

This book examines women-specific ritual songs in the Kiswahili language as sang in Western Kenya. Through a reading of songs by women in their rituals, the discussion investigates the dualism between men and women in the said communities. Through analysis of the womens poetic creations (Nyimbo za Kike) we understand how the people harmonize the male/female distinction into a social whole. The present study draws attention to the central fact that Uswahili practicing men and women live in one world, no matter how much it appears separated into two domains from an outsiders point of view. Our discussion focuses on the cross-gender power relations in terms of the negotiated order" in this society. We assume that the men and women in this society, as they interact, continually negotiate rules that define and circumscribe the positive relationships and that power therefore is not limited to its "universal" formal aspects but must be viewed from the very societys standpoint. The underlying question that remains unanswered by earlier studies therefore is how women learn to influence their men so as to achieve set social objectives.