learnt from siblings and other teachers. Although women tended to learn from other women, like their mothers, grand mothers, aunts or older sisters, some people argued that fathers also took part in the training and education of their daughters.
Learning also took place through traveling widely and learning from other musicians through what is called the apprentice and journeyman staging. Men had greater opportunity to travel than women did. This is due to the societal role of child rearing among others, assigned to these women. Some of these women admitted that this method of learning, for them was only possible before they got married and before they had children to take care of.

Modern communication technology has played an even greater role in helping to prepare some of these musicians. From this research, it was noted that some young female musicians record on a cassette player all songs being performed on an occasion, take them home and play them over and over again, singing along with them for practice. This was found to be a very liberating form of training, because the student is not at the whim of a teacher. These women were also well acquainted with songs broadcast on radio and television, and they often cited pieces by various women musicians. It is not unusual then to see them acting out a part of a singer, imitating the voice and if watching television, repeating the gestures of the performer. The young musicians did this with both secular and sacred music while the older aged mostly imitated the gospel singers.

The roles of these musicians in music include singing, dancing, playing the above mentioned African instruments and teaching other musicians by the same method of teaching, thus, informal.
4.1.3 Formal and informal Musical training

In this category of musicians are those who have had both formal and informal musical training. They have had formal education partly and mostly up to standard eight in primary school and Form two levels. They have learnt music in school and dropped it due to, the requirements of the Kenya National Examination Council, having joined secondary schools that do not offer it, or having dropped out of school at primary school level for some reason. These musicians consist of 42% of the group of female musicians interviewed.

Apart from the partial formal education, they also have informal training and take part in music making. Their role in music is singing, dancing, training of unnotated folksongs and compositions and playing the African instruments.

Conclusion

Formal music education and training is a factor that gives an added advantage to most women musicians, since they are able to assume more roles in music than others. This is due to the fact that they are able to read and write the music that they hear and create. These women can play many instruments in the society because their profession commands them to do so and therefore are not affected by the society's expectation of what they should or should not do.

Women are not expected to play Isukuti drums and the other traditional instruments in the Isukha community. This seems to have been extended to the western instruments. The reason given for the Isukuti drums is that it is believed that if they did so, rats will eat the skin membrane. This therefore hinders their participation in this area.
choir mistresses could only be seen giving instructions on how these instruments are to be played, even though they seemed to be better players.

Most of these women remarked that they would like to expand their musical experiences by taking part in more performances. Due to the fact that they would be seen as irresponsible mothers and wives when it comes to taking care of their homes, they preferred to stay home and take part in the music available to them. This is because most of the people in the society take music as an activity, which should be performed after the other activities.

In addition, acceptable music was to be that that is function–specific in the society. Music that accompanies activities such as digging, baby sitting, fetching water and herding cattle was highly acceptable. On the other hand, the kind of music like church and political music, which required the performers to assemble and practice was thought to be time wasting, especially to women. Men were allowed to take part in this very comfortably.
### 4.2 ROLES OF WOMEN IN MUSIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP VISITED</th>
<th>NO. OF PERFORMERS</th>
<th>TYPE OF MUSIC</th>
<th>ROLES OF WOMEN IN MUSIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>SEC/SAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukomari Catholic Church</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>SAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virunga Youth Group</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>SEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Church</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>SAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonotex Success</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>SEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull Fighting</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>SEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunyu Women Group</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>SAC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: The roles of women in Music**

- **M**  Male Participants.  Sec-Secular
- **F**  Female Participants.  Sac-Sacred

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the data presented, it is evident that women play many roles in music. 100% of them participate in singing, and 100% in dancing. Apart from the sacred and all-female performances, no women play instruments. Composition and training have a very a low percentage. Therefore, the predominant role that women play in music is singing and dancing.

As composers, it was observed that these women composed new songs that are not necessarily written down in staff or solfa notation, and perform them in church or other social functions. Among the groups visited by the researcher it was observed that, in all-women performances, the women took all the roles that were performed in the music making process. In some of the groups where men were involved, the
women mostly performed the role of singing and dancing while the men played the instruments.

It is fundamental to the tradition of the Isukha people that the man’s job is to play musical instruments whereas women sing. Of course men sing too, but in general, women’s voices are preferred, especially when it comes to singing the famed praise songs which recount, through improvised lyrics, the origins and history of the various family surnames.

It is in view of the above findings that the researcher proved the fact that women are able to play all the roles in music making only that they leave them to men due to the society’s expectations.

4.3 TYPES OF MUSIC THAT WOMEN TAKE PART IN

In this section, the data collected was to answer the research question about the areas of music that Isukha women participate in. This was to help the researcher in achieving a number of objectives:

- To determine the genres of music that women take part in
- To determine the extent to which women in the Isukha community participate in music

The types of music that women take part in are both sacred and secular. This classification depends upon the context of performance and the themes of the songs. In both types of music are genres of music, which involve dance, song and
instrumental music. Age is a determining factor in the types and genres of music that these musicians take part in. The table and chart below show the level of participation of these musicians in the different types of music in relation to their age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chronological Age (yrs)</th>
<th>Sacred</th>
<th>Secular</th>
<th>Sacred</th>
<th>Secular</th>
<th>Sacred</th>
<th>Secular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0-20</td>
<td>21-40</td>
<td>21-40</td>
<td>41-Above</td>
<td>41-Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Female musicians</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Types of music women take part in.**

**Chart 2: Showing types of music women participate in**
In this data, the respondents were categorized according to age, in groups of 20 years, and their level of participation in the various kinds of music measured according to these groups.

4.3.1 Secular Music

This is a type of music whose themes are got from daily experiences, nature and the various environments in which people live. They are neither based on the Bible, the Church nor God. Their contexts of performance include venues for social functions and activities like birth and naming ceremonies, initiation ceremonies, weddings, and funerals and during work and recreation.

- Dance Music

All girls aged up to around 20 years take part both in sacred and secular music. Girls have more freedom to take part in dance music than the middle aged and older ones. Most middle aged female musicians have less freedom to venture into this genre of music.

Even when they do so they perform them more freely in all-female performances than in mixed and public performances. The dancing styles that they use are normally those that portary their modesty. They are not too vigorous. Girls on the other hand have more freedom of choice of these styles. From observation, both the girls and older women wear a descent costume when performing these dances. They include sisal skirts and Kangas neatly tied around the waist and a well fitting top.
• Singing

100% of the women and girls who took part in secular music sang. Some are soloists. Here they sang praise songs, harvest songs, and entertainment songs. During performance of secular music, women are seen taking the role of the chorus and mostly sing in unison. Here the soloist is regarded as the most important in these performances, since he or she controls the rest of the group in terms of keeping the pace of the performance, pitching, changing the melodies, cueing in the other performers as well as improvising and changing the text in the solo section.

• Instrumental Music

Most secular instrumental music involves the playing of the Isukuti ensemble (Isukuti isatsa, Isukuti ikhasi, and isukuti mwana or shitindi), which were accompanied by ikengele or visiri. In other occasions, guitars were also played. These mostly accompany songs in various occasions.

Mostly, women did not play instruments in such ensembles. It is believed that men are the ones who play these instruments. One man remarked that if women were to play the Isukuti drums, they would wake up the following day to find it eaten up by rats. Another one said that these drums originally belonged to the Isukha community, and tradition has it that only men play them. No women in history have ever been allowed to play them. The women themselves said that it was the work of the men to play these instruments, and they would not touch them in their presence.
Some venues for performance of secular music are at beer parties. In such places, women would not be allowed to take part in this music. They would only take part in it in the social functions.

This is an indication that the women who take part in this type of music, if it is not for a particular occasion are viewed by the society as wrong doers. Gertrude Mwendo (Refer to chapter 6), while giving the story of her experiences as a secular musician, says that she got the themes of her music from her friends and from social gatherings like busaa clubs. This is also where some of the audience for her music would be found. Most people then mistook her for a drunkard and a prostitute. Some would even be heard saying, “Who on earth can ever marry such a lady?” People thought that she had no discipline since ladies of her age were supposed to stay at home with their mothers, either helping them with the house hold chores or learning how to be a responsible mother in future.

4.3.2 Sacred Music

The highest percentage of the ladies took part in sacred music. The venues of performance of this type of music are churches, christian crusades and fellowship groups. In their social gatherings like the ‘viama’ (women groups), also in ceremonies like weddings, sacred songs were sung.

The genres of sacred music that they participate in are gospel music, in church they sing praise and worship songs and choruses. The types of songs they sung mostly depended on the churches that they went to and also the common choruses heard over the mass media.
The types of sacred music for sacred music are:

- **Song**
  Most middle-aged and older women take part in sacred than secular music as singers. The girls also take part in singing.

- **Dance**
  In some dances like the liturgical dance of the Catholic Church, only young girls took part. The older women took part in the general dancing that took place when singing.

- **Instrumental Music**
  In church, the ladies were seen playing both the western and African instruments. These were like the piano and kayamba. The men mainly played the drums, though some young ladies also played them.

From the data above, it is clear that age is a determining factor for the genres and types of music that women take part in. The younger women take part in secular music more freely than the older and married ones. They also participate in dance more freely than the older ones. In indigenous music, which is function specific also has a bearing on the age of the performers. In the music by children, like singing games, only children were involved. Other functions like weddings involved both young girls and the older ladies.

All the women of all ages can freely participate in sacred music. The level of participation in sacred music is higher because most social functions even those that would call for performance of secular music have sacred music in them. This is due to the fact that most of these social functions take on a quasi-sacred nature.
Most women took part in singing and dancing and only a small number in instrumental music, especially the western instruments in church. Other than in church, there were more men than women taking part in the ensembles. This is an indication that it is against the societal expectations women they play the instruments.

4.4 VIEWS ABOUT THE FEMALE MUSICIAN BY MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY

The study sought to find out the roles and expectations that the society prescribes to women, hence the female musician and how they affect her participation in musical activities. Here, the ideas and views by various groups of people were sought.

4.4.1 Expectations of Women Among the Isukha

The expectations and roles of the female musician by the society are both the positive and negative beliefs and attitudes towards these women by the various groups in the society. Whereas the clans in the Isukha community have been said to have diverse origins, and therefore different customs and beliefs, there are general trends that have been observe regarding their perception of women among other issues. It is therefore in this sense that one can talk about the Isukha sub-tribe as a single group of people.

In this sub-tribe, women were important members of the society and they still remain so today. Culturally, they are assets in that they are responsible for the welfare and continuity of the society. They play the role of mothering. Apart from this, the society has assigned them the household duties. These include tailoring, decoration, cooking for their families and general cleaning.
Women also have the role of child rearing, which involves teaching the child the societal virtues, and making sure that they grow up into the upright beings that the society wants. Women in various ways do this, especially to girls.

According to Maimela (1994:36), “traditionally, 60-80% of agricultural labour has been performed by women.” Among the Isukha people, women, especially housewives, are expected to join workgroups (Lisanga) in order to be able to cultivate their pieces of land and weed their crops in turns. They also do this on other people’s land to earn some money. The society expects women to be well behaved and not to be too aggressive. They have strict norms for female modesty.

Men on the other hand are decision-makers, family breadwinners and political and religious leaders, though women also are religious leaders. They are also the protectors of their families. They play the role of political leadership and therefore are thought to be the ones who know much about their culture.

The above-mentioned roles, among others have been assigned to women by the society and they either directly or indirectly affect their participation in music making. This is as shown in the views by the various groups of people in the society about the female musician.

4.4.2 Views of the male musicians

Ideas by this group of people are more inclined on their aesthetic perception of music and on the societal perspectives of the woman’s role in the society. Also they take into account the fact that the role that a woman plays in a performance gives her
image in the whole society. Most male musicians did not mind ladies’ participation in music. Ladies have major roles to play in music making and should always be accorded a chance to perform.

The roles that most women play in music are singing, which is viewed as a back up or a supporting role in the society. These roles are however viewed as important roles by the male musicians. Some assert that

*A good instrumentalist does not feel complete unless he has at least one wife who is a good vocalist.* (Luseno, J., 2002)

Apart from the child rearing role that the society assigns to them, these women, who have interest and ability in music making should, like men, be able to fulfil the requirements of what they refer to as good musicians. They should therefore be able to make ‘good music’.

### 4.4.3 Views of Village Elders

According to this group of people, women should take part in music, since they were the ones who liven up performances, by decorating the songs with ululations, different dancing styles and the rest. However this should only happen after women have set things right at their homes. Ikalakala, a female village elder of Khayega remarked that

> “I’m also a woman and before I leave my home, I always make sure that I have delegated all the duties for the day to the relevant people in my home. These women are important to our society, but they should make sure that they have planted vegetable, cassava and potatoes on their farms before embarking on their music.”

38
Apart from the above, these elders have a view that women should take part in music which the whole society views as proper in the sense that it gives moral teachings to the society. Being a group of people who have the task of bringing up children, they should do so even by the use of this music. Any music with immoral teachings is normally banned, so the women, like the other musicians should only sing songs that emphasize virtues of the Isukha community.

These elders also pointed out that the venue of performance of the women’s music should be taken into account. There are places where women were not allowed to sing. For instance, a woman is not allowed to sing in public, especially, solo songs since, it is thought to be a way of displaying oneself to the public. A group performance was preferred to solo performance.

4.4.4 Views of other Women

Other women in the Isukha community appreciate the fact that women are good musicians, though they get perplexed at the fact that female musicians have time and permission from their husbands to take part in such public performances. They all said that they had more freedom to take part in music when they were still young than when they entered into motherhood. This is also constrained by domestic obligations and strict norms for female modesty in the society.

4.4.5 Expectations of the Female Musician

Enter the dance girls, now while you have time.

Because tomorrow you’ll be married and become housewives,
Your mother in law wont let you go to another neighbourhood,

Your father in law wont let you go where there is dancing,

Your husbands won’t let you visit your mothers,

We’ll get our husbands drunk and put them t sleep

And we’ll tie the mean father-in-law to the loom,

And we’ll tie the mean mother-in-law to the cooking tripod.

A translation of a Greek poem by Susan Aurebach. (Chernoff, 1979)

This song is appropriate in describing the level of freedom in participation by women in music making among the Isukha people. In the traditional Isukha villages, women’s freedom to ‘enter the dance’ is constrained by the domestic obligations and strict norms for female modesty. Their limited musical options appear to be determined by behavioral guidelines for their sex. Their assigned musical roles, in turn tend to reinforce indigenous beliefs about femaleness in this culture. As the text above suggests, restrictions on women’s lives prompt the impulse to break out of confinement.

Women are socialized to respond to changing family circumstances with shifts in vocal expression, from songs of carefree youth to musical restraint and laments of middle and old age. By contrast, men sing, dance and play certain instruments throughout their lives. This is “Because men are considered independent moral agents with a wide margin for error, they may follow joyful impulses without fear of censure.” (du Boulay, 1974:129)
In most villages, older women song carriers are reluctant to sing. “I used to be the best singer here” some would recall, “but then came the family troubles and now I don’t sing any more. I only lament.” These women express their various complaints through laments and special kinds of songs. These kinds of songs are therefore ‘socially meaningful expressions’ tied to gender identity.

In the villagers’ estimation, music is the outward manifestation of inner states and in the case of women, family circumstances. Their songs therefore do not have fixed texts. They incorporate much textual variations, elaboration and improvisation.

Women are sensitive to public opinion and their reputation in music making. As one summarizes, “It takes courage to sing.” A sense of shame and fear of gossip function as social controls on women’s musical expression. An act of singing and dancing which is frequent and spontaneous or unusually enthusiastic is seen as self-display, attracting undue attention. Only a musician like Gertrude is inclined by nature to sing regularly, inspite of gossip and ridicule.

Girlhood is recalled as a time of avid singing and dancing at weddings, neighbourhood parties and outdoor farm chores. However, as village girls approach womanhood, they are socialized in reserved habits of dress, speech, movement and manner. They learn to be ashamed of any departure from an unobtrusive persona.

Villagers acknowledge certain types of musical context, personality and life experience that overcome inherent shame. Although most women are ashamed to sing in public, they are proud to sing at weddings and other societal ritual events. These
are justified as necessary community service and perpetuation of custom, since ritual songs are seen as efficacious rather than recreational.

Women tend to gain courage as musical leaders at private occasions, where ‘everyone is kin’ rather than public ones. In contrast to singing in mixed company, women’s joy in music seems most freely expressed in all-female settings.

Most women have moved from young confident music performers to faltering, self-doubting women. This is a disconcerting feeling that one’s own perceptions of aspects of life, one’s observation of facts and events, even simple ones are subject to doubt and probably false. This self-doubt explains why women are less confident than men in music making, have lower aspirations and drop out of this field in which they are either trained or talented seemingly more readily.

4.5 WHY LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT FEMALE MUSICIANS AMONG THE ISUKHA

When asked if they had encountered any female musicians some respondents replied candidly, “I’ve never heard of any female musician, nobody ever mentions it, nor did they ever think about it. Some said they had always taken it for granted that there is none.

Among the Isukha people, most women tend to play supporting roles in performances. These roles include dancing and singing. Men take the major roles like composition
and playing of instruments, which are thought to be the most fundamental in this community. These roles are however viewed as essential by the male musicians.

The issue of gender bias is also reason for the lack of recognition of female musicians among the Isukha. It is a society in which women are under the sway of dominant male ideology, and therefore men dictate their roles in musical activities.

Mamadou (1989) sees a great and more fundamental distortion in research to date, stemming from differences in class. He found that for the noble, musicians, in general are a source of discomfort and embarrassment. Among the Isukha people on the other hand, musicians are people of great importance in the society. They are the historians and the custodians of their culture. The women musicians, though, are not recognised in writings as their male counterparts.
CHAPTER FIVE

ISUKHA WOMEN MUSICIANS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

...the lack of scholarly attention on female musicians in some communities lead people to assume that they are shadowy figures, who stand at the margin of musical activities, that are recounted by their male counterparts. (Hale, 1998: 32)

In this chapter, the researcher’s main objective was to articulate the roles played by female musicians among the Isukha.

Ng’ang’a (2002: 3) says

From the time of king Solomon, literature abounds with songs poems and stories paying tribute to black women although hardly a day has been set aside to reflect on their legacy outside motherhood.

I will exemplify two women, who have made a mark in music among the Isukha people, where they have been instrumental in not only influencing the history of popular music but also its content, character and quality. In sample, are Gertrude Mwendo, who has mostly ventured in secular music and Wilmina Sophie Vukutsa, commonly known as Sophie, who performs sacred music.
Gertrude Mwendo, *Mwana wa Makatiani* (Child of Makatiani) as she is commonly known is undoubtedly one of Kenya's first pioneer woman music songbird the country has produced. She was born on 11th of May 1948 in a village near Mukumu in Khayega Division. Gertrude joined Mukumu Girls' Primary School in 1953. She is also an ex-student of Mukumu Girls' High school, Kakamega District, and Khayega Division. In 1966, She joined Kianda college, where she studied Business Education. Currently, she is a bi-lingual secretary at Kenyatta University and trainer at Hi-Tech Computer Services, Nairobi.
5.1.1 Role

Mwendo specialized in African Folk songs, conducted the school choir, and was ranked the best vocalist between 1962 and 1965, while in school.

Her debut in music production started in 1966, when she was a student in Kianda College. It is at this time that she got inspired into composing and production of Isukha music by maestro of the popular Luyia musician, Jacob Luseno wa Ndunde.

Little did she know that she had embarked on yet another career of her lifetime, put aside her normal office routine.

Plate 2: REHEARSING: Mwendo and Troupe Working on Muhoto

46
Mwendo played a pivotal role as a vocalist-cum-composer in her Phonex Success Band, which later changed the name to Navongo Success Band, a name synonymous with the historical background of the Luyia community. Nabongo Mumia was a political leader of the Luyia. Soon after forming the band, she was thrust into limelight as a star vocalist, and turned herself into an unrivalled celebrity pioneering in an art hitherto assumed to be a preserve of men. She not only turned into a household name in Kenya, but also in East Africa and beyond. She broke the perception that music was a male domain.

Already released in the market on cassette format are such popular hits as *Cecilia* volume I and *Makuru* Volume II among others. A variety of their songs have been released on four cassettes, and the scramble for them still continues, says Mwendo.

Perhaps it was their style of composing with Luseno that left the late Franco Makiadi and Pascal Tabu Ley to play and compose their songs with such firebrands as Faya Tess and Mbilia Bel. Gertrude has plans to launch some of their best songs on compact discs (CDs).

An ardent follower of Mwendo and Luseno’s music, by the name, Kizito Matasyo says,

"Though we miss them on stage today, what they recorded will go down in the annals as the best of the best." (Matasyo 27th January, 2002)

Matasyo is a keen follower of contemporary popular music and a DJ.
Among the records to be featured on the CD will numbers such as *Cecilia*, a love song with rich benga beats of a woman who, because of the hardship in marriage abandons her husband and elopes with a tycoon. It is a song of lamentations of love and a past gone sour.

In rumba style, she has titles like *Injete Mutyitsi, shikumba, bushuma bwa malika* and *Masiali mchanganyiko maalum*. In the title Mchanganyiko maalum, Mwendo composed this song about Bell-bottom trousers and mini-skirts, which were the fashion at that time. Those were the days when sugar daddies were famous for wearing this type of trousers.

### 5.1.2 Her Music

**An example of her songs**

One of her best selling records in which talent and art was portrayed in a refined manner is ‘*Makuru*’ meaning the self-styled village elder. The text of the song is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isukha</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAKURU</strong></td>
<td><strong>VILLAGE ELDERS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Inzi njenyanga vutsa,</em></td>
<td>I’m just wondering,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nutushi Mumbetsa</em></td>
<td>when you reach Mumbetsa,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Makuru ku mumbetsa,</em></td>
<td>Village elders from Mumbetsa,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Kahenzanga shipenda.</em></td>
<td>Are too sharp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Butambi bwayitsula,</em></td>
<td>There’s a lot of poverty,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among people at home,  
tell those village elders,  
To take care of the law.

The village elders are a nuisance.  
My fellow luhyas  
by catching chicken,  
in people’s homes.

when you open for a chicken  
to go out,  
it just meets  
with the elder waiting.

You’ll not buy a thing  
and the elder fails to know,  
Men with clubs  
You are a nuisance to us.

We urban dwellers,  
they don’t spare us,  
when you come back home,  
and somebody sees you

He goes to the elder and says  
The European has come
the following morning
Men with clabs arrive.

with dirt in their eyes
we want money for Shibuye,
we want for Ingotse,
we want for Mutere,
we want for Shitoli,
we want for WECO
Even if you are rich,
Where do you get?

we want for Shikulu
we want for Ishitoto,
we want for Lugala
we want for Mulama,
even in Mumbetsa
ye they want more

there’s too much poverty,
Where do you get Koo?

Money for Shikoye,
Where do we get it?
Khali tsi Wa Mbale
Khali Mu Goibei,
Khali tsi Shiamalako
Khali tsi Kamusinga

Khu mbilili Likuru
Khu mbilili likuru
Khu mbilili likuru
Khu mbilili likuru

Tsisendi tsi Banja,
Tsisendi tsiu Mungabo
Tsisendi tsi Misikhu

Khunyoola hena koo?
Khunyoola hena koo?
Khunyoola hena koo?

Even for Mbale
So that I can take to the elder,
Money for Banja
Where do we get it?

Even in Goibei
So that I can take to the elder.
Money for Mungabo
Where do we get?

even for Shiamalako
So that can I take to the village elder
Money for Misikhu
Where do we get?

even for Kamusinga,
so that I take to the elder.

SOURCE: Makuru by Luseno and Mwendo, Vol.2 Side A No. 3.

- Analysis of the song

This song is rich in benga beats. It is in triple metre and is fairly fast in tempo. It begins with two guitars playing a simple and captivating introduction, with one playing a melody and the other one harmonising it in thirds. This forms one of the themes to be used in the music. The melodies in the song are short, repetitive and easy to remember. The song is in strophic form, it has different stanzas, with the same melody sang by the male and female voices in unison, but with slight variations to suit the tones of the changing text.
- nzi nje-nya-nga vutsa ntu-shi Mumbe-tsa Ma-
- nzi nje-nya-nga vutsa nu-mi Mumbe-tsa Ma-
- kuru ku Mumbe-tsa ka-he-nza-nga shi-pe-rda
- kuru ku Mumbe-za he-nza-nga shi-penda
There is a phenomenon that has been
observed in a few cases of personal projects. From the
cases that have been studied, it appears that
when a client and contractor enter into a contract,
they both expect the work to be completed
within a certain time frame. However, in
many cases, the project takes longer than
expected, and the client becomes dissatisfied.
In these situations, it is important to
communicate effectively with the client to
understand their expectations and
work towards a mutually agreed upon
solution.
The text of the song is organized in such a way that it tells a story from beginning to the end. First, the composer introduces by launching the complaint about the character of the village elder. To emphasize the fact that these people are too much, she changes the melody slightly and uses it on many lines, which have the same word beginning the short phrases. They also use speech, in a type of English with a luyia accent, which is a conversation between two people, supposedly a man and his wife about the village elders. The music is majorly in strophic form.

This record was a show of a born musician whose exploits were extensive. It revolves around village elders who would impose taxes on the villagers, side-stepping the motto of Harambee. She says that whenever one would travel to his rural home, come the following morning, the Wilikuru (singular of Makuru) would be at your doormat with a chain of demands in the name of Harambee. It is against this background that Mwendo complains of the trend, a phenomenon that had taken root in parts of Western province. The confiscation of personal property from the poor, even those who could not manage to contribute had become the practice. Besides taking away the Kutaywa (Cockerel), the makuru were so merciless that they would come for your lukalayi (washing basin) the following day.

The release of the record on her first Long Playing (L.P) into the market was timely. It came at a time when the spirit of Harambee had taken a different dimension in Western province.

It is perhaps the coming of the L.P into the market, which was popular on the local radio station that the action on the trend had to be addressed by the authorities. It
caused ripples across East Africa. It became so popular that it could occasionally be heard on Radio Cologne, Voice of America-Swahili Service to Africa, besides Radio Uganda and Tanzania.

Plate 3: Gertrude Performing ‘Makuru’

- Social Significance

It goes without saying that the new concept of having some of her records produced on CDs will go a long way in filling the gap that has long been unfilled. It will also help preserve the richness in culture and originality that her music had.

When one recalls the legendary Luyia Musicians such as the late George Mukabi, John Mwale, Isaiah Mwinamo, John Wijenje and David Amunga among others, no doubt, Mwendo and Luseno come immediately in that chronology of the best artists.
Their recordings in Luyia were laced with English and marked the beginning of a greater metamorphosis from the original twist, benga to the largely acclaimed rumba style.

5.2 SOPHIE VUKUTSA VITONYI

Sophie was born on March 5th, 1954, in Khayega Division of Kakamega District. Currently she lives in Shinyalu Division where she got married in 1974. Sophie was only eleven years when her father passed away after a land dispute with a neighbour. She continued going to school while her two brothers Simon and Daniel pursued various musical activities. They played guitar, and young Sophie listened and watched carefully how they drew magic tones from the self-made box guitars.

Sophie was not allowed to play her brothers instruments though she was interested. Her brothers argued that she could not play, first due to the fact that she was a lady and second that she was too young and should concern herself with schoolwork only. So there was nothing left but to take the brothers guitars secretly and soon, skilled in the magic tones of the box guitar she composed her first song, ‘Muyonga’.

5.2.1 Role

At school she was an active member of the school choir and due to the great interest she had in music and her great ability, she played leading roles in the choir. She trained folk songs, played drums, conducted and trained the others in the absence of their teacher. Her teacher Mr. Francis Ambani once commented that;
“Sophie was a very good music student. She had such a musical ear that once I taught a song, she could go ahead and remind the rest in my absence, though she did not know how to read notated music well.”

While at home, Sophie and her family were members of the Friends Church, she took part in singing during the service. They also sang the wedding, and other occasions. She got married at the age of twenty-three after failing to complete her high school education due to the fact that her mother could not afford the fee to let her finish her education.

In her completely new environment, Sophie could not practice her music much. Her husband’s family members were of the Roman Catholic denomination and she had to adjust to this. Sophie could be heard singing in her sweet voice when performing the household chores like sweeping and fetching water from the river. On realizing this, the husband encouraged her to join the Mukomari Catholic church choir, now known as St. Philips Catholic Church choir. She became a prominent soloist and guitarist in this choir. During the church choir competitions, which would take place in December, Sophie worked hard and composed at least a song for the choir and trained the members. In church she always composed responsorial Psalms and recited them together with the choir members.

On realizing her talent in music, the Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Bede Marandu decided to offer her a chance to broaden her musical experiences. She was sponsored by the church to go for music lessons at the Kakamega Diocese Cathedral, which was organized by the Bishop Philip Sulumeti. She then learnt how to read and write music and was in better position to train the choir and compose. By the end of the year
1990, she had composed many songs including sacred folksongs and a mass known as
the ‘Isukuti Mass.’ With the sponsorship of the new Parish Priest, Fr. Felix Juma,
Sophie and her choir were able to record this mass and a number of other songs in
Kisumu.

Sophie’s daughter Edith had taken after her mother in music. Edith died at childbirth
and her mother composed a song known as ‘Khavayi Wanje.’ She sung it over and
over again during the daughter’s funeral and it consisted of lyrical melodies and
chants. She was badly affected by the death of her first born daughter and most of the
music that she composes to date are dedicated to her.

5.2.2 Example of her music.

Solo:  
*Mwana wa mama*  
*Mwoyo ni kukwo*

Chorus:  
*Muyonga ubelele muno*

Solo:  
*Mwana wa mama*  
*Mwoyo ni kukwo*

Chorus:  
*Muyonga ubelele muno Koo,*

*Baremi khu musaala*

*Kwa Muyonga yikamanga mu*

*Vane shivera.*

Chorus:  
*Mama yoo, mama yoo,*

*Toto uverere muno koo*

Child of mother 
The heart is yours 
Muyonga is very sad 
Child of mother 
The heart is yours 
Muyonga is very sad 
Muyonga is very sad 
They have cut the tree

That Muyonga shelters under

Surely it is sad.

Mother oh, Mother oh

Truly he’s very sad
In this song, the composer is trying to explain that her grandfather, Muyonga is very sad due to the fact that the son (Also called Muyonga and a father to the composer) has died and was the family’s sole breadwinner. Thus he likened to the tree that the grandfather shelter’s under. She sings ‘varemi khu musala kwa Muyonga yikamanga mu, vane shivera.’
MUYONGA

Transcribed by Bulinda J.Z.

Mwa-na wa ma-ma mwo-yo ni ku-kwo

Mwa-na wa ma-ma mwo-yo ni nga u-ve-re-re mu-no

Usasa and khasi play improvised beats.
kukwono  
yonga u - ve - re - re mu - no ko - o va - 

Mu - yonga u - ve - re - re mu - no ko - o va - 

re - mi khu - mu - sa - la kwa Mu - yonga yi - ka - ma - nga - mu va - ne shi - 

re - mi - shi - mu - sa - la kwa - mu - yonga yi - ka - ma - nga - mu va - ne shi - 

ve - ra Mwa - na wa ma - ma mwo - ya ni ku - kwo 

ve - ra 

Mu -
Plate 7: Young Sophie Playing a drum in her Church youth group
5.2.3 Social Significance

Sophy is one of the women who set an example and encouraged other women in the Isukha community to take part in both secular and sacred music. Her efforts as a musician and tailor at the same time showed the other women that they could take part in music and perform their daily duties at the same time.

She is also a lady who composed music to suit any occasion and situation, so that in any occasion, her absence would be felt. Her mass was and is still liked by many people. Her song 'Muyonga' has been taken up by many people and performed as a folk song and a lamenting song in funerals.

Plate 6: Sophie outside her house after a choir rehearsal
CHAPTER SIX

[Image of two people playing instruments]
CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 SUMMARY

In this study, the researcher set out to find out the roles played by women in music making and specifically, the role of female musicians among the Isukha people. The study also sought to find out how their ages and different levels of musical education and training affect these roles, hence their levels of participation in music. The genres and types of music that they take part in were also determined. The above information was got from questionnaires, interview schedules and observation schedules, which were prepared by the researcher.

Apart from the above, the study also sought to find out the societal roles and expectations of women in the Isukha community, thus their gender ideology. Various groups of people expressed their views about their expectations of a female musician in the society. This would in the long run, help to gedge the effects of the society's expectations and perceived roles of women on their participation and roles in music.
6.1 CONCLUSION

This section gives answers to the research questions, hence giving a summary of the findings.

In the study, the researcher found out that the Isukha community is a society with a gender ideology that encourages stereotyping of women. This society’s prescribed roles and expectations of a woman were found to be like child bearing, child rearing, and general care of the homes. The society also has domestic obligations and norms for female modesty.

These roles and expectations of women in the Isukha community affect their participation in music making. First, that they are able to get themes for their music through their changing life experiences as children, girls, then mothers and wives. Secondly, they have less time for participation in musical activities since they are mostly pre-occupied by their household chores. Third, the fact that the society expects them to portray modesty makes them not perform roles, like leadership roles in music, especially in mixed groups where men are present. These expectations by the society have led to division of roles and music making activities thus, women participating in some genres of music more than/and not others. They may participate in dances, but not those that emphasize vigorous and suggestive body movements. They are also not allowed to play certain instruments like the Isukuti drums. These have also led to women only participating in music in chosen contexts. They may not be allowed to participate in music performed in public arenas as solo performers. These societal expectations, also encourage that women take part in music that is meaningful to the society, thus, one that teaches the society’s virtues and promotes its culture and that
that accompanies various societal functions like weddings, funerals, naming ceremonies and work.

The Isukha women see themselves through the eye of the society in that most of them go by these societal expectations and the majority take roles such as singing, clapping and dancing. The predominant role that they take is singing.

The areas of music making that these women participate in most actively are the sacred music spheres. These include singing in churches, crusades and societal gatherings. This is because most social events take on a quasi-sacred nature. They also take part in secular music, which is performed during societal functions. In these, they can sing and dance but rarely play instruments.

The Isukha female musicians can fully realize their potential in music making by doing away with the self-doubt attitude that most of them have about their potentials. Like their male counterparts, they should set aside some time to take part in music making.

These women should also take up either formal or informal musical training so as to be able to take up their possible roles well. In this way, they will be able to participate in music making to the maximum, hence realizing their potential in music.
6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this study, it is clear that women have the potential and ability to participate and play major roles in music making. They are able to perform roles like singing, dancing, playing of instruments, conducting choirs, training music groups and composing music.

Based on these findings, the study would like to make recommendations to female musicians, scholars and policy and stakeholders in the society.

To the female musicians, the study recommends that:

• Women should be encouraged to take part in music making, regardless of the society’s stereotyping that they play only minor roles in music. This will help them realize their potential as musicians. They should also be aware of the educative aspect, character shaping role and role modeling aspects that they have in the society and therefore their music, apart from the other societal roles they play.

• Women should not always view themselves through the eyes of the society, since this has more negative than positive effects on their participation in music as performers and composers.

• Women musicians should take either formal or informal music education, for it enhances their musical potential and ability. They should be enlightened through seminars and workshops about their ability in music making, so as to be able to fully realize their potential.
• They should be made to know their importance as members of their societies and that some of the roles they play in music making cannot be replaced or be played by men or anyone else. This therefore should encourage them to go ahead and perform and compose their music as they wish.

To the scholars, the study recommends that

• More research should be carried out in the area of women and their musical roles and the effect of the gender ideology in other societies on their music. This will probably help in curbing the stereotyping of women as minor performers in music.

• The researches carried out about women should include these women’s views and opinions in order to avoid biases in the information given

To the policy makers, it recommends that

• The teaching of music be done at all levels of education, in all schools, in order to improve access of proper musical education to all interested parties, including women.

Lastly, we are certainly moving away from a world, in which women are defined as less than men, where masculinity and femininity are separate realms of experience. It is clear that with time, gender will no longer be as determining a factor to an individual’s personal identity, choices and aspirations as it has been. This cultural shift will affect every aspect of life, including music, from subtle daily details to broad social principles.
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APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MALE MUSICIANS

1. Gender
   Male ----- Female-----

2. How old are you
   ------- 0-20
   ------- 21-40
   ------- 41 and above.

3. What is your level of Education?
   ------- None ------- Primary
   ------- Secondary school ------- Tertiary
   ------- Other (Explain)

4. (a) Have you ever had Lessons in Music?
   ------- Yes ------- No.
   (b) If Yes in (a) above, where?
   (c) Up to what level? (Explain)

5. (a) Do you know of any female musicians in the Isukha community?
   ------- Yes ------- No.
   (b) If yes, how many?
   (c) What is/ are their names?

6. Which musical activities / activities are they involved in?
   (a) Singing in choir.
   (b) Playing instruments
(c) Composing
(d) Training
(e) Soloist
(f) Any other (Specify)-------------------------------------------------------------

7. What other roles do you expect them to play in music?-------------------------------
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

8. What is your view on the fact that these women take part in music?---------------
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

9. What do you expect of them as musicians?------------------------------------------
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FEMALE MUSICIANS

1. How old are you?
   ---------0-20
   ---------21-40
   --------- 41 and above.

2. What is your level of education?
   ---------Informal
   ---------Primary
   ---------Secondary
   ---------Tertiary
   ---------Other (Specify)

3. (a) Have you ever had lessons in music?
       ---------Yes       ---------No

(b) If yes in (a) above, where?

(c) What kind of lessons were they?

(d) How were they taught?
       ---------Informally       ---------Formally
       ---------Both       ---------Other (Explain).

4.(a) What type of music do you take part in?
       ---------Secular
       ---------Sacred
       ---------Both
       ---------Other (Explain)

(b) Which genre(s) of the above mentioned music do you take part in?

(c) Why did you choose this type of music?

5. In which occasions do you perform your music?
6. What are your venues of performance

7. What role do you play in music making in your community?

(a) Composing
(b) Training
(c) Singing
(d) Dancing
(e) Playing instruments
(f) Other (Specify)

8. (a) At what age did you start participating in music?

(b) Did you change your role or the type of music at any one time? To what role and type?

9. What are some of the social problems that you encounter in music making, given the fact that you are a woman?

10. How do you view yourself as a musician? Do you think the society appreciates your work?
APPENDIX III

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS

1. Gender

--------Male  ------Female

2. (a) Do you know of any female musicians in your community?

--------------Yes ------------ No

(b) If No in (a) above, why not?

(c) If yes in (a) above, how many?

3. What are their names?

4. What role(s) do they play in their music making activities?

(a) Playing instruments

(b) Singing

(c) Composing

(d) Training

(e) Conducting

(f) Soloist

5. What other roles do you expect these musicians to play in music?
APPENDIX IV

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

1. The percentage of women participating in the music groups visited.

2. The roles played by these women in the music performances

3. The types of music they perform.

4. Their costumes

5. Their dancing styles.