

**CULTURAL CONTINUITY AND CHANGE: A HISTORICAL
STUDY ON MUSIC AND DANCE AMONG THE BUKUSU OF
BUNGOMA COUNTY, KENYA, Circa 1900 – 2012.**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

To my parents Christopher Barasa Mupalia and Beatrice Wanjiru.

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Acculturation- A process of systematic cultural transformation through the involvement of an alien politically dominant society.

Culture-The whole way of life, material and non-material, of a human society. It is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by human beings as members of society.

Dance- Purposefully, intentionally, rhythmical and culturally patterned sequences of nonverbal body movements and gestures which are not ordinary motor activities, the motion having inherent value.

Edutainment- That which entertains and educates at the same time, for example, music is an edutainment tool because it entertains and educates at the same time.

Folk music- Traditional or indigenous music of Africa.

Form- The expressive genre/style of music, for example, choral, reggae, *Ohangla*, circumcision music.

Innovation- The process of bringing about cultural change through the recombination of existing ideas into creative new forms.

Music- An artistic form of auditory communication incorporating instrumental or vocal tones in a structured and continuous manner.

Neo-folk music- A hybridized music which still retains a strong link with old traditional forms.

Performance- The act of presenting a dance or piece of music to an audience.

Presentation- The manner in which music and dance are disseminated to the audience, for example, electronically by way of radio, television, internet or staged live.

Sheng-Slang used predominantly by the youth in urban centres.

Song – A short vocal composition. It may be for one or more voices, accompanied or unaccompanied with musical instruments, sacred or secular.

Transformation- Change in form, performance, presentation and function of music and dance over a period of time as a result of influences from other musical cultures, socio-political, cultural, economic factors, and media technology.

GLOSSARY OF LUBUKUSU TERMS

Babayi- Livestock keepers

Bakesia- Bride maids

Baloli- A bride's favourite maids

Basakwa- Parents whose children have married each other.

Bikolonjo- Potsherd.

Chisasi- Maracas.

Chisia nyama- strings made from animal tendons.

Ekhulo- Waterbuck.

Endwitwi- Drum played during the circumcision ceremony

Engeye- A short tail with a lot of fur.

Enguu- A herb used in the treatment of circumcision wounds.

Esachi/khabanga- A small pot.

Etiang'i- A herbal root known to give circumcision candidates courage.

Kamakutu- Knee-high hide cloaks.

Kamasiopo- Type of leaves from a plant known as *Vernonia auriculifera*.

Khukhupa enanaki- A newly circumcised boy freeing fluids in the head of his penis.

Khukhwesolosia/ khukhwitikita- To masquerade.

Khukhwing'anana- To haggle.

Kimikomeri- Waist wrappers made of large bands of glass beads.

Kwandiangu- Backdoor.

Lukembe- Circumciser's knife.

Namunjiri- "Male" leg jingles.

Sifuororo- A bride's final visit to her future home.

Wambulwa- A traditional stool.

Ya sulwe- The morning star.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAW- County Assembly Ward

CD- Compact Disc

CDC- County Director of Culture

CIO- County Information Officer

CMS- Church Missionary Society

DC- District Commissioner

DVD- Digital Versatile Disc

EN- Elgon Nyanza

NN- North Nyanza

FM- Frequency Modulator

GDP- Gross Domestic Product

IEBC- Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission

KBC- Kenya Broadcasting Corporation

KMF- Kenya Music Festival

KNA- Kenya National Archives

KPHCR- Kenya Population and Housing Census Report

MA- Master of Arts

MP3- Motion Pictures Engineering Group Audio Layer 3

MTGs- Mobile Theatre Groups

NZA- Nyanza

OI- Oral Interview

PC- Provincial Commissioner

TI- Telephone Interview

ABSTRACT

Traditional Bukusu music and dance have suffered an authenticity crisis since the 20th century. This, we found out, has been as a result of globalization that has seen the adaptation and appropriation of Bukusu folk melodies and dance styles. Of significant influence on Bukusu music and dance have been the activities of colonialists, acculturation and the post- colonial socio-economic, political and cultural dynamics. Innovation and advances in media technology have also greatly impacted on Bukusu music and dance. This research established that blending of Bukusu traditional music and dance with foreign musical cultures has had profound effect on the former giving rise to a new genre of music and dance in the community. This study was necessitated by the fact that previous research works on Bukusu music and dance were anthropological and not historical. Through the use of in-depth interviews, content analysis of recorded music and observation of dance and music activities among Babukusu, we show how, when and why the function, form, presentation and performance of Bukusu birth, circumcision, marriage and death music and dance have been changing in the period 1900- 2012. The interviewees included local musicians, funeral orators, teachers of Oral Literature and Music, Bungoma County Director of Culture and Bukusu music programmes producers on radio. The period 1900 to 2012 was appropriate for this study because it was characterized by varying socio-cultural, political, economic and technological environments, all of which have influenced Bukusu music and dance. Continuity in aspects of Bukusu music and dance from 1900 to 2012 is discussed as well as the abandonment of some musical practices in the community. This study was guided by three theories:- diffusion, social learning and syncretism. Diffusionists believe that cultural traits move from one society to another through migration, trade, war or other contacts. The social learning theory acknowledges

that people learn from one another through observation, imitation and modelling. It was used to explain the imitation of other music cultures by some Bukusu musicians. This study found out that indeed Bukusu music and dance have been changing over time due to the community's interaction with and learning from foreigners. Syncretism was used to explain the impact of blending Bukusu musical traditions with exogenous ones. Change in Bukusu musical culture, we established, has also been due to the dynamism in the socio-political environments in which it is performed. However, some aspects of it were found not to have changed.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Music and dance, as cultural sub-systems, are dynamic and have, over time, been changing in the manner they are expressed. From whatever angle music (and dance) are viewed, they are embedded in the matrix of culture and thus share the general trends which the general culture development follows (Fortes 1936:27). Changes in African music and dance cultures have occurred through several processes such as innovation, variation, “tentation” and invention (Merriam 1964:303). He affirms that in addition to these processes, appropriation, hybridity and cultural borrowing (acculturation), have greatly influenced transformations in African music and dance. During the transformations, some folk musical characteristics are preserved and others discarded or modified in the new cultural context. However, no culture changes wholesale and overnight; the threads of continuity run through every culture and thus change must always be considered against a background of stability. Change and continuity are therefore processes which are integral to every culture and will continue to occur, observes Mugambi (1989:43).

The transformation of folk music (and dance) in Africa has been on-going since time immemorial. However, the changes became pronounced in the 20th century when the music and dance came to be performed in concerts accompanied by foreign musical instruments and disseminated by recordings and broadcasting. Before the advent of colonialism, changes in indigenous music and dance were on a smaller scale and were prompted by socio-economic developments within African societies, posits Manuel (1988:22). These changes, together with those that occurred during the colonial and postcolonial periods, form part of a corpus of musicological themes that have been quite extensively investigated by scholars in Africa.

Nketia (1971), for example, has researched widely on changes in West African music from the musical-structural, historical and, to a lesser extent, social and cultural perspectives. Kabede (1995) studied changes in African music which were as a result of urbanization. Hanna (1973) and Vansina (1999) investigated the transformation of dance in Africa, while Merriam (1981) looked at the contribution of radio and sound recording technology to the changes in African music. Finally, Ogundele (1980) discusses the changing utilitarian and aesthetic functions of African music and dance.

In Kenya, several ethnomusicological studies have been carried out in relation to changes in indigenous music and dance. For example, Ranger (1975) discusses the origin and development of popular neo-folk music while Nyakiti (2011) investigated changes in Luo indigenous music prompted by the adoption of the accordion, “onanda”, by some musicians in the community. Ntarangwi (2007) studied the history of Swahili taarab music and the changes in the production and consumption of folk music in Kenya. Kiplang’at and Lagat (2009) investigated the transformation of popular neo-folk music in post-independence Kenya. Nyamwaka (2008) studied, from a historical perspective, the transformation of the Abagusii music and dance. Gitonga (2010) analyzes the contribution of electronic media technology and intra-ethnic relations to the changes realized in the folk music of Kenya. Finally, Wahome (1986) discusses the functions of various traditional musical instruments of Kenya.

Ethnomusicological investigations have also been undertaken on various Luyia sub-ethnic groups. Kidula and Wanjala (2002), for example, documented the transformation of music among Baragoli while Siundu (2010) delves into the reconfiguration of electronic recording of Isukha music. Senoga-Zake (2000) discusses changes in performance of music and dances of several Luyia sub-ethnic groups. Among the Bukusu, Wagner (1949) looks at the role and

performance of traditional circumcision and birth songs and dances. de Wolf (1977) investigated changes in the performance of beer party music while Masasabi (2011) studied the transformation of harp (litungu) music. Wanyama (2008, 2009) looks at the transformation of the traditional kamabeka (shaking of shoulders) dance and circumcision songs respectively. Changes in the overall culture of the Bukusu society have triggered changes in its music and dance traditions. Bukusu music and dance, like any other African performing artistic expressions, are slowly being transformed due to pressures from modern technology and other foreign cultural expressions (Wanyama, 2008).

From the foregoing, we may conclude that most investigations into Bukusu music and dance have been anthropological and largely descriptive. For example, scholars such as deWolf (1977), Wanyama (2008, 2009) and Masasabi (2011) have attempted to investigate the transformation of Bukusu music and dance but not from a historical perspective. Their studies do not investigate why and when changes occurred in the Bukusu musical traditions. In addition, none of the studies discusses the transformation of Bukusu music and dance occasioned by colonial activities and the postcolonial socio-economic, political and cultural factors comprehensively. Neither do they look at changes in the post-independence Bukusu music and dance that have been prompted by advances in media technology. They also limit their investigation to circumcision, beer party and harp music and the “shaking of shoulders” dance and do not discuss continuity in Bukusu folk music and dance. A detailed historical study of Bukusu music and dance was therefore necessary in order to bridge the existing gap in the history of Babukusu.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There is a clear gap in scholarship as far as the historical study of music and dance among Babukusu is concerned. It is therefore imperative that the transformation of Bukusu music

and dance that has occurred through time and space be established by way of a historical analysis. As such, this study analyzes change and continuity in Bukusu music and dance in terms of their performance, functionality, form and presentation. It principally covers the period 1900 to 2012 although reference has also been made to musical activities relevant to this study that occurred outside the study period.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following specific objectives;

1. To analyze the nature of Bukusu music and dance during the onset of colonialism.
2. To interrogate the influence of colonial activities and foreign musical cultures on the transformation of Bukusu music and dance during the colonial period.
3. To examine the socio-economic, political, cultural and technological factors which have facilitated changes in Bukusu music and dance in independent Kenya.
4. To investigate reasons for continuity in some elements of form, function, performance and presentation of Bukusu folk music and dance.

1.4 Research Questions

This research concerned itself with answering the following questions:

1. What was the nature of the form and function of Bukusu music and dance during the onset of colonialism and how were they presented and performed?
2. In what ways did colonial activities and foreign musical cultures impact on the form, function, performance and presentation of Bukusu music and dance during the colonial era?
3. How have the socio-economic, political, cultural and technological factors in independent Kenya facilitated change in the form, function, presentation and performance of Bukusu music and dance?

4. Why have some elements of form, presentation, performance and function of Bukusu traditional music and dance continued being expressed in the postcolonial period?

1.5 Research Premises

This study was premised on the assumptions that:

1. There were different functional genres of music and dance in the Bukusu society on the eve of colonialism.
2. Colonialism and alien musical cultures impacted on the form, function, performance and presentation of Bukusu music and dance.
3. The emergence of modern technology, restructured political, cultural and socio-economic environments in independent Kenya have accelerated change in Bukusu music and dance.
4. There are elements of form, performance, presentation and function of Bukusu folk music and dance that have continued to be expressed since the precolonial era.

1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study

This research preserves in a scholarly manner the various aspects of Bukusu folk music and dance for future reference. Nzewi (cited in Wanyama, 2009:65) contends that African traditional music “contains all materials that are needed in philosophy, theoretical content and principles of practices for culturally meaningful and independent modern music education of any disciplinary specialization at any level in Africa and perhaps elsewhere.” The findings of this study will, therefore, hopefully be used as a reference source by anthropologists, historians, educationists, and ethnomusicologists in understanding music culture as a dynamic phenomenon. Teachers and students of literature and mass communication should also benefit from this study.

This study will hopefully stimulate further research in ethnomusicology. There is, for example, need to continuously document changes and continuity in Kenya's folk music and dance by scholars since music and dance, as elements of culture, are dynamic. The popular Luyia songs Mwana wa mbeli and Mulongo, for instance, and the "shaking of shoulders" dance, today come in various "modern" styles. "Traditional Kenyan music and dance will only become valuable cultural identity treasures if they are seriously studied, researched, theorized and practiced", argues Wanyama (2008:213). This research also aimed at encouraging ethnomusicology scholars to look beyond rural settings for research data. Due to the dynamism in the field of edutainment, urban centres today offer hybridized forms of music and dance which are worth a scholarly investigation. The effects of cyberspace on the production and consumption of oral texts to the spontaneous renditions of old folk songs during football, rugby and hockey matches among other subjects are worth a scholarly attention. The outcome of such research would be the discovery of a generational music and dance.

Music (and dance) can be studied historically, comparatively, systematically, biologically, anthropologically, ethnologically, geographically, psychologically or sociologically (Nisbet 1969:32). This is a historical survey of the Bukusu society's music and dance. Historical interests and orientations have always played a considerable part in ethnomusicology and they have been motivating forces in scholarly investigations (Nettl 1958:518). A historical approach to the study of music and dance analyses intercultural influences in the light of historical evidence. It orders events and demonstrates how such events affect subsequent ones. On the other hand, Anthropologists do not describe events in an ordered and sequential manner. Ethnomusicologists study music as well as the people who make the music (Titon 2009:78). "Music as a text... can be thought of as an element of culture..." (Shepherd 1991:162). This investigation, therefore, briefly discusses the history and cultural

organization of Babukusu in the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial eras as we analyze the transformation of the community's music and dance traditions over the same period of time.

The findings of this study will, hopefully, contribute to the historical knowledge of the Bukusu society in terms of the community's music and dance traditions. The researcher was motivated to undertake this study among Babukusu because of his knowledge of Bukusu culture and language. Kunst (1959:1) contends that "a most important factor for the success of an ethnomusicological expedition is the knowledge of the language current in the territory of one's investigation."

We analyze change and continuity in Bukusu music and dance from 1900 to 2012. This is because by 1900 Bukusu folk music and dance were still largely intact. The community only came to interact with Christianity and colonialism, factors which, according to Hanna (1973) and Kidula and Wanjala (2002) tremendously influenced change in African music and dance, after 1900 (Wagner 1949:33). And between 1900 and 2012 there were four different political regimes in Kenya which cultivated varied socio-economic, political, cultural and technological environments that impacted differently on traditional and neofolk music in the country. These are: the colonial government (1900 to 1963), the Kenyatta reign (1963-1978), Moi government (1978-2002) and the Kibaki regime (2003-2012).

1.7 Study Area

The Bukusu are found in Bungoma County of Western Kenya. The county borders Uganda to the Northwest, Trans-Nzoia County to the North, Kakamega County to the East, and Southeast, and Busia County to the West and Southwest. It is divided into nine Sub-Counties which are: Mt. Elgon, Sirisia, Kabuchai, Bumula, Webuye East, Kimilili, Tongaren, Webuye West and Kanduyi. Nationally, Bungoma County is the third largest after Kakamega

and Nairobi with a population of 1,630,934 (2009 KPHCR)¹. The Bukusu form the bulk of the population. There are other smaller ethnic groups in the county. These include the Iteso, the Kalenjin-speaking groups of Bongomek (Bang'oma), Kony (El Kony) and Bok (Balaku) and Tachoni (de Wolf 1977:10). However, he misses the Batura who occupy the South-Western tip of Bungoma County, the Masabinjek and Semekat (Basomeki). The Bukusu neighbour Bawanga, Bakhayo, Bakabalasi and Banyala (see map 3). To the West near and across the Ugandan border live the Samia, Phadola, Bagwere, Teso and Bagisu. (It was necessary to identify all the ethnic groups neighbouring Babukusu because where necessary we have established their influence on Bukusu music and dance). The Saboat are the largest of the minorities and live almost exclusively in Kapsokwony and Cheptais divisions of Mt. Elgon Sub-County. The Teso live around Malakisi town, Changara, Cheptais and Kimilili.

Bungoma County covers 2,907 square kilometres of which 1,938 square kilometres is considered arable land (ibid). It is generally wooded grassland, well drained by rivers and streams such as Nzoia, Misikhu, Miendo, Kituni, Chwele, Kuywa, Sosio, Kimilili, Malakisi, Sio, Kibisi, Toloso, Khalaba, Mabanga, Kamukuywa, Kasosi, Sichei, Muyayi and Sirare. All of them excepting Muyayi, Mabanga, Kasosi, Sio, Khalaba, Kituni and Sirare have their sources in Mt. Elgon. The area forms an undulating plain which gradually slopes away towards the West and slightly also towards the North until it rises again to the foot of Mt. Elgon (Wandibba 1972:1). More resistant inselbergs and ranges stand above the general level forming the Chebukwa hills, Kabuchai hills, Luucho hills, Sang'alo hills, Mwibale hills, Kibabii hills and several small ones. At the foothills of Mt. Elgon, the soil consists of dark red friable clays with a deep humic top soil with a carbon content of 3-7%. This soil is derived from volcanic and basement complex rocks (de Wolf 1977:19). On sloping land, the carbon content is less than 3-5%. In the rest of Bungoma County, the soil consists of dark

¹ See the 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census Report (KPHCR) at <http://pdf/2009-Kenya-population-and-housing-census>.

brown sandy loams with a mere 2% carbon content. Virtually any crop can be grown in the County (Simiyu 1997:6).

1.8 Scope and limitations of the Study

According to Makila (1978:26) and de Wolf (1977:52) the Abaluyia community comprises seventeen sub-ethnic groups. They identify them as Babukusu, Batiriki, Barakoli, Batachoni, Banyala, Banyole, Bakhayo, Bamaraki, Basamia, Babesukha, Babetakho, Bakisa, Bachochi, Bakabalasi, Bawanga, Bamarama and Barechea. Makila and de Wolf, however, fail to mention the Batura who are found in Bungoma County. Bulimo (2013a:388) argues that there is a near extinct sub-ethnic group of the Luyia community known as Basonga living in Alego-Usonga, a predominantly Luo enclave. The Bukusu are the largest ethnic unit of the Baluyia nation comprising 17% of the Baluyia population (Simiyu 1997:1). However, a general survey of the eighteen sub-groups would reveal that they speak four dialects. On the basis of phonological and semantic differentiation, Wagner (1949:26) identified the four dialects as: Luwanga, Lulogoli, Lunyala and Lubukusu.

The Luwanga dialect according to Makila (1978:34) is spoken by Bawanga, Bamarama, Bakisa, Bachochi, Bakabalasi, Babesukha, Babedakho, Bamaraki, Banyore and Batachoni. Baragoli and Batiriki speak the Lulogoli dialect while Banyala of Busia and Kakamega Counties, and Basamia speak the Lunyala dialect. The Lubukusu dialect is spoken by Babukusu and Bagisu of Uganda. There are distinctive characteristics between Lubukusu and other Luyia dialects. In the Bukusu parlance, there is, for example, the use of what Huntingford (1944:77) calls “full prefix” as contrasted with the use of “decayed prefix” in the other dialects. For example, a tree is kumurongoro (singular) and kimirongoro (plural) in Lubukusu while the same is omusala (singular) and emisala (plural) in other Luyia dialects.

This study focused on the Bukusu sub-group. The community's population traverses Bungoma County in Western Kenya. Babukusu are also found in Trans- Nzoia, Kakamega, Busia, Uasin Gishu and West Pokot Counties. In Uganda, they are found in Bugisu and Sapiny (Sebei) districts and Yembe and Cheptui divisions of Mbale district (Simiyu 1997:1). The Bukusu are Bantu- speakers who belong to the Niger-Congo Bantoid stalk whose migration to various parts of Africa began in 3000 BC (Guthrie cited in Bulimo 2013b:72) . The ethnonym "Bantu" was first applied in 1862 by Bleek in his book *A Comparative Grammar of South African Languages* (Berry and Guthrie 1962:53). He coined the term to enable him group tribes whose word for "Man" ends with the suffix "-ntu", "-ndu", "- tu", or "- to" as in "Muntu", " Mntu", " Omundu", " Mtu", " Omon(h)to", etc., together. The Luyia [and therefore Babukusu], belong to the interlacustrine cluster of East African Bantu (Odak 1971:21). The cultures of Bantu-speaking peoples of East Africa were closely related to one another in the Early Iron Age, before they diverged into different cultural groupings. This happened in the early centuries of the second millennium AD (Curtin 1978).

The term Baluyia, also known as Luyia, was not allowed by colonialists until after 1942. According to the 1952 Annual Report of North Nyanza (KNA DC/NN/1/34) "the Local Native Council by a large majority vote agreed to adopt the word Abaluyia as describing the people of the district (North Nyanza District)." It was first suggested by a local African mutual assistance association around 1930. The term "Baluyia" means children of one common mother in a polygynous family. Politically, it means "fellow tribesmen," contends Osogo (1966:57). He affirms that by 1945, when in the postwar colonial period it was politically found to be advantageous to possess a super-tribal identity, the Luyia emerged as a national group. However, it was not until 1948 that the Luyia sub-groups formally adopted the name "Abaluyia." Simiyu (1991:125) believes Babukusu coalesced into a distinct cultural

and political entity from about the 14th century and that this happened after separating from Bakisu in Eastern Uganda.

This is a historical approach to the study of Bukusu music and dance. We first describe the nature of Bukusu music and dance before the advent of colonialism. We then demonstrate continuity and change in form, function, presentation and performance of Bukusu folk music and dance occasioned by innovations, the activities of the colonialists, and the adoption of alien musical cultures by Babukusu. The socio-economic, political and cultural factors which have influenced change and continuity in Bukusu music and dance in the post-colonial period are discussed. Advances in media technology that have impacted Bukusu music and dance are also analyzed. This investigation in principle covers the period 1900 to 2012 although activities that occurred outside this period but which are significant to this study are also captured.

This study does not separately analyse singing, dancing and playing of musical instruments among Babukusu as it discusses change and continuity in the community's musical expressions. This is because African musical performance is a tightly wrapped bundle of arts that are sometimes difficult to separate even for analysis. Singing, playing instruments, dancing, masquerading and dramatizing are part of the conceptual package that many Africans think is one and the same (Stone 1998:7). Among Babukusu, for example, although harpists normally sit, when the excitement reaches a climax, they stand up and join the dancers Wanyama (2008:214). According to Small (1998:34) African music is an active process that extends to all kinds of musical involvements, interests and actions in society beyond performing music. However, not all genres of Bukusu songs and dances are captured in this study. We specifically investigated change and continuity in birth, circumcision, marriage and funeral songs with the accompanying instruments and dances. We focus on the

texts of Bukusu music and their application. The terms “music” and “song” are interchangeably used in this study since there is a very thin line demarcating the meanings of the two words. In fact, Apel (1970) defines the term “song” as “the oldest form of music”. Lack of adequate time and resources limited the scope of the study. The researcher took leave from official work to focus on the data gathering component of the study. Resources were pooled from friends and relatives and dedicated to this research. While carrying out fieldwork, the researcher realized that some respondents were not willing to openly sing sexually explicit birth songs. Whenever this occurred, the researcher recorded the music in absentia. He left the recorder with the respondents and collected it after they had sung.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

A considerable number of scholars have carried out research and written books on African music and dance. Most of the investigations, however, focus on the use, structures and performance of music and dance. But a few, such as Nketia (1959), Hanna (1973), Kabede (1995) and Vansina (1999), have analyzed continuity and change in the performance, presentation, form, and function of African folk music and dance. Literature concerning the history of Bukusu music and dance is, however, scanty. This chapter discusses some of the works that informed this study.

2.1.1 Review of related literature

Emielu (2006:29) and Wanjala (2003:14) observe that traditional African musical performances germinate from shared folk imagination, beliefs and customs, history, philosophy and literary creations. However, they do not explain how this happens in relation to Bukusu music and dance culture. They also do not discuss continuity and change in the performances of Bukusu music and dance that has occurred over time. This study attempts to fill this knowledge gap. Emielu's and Wanjala's positions, however, provided us with insights into the sources of the oral texts in Bukusu music. According to Nketia (1959:31) there are three phases of change in indigenous African music and dance. First, there is change resulting from the cumulative effect of the creative efforts of individuals (largely anonymous) or groups of individuals within a given society of a fairly homogenous character. Second, there is change resulting from the interaction of such homogenous African societies through geographical contiguity facilitating economic or other pursuits through religion or, in the past, war. Third, there is change resulting from the impact of an alien culture- Western or Oriental- on the practice of African music and dance. Nketia's study focuses on change and

does not discuss continuity. However, his findings were relevant to this study as they provided insights into the agents of change in Bukusu music and dance, that is, creativity and acculturation which we discuss.

The activities of Christian missionaries had a profound effect on African music and dance (Nyamwaka 2008:191). Giving the example of Gusii music, he affirms that Western education introduced through mission schools encouraged the performance of Western songs and dances in learning institutions in Gusiiland. Early Christian converts were discouraged from performing Gusii traditional songs and dances which the missionaries believed were barbaric. These early converts were confined in mission stations to prevent them from getting back into African traditional life. The introduction of the cinema, radio and television popularized foreign dance styles among the Gusii, especially those in urban areas, argues Nyamwaka. However, he does not explain how the radio, cinema and television impacted the presentation, functionality and utility of Gusii music and dance. He also does not discuss continuity in Gusii music and dance culture. Nyamwaka's conclusions, however, provided relevant reference material to our study which investigated the role of Christian missionaries and advancement in media technology in the transformation of Bukusu music and dance.

“The nature of Kenyan music has drastically changed over the last century reflecting changes in circumstances as well as historical development” argue Kidula and Wanjala (2002). They also argue that with the arrival of Christian missionaries and European settlers, with the new technological advancement, political and historical disruption, growth of urban centres and cosmopolitan cities, indigenous music has continued to grow in performance and re-performance. According to Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2012), influences from exogenous musical cultures brought about a rebirth of a new hybrid of indigenized (African) music which retains strong links and identification with older parent forms while at the same time

drawing on influences from newer forms. This study benefited from Kidula's and Nannyonga- Tamasuza's findings since it discusses continuity and change in Bukusu music and dance brought about by influences from alien musical cultures, technological advancement, Christianity, social, political and historical developments.

African dances, argues Hanna (1973) were dismissed by the colonialists and Christian missionaries as licentious, bestial displays and as manifestations of "savage heathenism." Hanna believes that imperial rule and Christianity were the agents "most responsible for the modification, suppression and disappearance of traditional dances in Africa." She, however, argues that the vitality of African dances tenaciously persist in spite of attempts to destroy or transform them. But over time, she observes, the structure and style of African dance have evolved as a result of the perception of supernatural revelation, mythical precedence, individual or group innovation and contacts with other people. Hanna contends that African dance with its roots in the cultural, social, psychological, economic and political life of a people, intermeshed with facets of life from birth to death, generally continues to be significant, reflecting changes and contributing to them, meeting old and new needs and changing as it always has. Hanna's arguments served as reference materials in this study which analyzed the agents of change and continuity in Bukusu dances.

Kebede (1995:113) affirms that when traditional forms of music no longer satisfy the artistic needs of a society, they are either completely abandoned, in which case they disappear, or are partially modified through the process of innovation and acculturation. His argument prompted us to identify Bukusu songs that have disappeared after losing their usefulness and those that have been created or transformed by way of innovation and acculturation. Dance styles in Africa, asserts Kabede, differ according to sex, age, social status, profession, nationality and ethnic membership. Dance, he argues is also a form of non-

verbal communication as facial expressions, gestures and body movements during a dance performance often carry meaningful messages. Kabede does generally refer to African dance and is not specific to Babukusu. But his work guided this study in identifying the different genres of Bukusu dances and their functions.

Pongweni (1982) notes that during the liberation war in Zimbabwe, the Shona *chimurenga* music accorded Africans the opportunity to revitalize traditional performances to suit their changed circumstances and needs. Commenting on the significance of war in music change, Ranger (1975) argues that the origins of neo-folk popular music in Kenya can be traced to the *Beni Ngoma*² and the returning war veterans of the First and Second World wars. “Kenyan soldiers returning from the front brought back disposable cash, guitars and accordions” posit Stapleton and May (1989:226). Hanna (1973:167) contends that (African) dance was affected by Africans’ exposure to the alien experiences and societies through their service in both World Wars. Pongweni, Ranger, Stapleton and May and Hanna’s arguments led this study into discussing the role played by wars in the transformation of Bukusu music and dance.

Coplan (1980) observes that one of the strategies used by migrant musicians to thrive in urban environments is to adapt to new circumstances, usually drawing upon various resources including cultural forms like performances. He describes these musicians as “cultural brokers skilled in manipulating multiple expressive codes in heterogeneous environments.” His argument that musicians manipulate multiple expressive codes formed a basis on which this study investigated the concept of neologism (use of *Sheng*) in Bukusu music. Olukuju (cited in Coplan 1980) believes that at a certain stage in the history of any society, for example, urbanization as a crucial part of the process of social evolution does influence the movement and therefore transmutation and alteration of the oral material. This study used Olukuju’s

² *Beni “Ngoma”* was a popular culture along the E. African coast which started in the 1890s. It involved clubs of male dancers performing music essentially African in character imitating European military drills.

arguments to determine how urbanization has influenced Bukusu music and dance. Kiplang'at and Lagat (2009) argue that the 1960s saw the birth of modern Kenyan popular (neo-folk) music which was mid-wifed by the arrival of the guitar, influence from South African Jazz and Congolese rumba rhythm. The guitar-folk fusion beats popular in the 1960s and 1970s, they contend, came to be known as benga. The new styles benefited greatly from early 1960s arrival of electric bands, "some playing imitations of western pop and a form of African twist which leant heavily on the new electrified kwela³ guitar sound from South Africa" (Stapleton and May 1989:229). The work of Kiplang'at and Lagat and Stapleton and May served as reference materials in this study which traced the introduction of benga sounds and the electric guitar among Babukusu. Their findings also guided this study in investigating the diffusion of rumba and other foreign dance styles into the Bukusu society. Gitonga (2010) observes that the "tremendous changes that have occurred in Kenyan music, both within ethnic communities and in the hybrid urban environments are, barring Western influence, as a result of the intra-ethnic streams of influence which include contact with neighbouring communities through trade, intermarriages, long distance travels, immigration and the mass media." We were guided by her findings as we investigated the effects of the mass media and cultural contacts between Babukusu and their neighbours on the former's music and dance.

Cook (2009:149) argue that when we consider the use of sound recording for the transport and presentation of performance, the history of sound-recording technology must be taken into account. According to Ntarangwi (2007) when a community's mode of transmitting information changes, music becomes the first genre to adapt to changing modes of production and consumption. Both Cook and Ntarangwi's observations were appropriate in understanding continuity and change in the production and utility of Bukusu music and dance. Mindoti (2006), while discussing the transformation of Luyia marriage music,

³ Kwela is a happy often pennywhistle based street music from South Africa with jazzy underpinnings. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kwela> for details.

contends that the Western musical culture adopted by Luyia musicians does not allow the soloist the freedom to compose words as it used to be done traditionally since some of the music is pre-recorded or is written down and the performers have to therefore use the text as it is. Western instruments such as the guitar and piano, he argues, have created a new sound structure in Luyia music. Mindoti's findings inspired us to investigate the role of foreign musical culture on changes in, among other genres, Bukusu marriage songs and dance.

After independence, the performance and preservation of indigenous music and dance was encouraged by the new African governments, augmented by black diasporic Afro-centric ideas (Collins 2002). However, in Kenya, contradictory government policies have made it rather difficult to obtain, say, monitor lizard skins required for making sets of the Luyia Isikuti drums, contends Omondi (1984). He adds that specific indigenous trees that were considered suitable for constructing the harp cannot be accessed either because natural forests have been cleared for cultivation or government policies do not allow encroachment of forests and felling of trees. Collins' and Omondi's arguments provoked this study into a discussion on how varying post-independence political climates have facilitated change and continuity in Bukusu music and dance.

Digolo (2003) contends that, unlike in traditional African settings, folk songs with innovative social concerns are now heard in night clubs, church festivals, political gatherings and tourist resorts. She posits that change in content and context has meant change in uses and functions of folk music. Men, and even children, she contends, are now using forms of music that were exclusively performed by women. Those that were used in sacred places can now be heard in political gatherings and on other secular occasions. This investigation relied on Digolo's work as reference material while discussing the changes in function and performance of Bukusu music.

The content of music dictates its usefulness as a communication tool. According to Masasabi (2011:7), Bukusu verbal communications are enriched with proverbs and sayings which often find their way into musical performances. The proverbs, she believes, are a means of communication that circulate messages to educate, reject bad behaviour and uphold good morals. This study relied on Masasabi's findings on the use of proverbs in Bukusu music as it discusses the changing content and therefore functions of Bukusu music. Given that some Bukusu musicians have been aping Congolese musical expressions (Shitubi 2005) most of which, according to Baongoli (2011: x), today "contains more noise than message(s)," it was critical that the impact of alien musical cultures on the communicative vitality of Bukusu music is comprehensively analyzed. This study attempted to bridge this knowledge gap.

Masasabi (ibid) notes that in an effort to emulate sounds of modern bands, Bukusu musicians have modified the harp (litungu), which before the advent of colonialism, had seven strings but today has varieties with up to twelve strings. However, change may be radical but it is seldom total. The structure of the harp is still largely the same as that of the precolonial age. She adds that contrary to the dictates of Bukusu musical culture, women in the Bukusu community nowadays play the harp, and that during a musical performance, the harp is played alongside Western musical instruments such as the guitar and piano thus bringing forth a new sound that is packaged for the modern music industry. Drawing from Masasabi's arguments, this study delved into a discussion on gender involvement in Bukusu music and the influence of exogenous musical cultures on the performance of Bukusu music.

Africa, before European and Islamic contacts, was made up of self-sustaining "ethnic nations" which lived in more or less homogenous communities where life was largely communal, contends Emielu (2006:29). Music in these societies, asserts Chitando (2002:21),

was an integral aspect of life and musical performances punctuated milestones in the life of the individual from cradle to the grave. The music was passed down generations through oral traditions, was communal and nobody claimed authorship of any composition. Emielu's and Chitando's findings formed a framework for illuminating the nature of Bukusu society and its music and dance before European influence. Western Kenya and the adjoining fringe of Uganda was, between AD 500 and 1800, a region which drew immigrants, and because the immigrant groups came from a variety of origins, it became and remained a region of ethnic and cultural multiplicity and thus a context for wide-ranging social (and cultural) change (Ehret 1976:16). Using Ehret's arguments, this study established how different ethnic correlations are visible in the blending of dance and music cultures between Babukusu and the neighbouring ethnic groups.

Nangendo (1994:9) argues that the Bukusu society is no longer in a traditional, isolated ("micro-environment") setting. Modernization, which started first with the coming of the Arab and Swahili traders and later colonialism, has permeated it. He observes that, many of the "macro-structural" influences in Bukusu society have been brought about by formal schooling, Christianity, monetary wage employment and modern national and international (political) infrastructure. But there is still considerable continuity between the Bukusu community of "yesterday" and today, he concludes. Nangendo's arguments were applied in this study given that "the parameters of music that at first sight are intrinsically musical have correlations with the levels of (a society's) subsistence complexity" (Allan 1968). Thus, a people's music and dance culture is synonymous with their civilization, with all its processes of continuity and change. In addition, Nangendo's work guided us in "understanding" the socio-cultural, political and economic contexts in which Bukusu music and dance are performed. Wanyama (2009:17) believes that Christianity has split the contemporary Bukusu society into three adversarial factions in-as-far-as the performance of circumcision music is

concerned. According to him, the three protagonists are the traditionalists, semi-traditionalists and modernists. He argues that while the traditionalists back the performance of circumcision music, the semi-traditionalists blend the modern and traditional traits. The modernists, posits Wanyama, have abandoned the music. This study gained from the insight of Wanyama as it too investigated the impact of Christianity on the performance of Bukusu circumcision music. However, while Wanyama's observations are restricted to the modern Bukusu society, the lens of this study looked further back into the colonial era when Christianity was introduced among Babukusu. Furthermore, Wanyama's work does not interrogate the impact of media technology on Bukusu circumcision music. This study does.

It is evident from the foregoing literature review that there are knowledge gaps which needed to be filled in as far as the transformation of music and dance in the Bukusu society is concerned. These knowledge gaps therefore called for an exhaustive historical study of change and continuity in Bukusu folk music and dance.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This investigation was informed by three theories, namely, diffusion, social learning and syncretism. Winthrop (1991) defines diffusion as the process of which discrete culture traits are transferred from one society to another through migration, trade, war or other contact. Some scholars restrict the term "diffusion" to the spontaneous, unplanned spread of new ideas and use the concept of "dissemination" for diffusion that is directed and managed (Rogers 1995:7). In this study we use the word "diffusion" to include both the planned and the spontaneous spread of new ideas. Diffusionists believe that "each society is influenced by others but that the process of cultural diffusion is both contingent and arbitrary...", argues Lowie (1961). For diffusion to occur on a substantial scale, he contends, there must be separate societies that have existed long enough to have elaborated distinctive ways of life.

Cultures change as a consequence of the interplay between the processes of internal invention and diffusion, contends Boas (1938). He, however, argues that the impact of one society upon another should not be understood merely as an addition or subtraction of discrete culture traits, but as a potentially major transformation of behaviour, values and mode of adaptation. He adds that the concept of diffusion “is useful in charting the distribution of traits only through a limited (cultural) area.”

However, diffusionism has been criticized for being racist. Blaut (1993) believes that it has contributed to the prevalent belief that “European-style societies” are more innovative than non-European societies and that proper form of development would only progress according to whether or not these culture traits have diffused from European societies. Furthermore, diffusionists erroneously believe that an innovation should be diffused and adopted by all members of a social system, that it should be diffused more rapidly and that the innovation should be neither re-invented nor rejected (Rogers 1995:100). This thinking, argues Rogers, does not recognize the ignorance about innovations by some members of a society. It overlooks re-invention and underemphasizes the rejection or discontinuance of innovations. It also fails to appreciate the antidiffusion measures put in place by communities to prevent the diffusion of “bad” innovations. Newell (2000:3) criticizes diffusionists and “globalization theorists” who present “local audiences in postcolonial states as the passive consumers of a drug-like alien culture, slowly becoming ‘committed’ to mass-produced western form”. These theorists view today’s popular culture as mimicry, flowing only from the affluent North to the impoverished South.

The diffusion theory was, however, applicable in this investigation since we traced the infusion into Bukusu musical culture of alien musical instruments, performances, and dance styles from 1900 to 2012. This study found that diffusion has played a central role in changes

that have occurred in Bukusu music and dance. For example, from the precolonial era, foreign terms have been diffusing into the Bukusu oral traditions such that today very few Bukusu songs are free of foreign verbal texts. This assertion is demonstrated in subsequent chapters. The playing of some non-traditional Bukusu musical instruments such as the fiddle, siilili, by Bukusu musicians is attributed to the concept of “successful” diffusion. “Successful” diffusion, posits Rogers (1995:104) leaves a rate of adoption that can be retrospectively investigated. He argues that a rejected and/ or a discontinued innovation is not so easily identified and studied. However, despite this difficulty, this research investigated discontinued innovations such as the use of the limoyi fiddle and belts with iron spikes by circumcision candidates among Babukusu in the colonial period. However, this research appreciates the fact that Bukusu musicians and dancers are “continually regenerating popular narratives, beats and rhythms creating models from the borrowed element and localizing the foreign to such an extent that it cannot easily be placed in a separate sphere” (Newell 2000:4).

The social learning theory fronted by Bandura (1977) acknowledges that human beings are capable of cognition or thinking and that they can benefit from observation and experience. The theory focuses on learning that occurs within a social context. It asserts that people learn from one another through observation, imitation and modelling. Children and adults acquire attitudes, emotional responses and new styles of conduct through filmed and televised modelling (Bandura 1977:39). This research found that some Bukusu musicians have, from watching Congolese music videos and live performances, adopted Congolese musical culture. Sections of their music are in Lingala language and they have also adopted the Congolese ndombolo dance style (Shitubi 2005). However, the social learning theory has one major weakness. Its critics argue that the theory sees the learner as a sponge, absorbing information through modelling. His/her actual contribution to how such models are absorbed,

processed and worked out through time is not present to any great extent in the theory (Turner 2005). However, Bandura (2002:130) posits that “modeling is not merely a process of behavioral mimicry as commonly misconstrued...[m]odeling influences convey rules for generative and innovative behavior as well.”

This investigation also based its arguments on the theory of syncretism. According to Merriam (1964) syncretism is a process through which elements of two or more cultures are blended. Nettl (1983) defines it as the “presence of similar or analogous traits in two cultures that are becoming acculturated.” Merriam (ibid) argues that musical cultures are more likely to blend together or influence each other if they share a number of similar traits. With the introduction of European culture in Africa, he holds, the potential for blending Western and African music was high because of the similarities between the two, including the use of diatonic scales and harmony as well as the practice of accompanying the voice with percussion instruments and with stringed instruments.

Cultures are open to intermixture with other different cultures and they are subject to historical change (Rosaldo 1995). Today’s cultural hybridization, he argues, will give way to tomorrow’s hybridization, the form of which will be dictated by historic-political events and contingencies. Syncretism was therefore used in this study to explain changes in Bukusu music and dance which are as a result of the blending of traditional Bukusu musical culture with foreign musical traditions. For example, the guitar, whose origins lie in Europe, became part of Bukusu music during the colonial period. The vuvuzela (type of trumpet), today often accompanies Bukusu circumcision songs despite the fact that it originated in South Africa.

The above are not the only theories that can be used in the study of music. Functionalism and neoevolution theories too can be used in ethnomusicological investigations. Functionalism looks for the part some aspect of culture or social life plays in maintaining a

cultural system (Ember et al. 2012). The main proponents of functionalism are Bronislaw Malinowski and Arthur Reginald Radcliffe-Brown. Malinowski's version of functionalism assumes that all cultural traits serve the needs of individuals in a society which include nutrition, reproduction, bodily comfort, safety, relaxation, movement and growth. On the other hand, Radcliffe-Brown argues that the various aspects of social behaviour maintain a society's social structure rather than satisfy individual needs. The phrase, *structural-functionalism*, is often used to describe his approach. His school of thought seeks to describe the different parts of a society and their relationship through the organic-type analysis. The organic analogy compares the different parts of a society to the organs of a living organism. The organism is able to survive and function through the organized system of its several parts and organs.

In relation to music, functionalism interrogates the role music plays in society. Akuno (2005:160) asserts that it is a "view of music that sees meaning in the role that music plays in the life of those who make it." A major problem with Malinowski's functionalism is that it does not readily account for cultural variation. For example, it does not explain why certain specific cultural patterns arise to fulfill a need that might be fulfilled just as easily by any of a number of alternative possibilities (Jarvie 1973). On the other hand, Radcliffe-Brown's functionalism cannot explicitly determine whether a particular cultural behaviour is in fact functional in the sense of contributing to the maintenance of the social system.

Functionalism has also been criticized for seeing active social change as undesirable because it believes society will compensate naturally for any problems that may arise. It has elicited criticism for its disregard of the historical process and for its presupposition that societies are in a state of equilibrium (Goldschmidt 1966:511). For these reasons, the theory of functionalism was not applied to the current study. Functionalism is simply viewed as a

concept as we discuss the changing functionality of different genres of Bukusu music and dance. The neoevolution theory proposed by White (1949:368) sees culture as an energy-capturing system. According to his “basic law” of cultural evolution, “other factors remaining constant, culture evolves as the amount of energy harnessed per capita per year is increased or as the efficiency of the instrumental means of putting the energy to work is increased”. He argues that a more advanced technology gives humans control over more energy (human, animal, solar, etc.) and that cultures expand and change as a result. Critics of neoevolutionism believe that cultural evolution is not determined strictly by conditions (preeminently technological ones) but also by environmental, historical or psychological influences (Ember et al. 2012:236). Since the theory of neoevolution limits itself to the effects of technology on cultural change it was not applied to this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter we explain how the researcher collected and analyzed the relevant data to investigate the transformation of Bukusu music and dance from 1900 to 2012. The nature of the research theme and theoretical discourse led us to select the relevant research design, sampling strategy, data collection methods and data analysis processes all which are discussed in this chapter.

3.2 Research Design

This study employed the ethnographic and case study research designs. It also relied on content analysis. Case studies aim to provide an in-depth description of an individual group, institution or phenomenon. This study focused on the music and dance of the Bukusu society and data were gathered from the community's musicians, dancers and consumers of Bukusu music.

The recorded oral texts and performances of the Bukusu birth, circumcision, marriage and funeral songs and dances were analyzed to determine when, why, where, how and by whom they were performed. Continuity and change in form, presentation, performance and function of the songs and dances is described. Both the ethnographic and case study research techniques which were employed in this study are qualitative. The study relied on two complementary sources of data: Primary and secondary. Secondary sources included written materials such as books, journals, seminar papers, MA and PhD theses, articles and daily newspapers. These were accessed from libraries in Nairobi and the surrounding areas. Online articles and journals were also interrogated. Primary sources of data were the respondents interviewed and audio and audio-visual recordings on Bukusu musical performances.

3.3 Population and sampling strategy

3.3.1 Sample Population

The target population in this study comprised performers, disseminators, scholars, custodians and consumers of Bukusu music and dances both within and without Bungoma County. Since this study excludes children's songs, only respondents of eighteen years and above were interviewed.

Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used to select respondents such as instrumentalists, musicians and dancers. Key informants among them the Bungoma County Director of Culture, Sulwe FM, and West FM's music programme producers, a KBC television producer, scholars, omuswali we kumuse (funeral orator) and music teachers were purposefully sampled and interviewed through face to face discussions.

Owing to constraints of time and the vastness of the study area, only sixty- one respondents participated in this study. However, the sample was representative of the study locale and it included urbane Bukusu musicians and dancers in Nairobi County.

3.3.2 Sampling Strategy

3.3.2.2 Purposive Sampling

This is a sampling technique that allows a researcher to use cases that have the required information with respect to the objectives of the study. Three teachers who have trained folk and neo-folk music troupes up to the National level in the annual Schools and Colleges Drama and Music Festivals competitions were interviewed. Two scholars who have researched extensively on the history and music culture of Babukusu and a renowned funeral orator were interviewed as key informants.

Others deliberately picked for interviews were teachers of African Oral Literature in two National secondary schools, the Bungoma County Director of Culture, vernacular music

programmes producers at West FM, and Sulwe FM, a KBC television producer and one popular Bukusu neo-folk music group based in Bungoma County and another in Nairobi County.

3.3.2.3 Snowball sampling

Snowball sampling technique involves a subject who displays the qualities the researcher is interested in investigating and who then identifies others that he or she knows have the required characteristics the researcher is looking for. In this study, the researcher identified a traditional musician, dancer, soloist, instrumentalist, a composer of popular music and an elder who is also a cultural expert. These persons led him to their peers whom they knew had the information the researcher was looking for.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Training of field assistants

The researcher trained three field assistants who helped him with data collection. These were well versed in Kiswahili, English and Lubukusu, languages which were used to interview respondents.

3.4.2 Interview method

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with respondents. Interviews were by way of telephone, face to face and through group discussions. Question guides were distributed to respondents who were not interviewed directly. Such interviewees were those literate enough to respond in writing to questions captured in the question guides. The filled up question guides were later collected by the researcher for analysis.

3.4.3 Observation method

This research used both the participant and non-participant observation methods. The researcher observed live performances of Bukusu music and dance in Bungoma and Nairobi Counties. He participated in some of the dances and made mental and written notes on what he observed using a pen and note book. The information was later analysed to form part of the research narrative.

3.4.4 Audio and video recording

Responses from interviewees were recorded using a voice recorder. A video camera was employed to record live performances of Bukusu songs and dances. The recordings were then transcribed into written texts. Recorded Bukusu music and dance performed between 1900 and 2012 was also analyzed.

3.4.5 Photography

The researcher and his assistants took still photographs of Bukusu musical performances and instruments. Still photographs are important in documenting sites of musical performance, the arrangement of performers and musical instruments during a performance. This being a historical study, photographs taken from 1900 to 2012 of Bukusu musical performances and instruments were also analyzed.

3.4.6 Focus Group Discussions

This method was used in only one situation where more than five informants were gathered for an interview. These were members of Nalulingo Cultural Group formed in 2010 to promote cultural activities among Babukusu through broadcasts on West FM, a radio station based in Bungoma town. The researcher had a face-to-face interview with members of this

group in order to gain in-depth information regarding the research subject. He asked declarative, evaluative and actuative questions meant to elicit more clarification from his respondents. We deployed declarative questions which helped us to find out whether a certain state of affairs existed in the past, is prevailing now or will exist in future. Evaluative questions helped us to determine the value placed on musical instruments, song texts, dances and musicians in the Bukusu community. We asked actuative questions in order to find out the reactions of Babukusu to the diffusion of foreign musical cultures into the society. The researcher guided and moderated the discussions and captured the resultant details with a digital recorder for subsequent analysis.

3.5 Data Processing, Analysis and Interpretation

The recorded interview sessions together with field notes formed the raw data for this study. Information was also extracted from video and audio recordings of musical performances. Both sets of data were then checked for accuracy, completeness and uniformity. Materials found with serious errors (for example, scratched and unplayable videos and CDs) were discarded. Data obtained from library and archival sources were carefully interrogated and collated for validity. In some cases, oral corroboration from experts was sought to validate them.

This being a qualitative research, the field results were transcribed and discussed in a narrative form. Two levels of data analysis were employed. These are descriptive and thematic. At the descriptive level, the various musical and dance activities were classified and described in terms of their performance, form, and function and their dynamism. On the thematic front, we identified the themes in song texts and dance movements. This work is therefore organized thematically and chronologically to capture the transformation of Bukusu music and dance between 1900 and 2012. The first chapter gives the background information

on Babukusu and thus contextualizes the research problem. The subsequent chapters discuss change and continuity in Bukusu music and dance between 1900 and 2012.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRECOLONIAL BUKUSU MUSIC AND DANCE

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we discuss Bukusu music and dance in terms of performance and form in the precolonial era. However, since music and dance germinate from a community's geneology, history and culture (Emielu 2006:29; Wanjala 2003:14), we first briefly describe the Bukusu society in these respects. An understanding of oral works, as Na'allah (1997:125) points out, depends upon an appreciation of the totality of their historical essence. Besides, a look at Bukusu music and dance before the onset of colonialism and Christianity, aspects of European imperialism which heavily influenced the orientation of Bukusu music and dance in the last century, enabled us to explain the changes in the musical traditions of the community occasioned by foreign influence in the subsequent chapters.

According to Makila (1978:117) and Simiyu (1997:3), the eponymous ancestor of Babukusu was called Mundu. God (Wele), caused the heavens to unite with the earth and through lightning, fertilization occurred and Mundu was born. One tradition advanced by Nangendo (1996:70) argues that God took cosmic dust from the morning star (ya sulwe) and mixed it with sublunary clay from a quarry to mould the first man (Mundu). Mundu and his descendants who were known as Babayi (livestock keepers) lived at Sibakala in Misiri and spoke a Bantu language. Misiri is considered to have been in the general area north of Mt. Elgon or Lukulu Iwa Masaaba (literally Mountain of Masaaba) and not the biblical Egypt, argues Simiyu (1991:10). Simiyu holds that Mundu begot Mwambu (male) and Sela (female). These two bore Masaaba who is said to have married a Maasai girl called Namurwa and had three sons with her. The eldest one was called Mukisu, the second one Mubukusu and the

third one Kundu (Kintu). However, Dominic Wetangula⁴ (OI on 30th December, 2011) asserts that Mubukusu and Masaaba whose genealogies are referred to as “Babukusu” and “Bamasaaba” (those of Masaaba) respectively, were actually sons to Mundu. Whichever the case, when the proto-Babukusu left their original homeland at Sibakala, they migrated to Sirende (literally swampy area) probably in the sudd region of the present-day Sudan, then to Nabiswa (land of ant-hills) which was near present day Lokitau’ng (Makila 1978:136). After an attack on them by Arabs, they migrated in a south-westerly direction led by Masaaba since Mundu was too old to lead his people. This study, however, finds Makila’s assertion that Babukusu were attacked by Arabs near Lokitau’ng not convincing. The penetration of Arabs into the interior of Kenya and in particular, Turkana County, is a recent occurrence. Masaaba led the Babayi to Mbayi where he probably died leaving his people under the care of his sons, Mubukusu and Mukisu (Makila 1978:136).

It was at Silikwa (near Cherengani Hills) that Babukusu started to build and live in stone forts. Living in fortified villages subsequently protected them against the Ethiopians, Turkana, Uasin Gishu Maasai, Nandi, Basoga, Iteso, and Bakhumama who used to raid them for livestock (Wandibba 1972:4; 1985: 34; Ehret 1976:4; Simiyu 1991:15). Enemy attacks on Bukusu forts have been captured in song. The Bukusu left Silikwa for Namarare near Mbale town in Eastern Uganda. According to Simiyu (1991:11) these migrations are situated between 1300 and 1500 AD. Maina wa Nalukale led Babukusu from Namarare onto Bukaya then to the Bukusu hills in Mbale between the sixteenth and late seventeenth centuries. Simiyu argues that it was in the Bukusu hills that the final separation between the Bukusu and Bakisu took place. The Bukusu hills dispersion saw some Bukusu clans going up River Lwakhakha and crossing it into Kenya at the slopes of Mt. Elgon in the 18th century. Other clans went to Bwayi in south Teso. According to Were (1967:86) this dispersion was caused

⁴ Dominic Wetangula is a former chairman of the Bukusu Council of Elders.

by population explosion and attacks from the Iteso (Bamia), Basoga (Bakholi) and the Kuman (Bakhumama). Most of the clans at Bwayi moved to Mwiala wa Mango in Amagoro division of present day Busia County between 1706 and 1789, argues Were (ibid). The general area of Bwayi, Tororo, and Mwiala wa Mango was the area of Bukusu settlement in the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Wandibba (1972:1) believes that the Bukusu sojourned into their present homeland about three hundred years ago and settled in the area in the 1770s. However, this research holds that it is not probable that Babukusu migrated, prior to the Bukusu hills dispersion, as a single group given its clan heterogeneity. Details of the migratory history of Babukusu are found in Makila (1978:134-164).

Until mid-twentieth century, Babukusu were referred to as “Kitosh” (Patrick Wangamati⁵ OI on 30th December, 2012; Makila 1978:31). It was because of their ruthless fighting methods, they contend, that the neighbouring Kalenjin communities called them “our enemies”, i.e., ketosh. But Simiyu Wandibba⁶ (OI on 23rd January, 2014) and Reed (1954:5) argue that none of the Kalenjin sub-ethnic groups have the term “ketosh” in their vocabulary. Indeed this study established that Kalenjin communities refer to their enemies as bunyot (with minor variations in pronunciation) and not ketosh (TI with Gillian Soi [Kipsigis], Edwin Kibet [Keiyo], Boiyo Kipchumba [Tugen] and Joash Kogos [Nandi] on 5th September 2014). The term “ketosh” could actually be Maasai. Reed who carried out an Anthropological study among Babukusu in the 1950s, explains that “one morning I saw a Maasai standing imperiously down Delamere (Kenyatta) avenue in Nairobi... I asked him in Kiswahili the Maasai word for “enemy.” “Kitosh,” he said” (Reed 1954:5). However, according to John Saitoti (TI on 20th September, 2014) the Maasai term for “enemy” is “ormang’atinda”. A

⁵ Patrick Wangamati is the Chairman of Luyia Council of Elders and nominated Member of Parliament.

⁶ Simiyu Wandibba is a professor of Anthropology and History at the Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies, University of Nairobi.

Maasai word lexically close to “ketosh” is, he contends, “etosh” which means “to knock.” To the Maasai, Babukusu could, therefore, have been enemies “to be knocked”. Following a vigorous campaign by Bukusu elders, the name “kitosh” was substituted in official records with “Bukusu” in the mid-1950s (Makila 1978:31). The Bukusu society is a confederation of agnatic lineages which relate to each other in a system of clans (see appendix 2). The clans share common backgrounds and customs. Clans whose members misbehaved were often castigated in song. The precolonial Bukusu kept animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, dogs and chicken (Nasimiyu 1985:55). Possession of a large herd of cattle was considered prestigious and this was concretised in dance movements Wandibba (1972). Babukusu grew a variety of crops and engaged in sedentary fishing, hunting and gathering. Products from some of these activities were used to reward musicians.

Music and dance permeated all the cultural activities celebrated among Babukusu. The two were inseparable. Dance could not be performed without any form of music. Also music was known to inspire dance. It is difficult to find a single indigenous group in Africa that has a term congruent to the usual Western notion of “music” observes Stone (1998:7). This is true of Babukusu. The words khukhwimba (singing), khukhina (dancing), khukhwesolosia (masquerading), khukhweinyaisia (dramatizing) and khukhupa bukhana (playing stringed instruments) are part of a conceptual package that embodies Bukusu music (Simiyu 2011:22). Music in precolonial Africa was integrated into a process of community living, in peoples’ lives, in social organization, in work or economic life, religion, celebration, political life and history (Berliner 1978:20). Folk songs were perpetuated orally and were integrated into the historical pattern of Babukusu’s social life. Wafula (2012:6) identifies the main traditional type of dance in the Bukusu society as kamabeka (shaking of shoulders). Another dance style known as singorio was, according to him, performed up to the early 1900s. Performers of the

dance leapt into the air and made wide strides with a lot of grace and glare. It accompanied songs that had rhythms similar to those of the Kalenjin (ibid:7).

According to Akuno (2008:183) music is a multi-media event that utilizes artefacts. Indeed Babukusu have always had musical artefacts. In the traditional Bukusu community these included a wide range of resonant solids (idiophones) such as jingles (bichenje), and the cowbell-like chinyimba. “The use of (these) bells... in (Bukusu) music traditions may be attributed to the early Bantu traditions of the Niger Delta” (Strumpf 2012:35). Maracas or chisasi made from small gourds were often used as musical instruments although they were principally utilized as aids by seers and medicinemen. Membranophonic parchment-head drums, ching’oma, (singular eng’oma) were also common in the pre-European Bukusu society. They included the long cylindrical drums, chifumbo (singular efumbo) (see plate 17) and the smaller chindongoli (singular endongoli), observes Simon Wepukhulu Mukonambi⁷ (OI on 27th March, 2013). The endongoli, also known as the “drum of twinship” (eng’oma ye bukhwana), is usually held under the left armpit and struck with a stick. The efumbo, made from soft wood, is the biggest drum in Luyialand (Wahome 1986:53). It resembles the musondo of the Giriama and is shorter than embegete of the Kuria. Babukusu borrowed the art of playing efumbo from their neighbours Batura and Basamia, argues Anicet Wafula⁸ (OI with on 1st April, 2013).

Endoli is the smaller type of efumbo but is larger than endongoli. It is strapped to hang in the armpit while the heavier efumbo is held between the legs at an angle with the open end touching the ground. Both drums are single headed and are played using open palms. The wider end of each of these drums is covered with an animal skin, preferably that of the

⁷ Simon Wepukhulu Mukonambi, Omukananachi, was a popular custodian of Bukusu cultural knowledge. He died in 2014 aged 98. He hailed from Ndengelwa village.

⁸ Anicet Wafula is a teacher of music. He became the first omubukusu in 1972 to train a litungu playing choir up to the National level in the Kenya Music Festival competitions.

monitor lizard (embulu). The skin was held in place with small wooden pegs. Wind instruments (aerophones) found in the pre-European Bukusu society include flutes made from chindulienge (*Pennisetum purpureum*) reeds, millet or bamboo stems and horn trumpets (chikhombi). Horns from ekhulo (waterbuck) and embongo (bongo or *Tragelaphus euryceros*) were particularly preferred. Teenage boys played the sifwototo (plural bifwototo) which was formed when fingers from both hands were artistically joined. Space was then left between the thumbs in which air was blown. When the fingers were released systematically a musical sound was produced. Traditional stringed instruments (chordophones) played by Babukusu in the precolonial era include harps kamatungu (singular litungu) and the bow-like limoyi, affirms Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012). The limoyi (see Plate 6) is similar to the entono of the Abakuria and its resonator is made from a small calabash (Wahome 1986:8). Other instruments were chimbengele (wooden sticks) which were struck on siiye, a wooden tray. The siilili (fiddle) which is widely used today and walubende (a one-stringed plucked ground lute) popular with pre-teen boys were not part of the precolonial Bukusu musical ensemble.

Body percussion was also employed, the most common involving handclapping and foot stamping. Masasabi (2011:10) observes that songs could be accompanied by musical instruments or not depending on the occasion within which the music was performed. In cases where musical instruments were used, they were not all utilized at the same time. In the traditional Bukusu society, women were not allowed to touch let alone play the harp, fiddle, chimbengele or even whistle! These were considered masculine instruments associated with men only and were obviously phallic symbols. Women instead made their own miniature harps from millet stalks which they played “while lamenting the burdens of

life (engunyi), facing them,” argues Penina Kerre⁹ (OI on 23rd May, 2013). The harp was the most important traditional musical instrument of the precolonial Babukusu. It has always been a musical instrument of Babukusu from time immemorial, contends Joash Murutu¹⁰ (OI on 5th August, 2012). The idea of making a musical sound with a vibrating string (such as the harp’s) probably came from early humans hearing the twang of the bowstring as a hunter shot an arrow. The earliest record of this idea being used on harp-like instruments specifically made to play music is found in Babylonian inscriptions of over four thousand years ago (Luttrel 1979:89). Among Babukusu the harp has always been a source of aesthetic appeal; that is why they refer to it as lusia which literally means “a string.” The words lusia lulayi used to describe “good music” literally means “a good string” in reference to appealing music performed on the harp, argues Masasabi (2011:10). The traditional harp had seven strings. The occasion on which a dance was going to be performed determined the kind of costumes the dancers or singers were to adorn themselves with. Dancers-cum-singers in the precolonial Bukusu society wore butundi (beads), ekutwa (Colobus or Patas monkey skin head-gear), chinakwe (pieces of split stick worn on the hands) and biyula (waistline costumes), contends Yakobo Malaba¹¹ (OI on 2nd May, 2012). However, body embellishment was gendered.

4.2 Birth songs and dances

Through music and dance a Bukusu child was traditionally integrated into the society, benevolent spirits were pleased and hostile ones that would harm the new-born appeased, the rain that waters the ground for the child to get food was sung and danced out of the sky and milk, the child’s food, out of the cow’s udder, a sick child into health, the dead whose spirits could bother a child, into quiescence, the enemy of the new-born into defeat, and the child’s

⁹ Penina Kerre is a teacher of History at Cheng’wali SA primary school.

¹⁰ Joash Murutu is a renowned harpist who first played the instrument in a public function in the 1950s.

¹¹ Yakobo Malaba is a retired kamabeka dancer. He once performed for President Jomo Kenyatta in Gatundu in the 1970s.

quarry into capture, observes Patrick Wanabule¹² (OI on 4th April, 2013). Birth songs and dances among the precolonial Babukusu were performed post-natal. The reason is ably captured in the community's saying, sokhala engobi omwana nakhebulwa ta! (literally you can't cut the umbilical cord of a child before it is born). As such, people did not celebrate a pregnancy but the birth of a child "for no one really knew what was in a pregnant woman's womb", contends Wanabule. Childbirth had a two-fold social significance. First, through it a new individual was added into the community's populace and second the child's parents' social status was elevated particularly with the accouchement of a first born child. A boy-child was considered more precious than a girl because he was seen as the heir to his father's estate, contends Petora Naliaka¹³ (OI on 3rd April, 2013). Therefore, young couples expecting to be parents for the first time waited with abated breath, for the birth of their first child. In order to determine when they were likely to give birth, women used to count "moons" by placing nine sticks in the roof of their house and removing one each time a new moon was sighted (Wagner 1949:297).

Mbiti (2008:109) posits that among the traditional Gikuyu of Kenya, when a woman gave birth, she ululated five times if the child was a boy and four times if it was a girl. However, among Babukusu, the birth of a child elicited excitement but no ululations were performed. The birth of a child led to a complexity of rituals meant to protect it from persons with evil eyes and cleanse those who had come into contact with it. A newborn child was considered to be in a state of ritual uncleanness. The parturition of twins, (bakhwana), argues Simiyu Marombo (OI on 8th September, 2013) was considered a blessing because it enhanced the respect the mother enjoyed amongst her relatives-in-law. Elaborate celebrations involving song and dance were therefore reserved for twins. But if the twins were boys and first-borns,

¹² Patrick Wanabule, Omukananachi, was among the pioneer pupils of Lugulu Friends primary school in the late 1920s. He was born in 1918 at Kituni village.

¹³ Petora Naliaka is a traditional mid-wife.

they were considered a bad omen. In the traditional infanticidal Bukusu society, their mother was divorced or one of the twins was secretly killed, affirms Petora Naliaka (OI on 3rd April 2013).

When a woman gave birth to twins, the birth was communicated to her relatives by her brother-in-law who threw a hoe in her father's compound saying "bukhwana buenywe obuosi" (Here is your twinship), contends Naliaka. This demonstrated the destructive power posed by twins. The first-born of the two regardless of its sex was called Mukhwana and the second one, Mulongo. These names featured in "twinship songs". Being an unusual occurrence, the birth of twins heralded potential danger both for the twins themselves and to anybody who came into contact with them or their parents. For this reason, depurative cleansing celebrations followed every twin birth. The celebrations were also in recognition of the "blessings of fertility" bestowed on the twins' parents by God, argues Petora. Immediately a woman gave birth to twins, they were taken into a seclusion house together with their parents and caretaker. The parents were expected to firmly tie the door (lulwiki) onto door-posts so as not to allow anyone access into the house. During the period of seclusion, the house was not even opened for dirt to be thrown out (Wagner 1949:325).

The seclusion of neonates and their parents which is still practised in many African societies such as the Jopadhola of Uganda (Tumusiime 2011:128), symbolizes the concept of death and resurrection, death to one state of life and resurrection to a fuller state of living. It is as if the mother and the twins "dies" and "rises again" on behalf of everyone else in the family (Mbiti 2008:112). However, among Babukusu, this is not the case. The isolation is principally meant to protect the public from the harmful "twinship" powers and parents and infants from persons with evil eyes who may harm them. In the precolonial Bukusu society, it was not until after the parents' kindred sent them gifts in the form of young oxen or bulls,

grains, groundnuts, beans and dried beer pellets that the period of seclusion would come to an end.

The twins' paternal uncle broke into the seclusion house in a ceremony called khukhwikula bukhwana (to open the twinship). Before breaking into the house, a sheep, whose blood was thought to insulate participants against the mystical twinship danger (bukhwana), posed by the twins and the persons they had come into close proximity with, was slaughtered. The twins' father was made to wear the sheep's skin. The mother's kinsman then entered the seclusion house and hang a garment made of kamabombwe (*Strychnos sp*) leaves over her naked body. The twins' paternal uncle then led the team out of the seclusion house into the yard where crowds of relatives and friends gathered to perform the "dance of twinship." This dance was the most significant feature of the whole ceremony. It was performed throughout the day and occasionally extended into the following day (Wagner 1949:326). The "dance of twinship" was in sync with the beats of a small, single-headed cylindrical drum known as endongoli, posits Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). The use of drums during "twinship dances" was not unique to the Bukusu community. The precolonial Baganda, Iteso and Basoga of Uganda had them and to date they still use them (Tumusiime 2011:193). Among the Baganda the drum is known as engalabi and in Lusoga it is called omugalabe. The Iteso refer to it as emiidiri. All the three drums, like the endongoli of Babukusu, are cylindrical except that they are longer than the latter. According to Anicet Wafula (OI with on 1st April, 2013), the art of making and playing the endongoli diffused into the Bukusu society from their neighbours, the Bamia (Iteso). Interestingly, we established that among Basamia, a Luyia sub-group, the term endongoli refers to a genre of a folk dance!.

Valova Lyonga (cited in Khaoya 2013:111) aptly observes that the "...drum principally dictates the tempo of certain kinds of performance for its rhythm slows down or quickens

according to the moments of the dance...”. This study found out that indeed the beats of the endongoli determines the pace of the “dance of twinship.” The performers shake their waists according to the tempo of the drum’s beats. There were no standard tunes for the songs accompanying the “dance of twinship” and the oral texts were improvised. The soloist (often a woman) who led the crowd in a call and answer singing was usually surrounded by dancers. She, too, gyrated her waist to the rhythm of the endongoli drum. Her lead words came out in a high-pitched shrill voice. Each song was repeated about a dozen times. When she got tired, another soloist took over and rallied the dancers around her for a new song (Wagner 1949:326). Women took a leading role in the “dance of twinship” probably because fertility issues among Babukusu are often associated with them. For instance, childlessness is among married couples often blamed on women.

Female dancers-cum-singers wore biyula on the front part of their waists. Those whose marriage had been reconsummated wore chinyinja wrappers, observes Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). Both the biyula and chinyinja, he argues, were woven by women using fibres obtained from wild sisal (nabiili), and banana stems (kamarakicha). The wild sisal plants (*Sansevieria ehrenbergii*), grew predominantly on bibiili (anthills) hence their name. Chinyinja were slightly longer than biyula and could be folded in between the legs to afford the women maximum privacy, asserts Wepukhulu. Women would alternatively wear biliko which were wrappers also made from banana stem fibres. However, the biliko, and biyula waist wrappers were normal day-to-day attires and were not therefore designed specifically as dance costumes. Young adult men, contends Wepukhulu, wore calf, goat or antelope karross both on the front and back sides of their waists.

Older men danced in kamakutu, knee-high hide cloaks that covered the entire body exempting the shoulders. These were also used as day-to-day clothings. To make them, the

inner membranous layers (chichwala), of dry skins were removed before the latter were cut into shape and softened using ghee. Children below the age of ten danced naked as it was customary for them not to wear any body covers, observes Stephen Manyasi¹⁴ (OI on 30th December, 2012). The ceremony of “opening the twinship” was one of the few ritually prescribed occasions for performance of pronouncedly obscene dances and the indulgence in sexual liberties, indecent gestures and the passing of obscene jokes between sexes which ordinarily would be considered most serious breaches of the rules of social conduct (Wagner 1949:326). The oral texts of songs saturated with sexual innuendos and dances simulating copulation were performed in a frenzied celebration of sexual fertility. The words and the waist movements encouraged the audience to beget as many children as possible as a guarantee to the survival of the community. And as Martin (1965:62) observes “the cardinal consideration in the approach to dance composition, namely, that (body) movement of whatever kind, carries within itself the implication of mood, purpose, function and emotion.”

When the “opening of twinship” celebration approached crescendo, the crowd broke into several singing and dancing “platoons.” Interminably, couples comprising of a man and a woman would reenact copulation movements or a woman would pair up with another and one acting as a man, they would simulate the act of sexual intercourse. As appropriately argued by Rosman and Rubel (2004:345), the basic elements which define a dance are the dancer’s body movements, the steps, spatial patterns, their relationships to music and postural positioning. This research established that “twinship dances” among the contemporary Baganda, Iteso and Basoga are similar to those of Babukusu. Their styles of dancing too range from familiar dances to total obscenity (Tumusiime 2011:193). Among the precolonial Babukusu the audience often shouted obscene jokes at the performers. The texts of “opening of twinship” songs consisted of either plain obscenities or hints of ambiguous meanings

¹⁴ Stephen Manyasi is a cultural consultant. He hosts “Bamasaaba”, a cultural programme on West FM radio which broadcasts in Lubukusu.

which, however, every adult understood. Fornicators and adulterous people were castigated in aleatoric but *ad hoc* musical compositions. Dancers in the “opening of twinship” ritual were also accompanists. They sang along as they danced. In African ceremonies, music and dance break down social and moral barriers, allowing people to act out often suppressed emotions, transport the celebrants to a higher plane and liberate them from the usual socially approved selective words and actions sanctioned by society (Khamalwa 2012:65). This similarly happened among Babukusu. For example, the themes of the “opening of twinship” songs and dances were the socially “unpalatable” subjects of sexuality, virility, fertility and fecundity. The sexually explicit song, engeye or “tail with a lot of fur” (see pp.118-119), was the most common of all.

Khaoya (2013) investigated the performance of termite harvesting songs among Babukusu and he contends that “...beneath the apparent ordinary use of language, there are complex allusion, hidden meanings and connotative implication concealed within the subject of the songs...”. Although based on termite songs, Khaoya’s argument aligns itself appropriately with the characteristics of the verbal texts embedded in Bukusu birth songs. For instance, the term “engeye” is used to mean “penis” when in conventional parlance it refers to a hirsute tail. Throughout the performance of the “dance of twinship”, obscene words were directed at the parents of the twins. They were urged to re-enact the sexual act that they engaged in and which resulted in the mother conceiving twins. The dancers-cum-singers, moving in circular motions, repeatedly gyrated in quick movements, their waists only, a pointer to the thematic significance of the dance being communicated. As aptly acknowledged by Martin (1965:74) we found that among Babukusu, repetition, up to the point where it becomes monotonous, is increasingly pleasurable, providing opportunity for recognition both of what has been previously presented and its manner of presentation.

The performers of the subtly sensual “dance of twinship” can be described as expressional dancers. An expressional dancer concentrates all his/her forces upon communication to the spectator, not trying to win admiration for himself/herself (ibid: 286). Indeed, “the dance of twinship” is not about the dancers competing each other for admiration by the spectators but communication to the audience. Women interspersed the singing with ululations. And as the singing and dancing continued, the twins remained in the seclusion house and no one went near them for fear of being afflicted by bukhwana (twinship), the mystical power inherent in twins and their uncleansed parents. Anyone attacked by it showed symptoms of receding eye-lashes, blear-eyes or “burnt” skin around the eyes or hands, observes Petora Naliaka (OI on 3rd April, 2013). An uncleansed individual who came into contact with crops would cause the plants to wither. As a preventive measure against the mystic powers, every dancer was cleansed using sheep’s blood and a special mixture of millet flour and water.

In the “opening of twinship” ritual, each singer doubled as a dancer vindicating Stone’s (1998) observation that “...singing, playing instruments, dancing, masquerading and dramatizing are part of the conceptual package that many Africans think is one and the same.” After the “opening of twinship” ceremony, the twins continued being kept in seclusion until they were four years old or at least when they were able to walk unaided (Wagner 1949:329). As they became older, the perniciousness of the twinship powers was thought to gradually wane. When the twins were about six years old, observes Wagner, their father brewed beer and slaughtered a bull for his invited guests who comprised his relatives, neighbours and friends. He welcomed them all to a feast in celebration of khubeka bakhwana (shaving twins). During this ceremony, asserts Wagner, the twins were shaved for the first time. The invitees brought with them gifts for the twins. Harpists and the limoyi (type of fiddle) fiddlers entertained the guests who in turn danced kamabeka (shaking of shoulders) amid ululations from women.

4.3 Circumcision songs and dances

According to Mwamwenda (1995) circumcision has been part of many African cultures long before Western nations sent their people to Africa as traders, missionaries and colonial administrators. Circumcision among Babukusu does not have a single definition. In order to attempt to define it, we must first distinguish between the original motive(s) which made the community adopt it and, secondly, we must correctly interpret the symbolic meaning of the numerous rituals involved in it. Circumcision in the Bukusu society is referred to as embalu, a term derived from the circumciser's knife- embalu. It is also referred to as sikhebo, a word formed from the verb khukheba, which means "to cut." It involves the cutting and removal of the prepuce from the tip of the penis. Another verb derived from the term "circumcision" is khukhwingila (to enter). This connotes morbidity in the community's cultural life cycle. In the pre-European Bukusu society, every male person was expected to be circumcised at an average age of twenty-two years, an age when the candidate would have reached full physical and mental fitness to become a warrior (Wagner 1949:339). Circumcision thus marked the entrance of a "boy" into manhood but was, however, not a pre-condition for marriage, affirms Wagner (ibid). It differed from other rites of passage since it was performed communally and not individually.

Samba sambarani Enguny is reputed to have been the first Omubukusu to be circumcised, asserts John Manguliechi¹⁵ (OI on 7th April, 1993). The circumcision ritual was abandoned for a while due to migrations occasioned by constant attacks from enemy ethnic groups. According to Wafula Hamisi¹⁶ (OI on 13th May, 2012), the ritual was revived by Mango, Omukhurarwa by clan and who belonged to the Kolongolo age-grade. Babukusu are organized into eight age-grades (bibingilo) a system which may have been directly borrowed

¹⁵ The late John Manguliechi was a renowned funeral orator who performed at the late Vice President Michael Wamalwa's funeral on 10th September 2003. He died on 26th June 2012. The researcher interviewed him for his undergraduate research on circumcision among Babukusu in 1993.

¹⁶ Wafula Hamisi is an elder and popular musician among Babukusu. He started playing music in the 1960s.

from the Nilotic Kalenjin speakers. These are Kolongolo, Kikwameti, Kananachi, Kinyikeu, Nyange, Maina, Chuma and Sawa. Each age-grade lasts six years of successive circumcision years. Mango, who was the son of Bwayo lived with his family at Bwayi in Uganda. His father was the son of Fuya and Fuya was the son of Makutukutu who led Babukusu in earlier migration movements dying of old age at Silangilile. When Mango got married, argues Makila (1978:170), he moved to Mwiala which is north of Bwayi Hills in present-day North Teso Sub-County where he got circumcised. When he moved to this relatively peaceful area, Mango came into contact with Bayumbu and Barwa Bakinisu who were systematically practising circumcision. At Mwiala lived a serpent (Yabebe) which, according to Makila, used to devour beasts and human beings that came within the proximity of its lair- a cave. This snake killed Mango's son, Malaba. An infuriated Mango swore to kill the serpent. His Barwa Bakinisu neighbours chided him saying; "Mango if you can kill that serpent we will circumcise you and give you one of our daughters for a bride, for you will have proven yourself an indomitable warrior whose crowning achievement should be circumcision."

Mango armed himself with a short stabbing spear, wamachari, a sword, embalu, shield, engabo and long spear and then smeared himself with clay, litosi, to conceal his body odour, placed a log at the mouth of the serpent's cave before lying in wait inside, contends Patrick Wanabule (OI on 4th April 2013). On retiring to the cave after a morning hunt, posits Wanabule, the snake coiled itself and eventually placed its head on the log at which moment Mango chopped it off. The head is said to have bitten a nearby fig tree which wilted immediately. After he was certain the snake was dead, Mango called on people to come and celebrate with him since the serpent was no more. He was then circumcised despite his mother's earlier warning to him that circumcision for him would be painful. The mother is said to have warned him thus "ahaaa, hooh Mango... circumcision is painful" (Makila

1978:174). These words later formed the foundation of the *sioyayo*¹⁷ song's chorus, argues John Manguliechi (OI on 7th April, 1993). Other Bukusu men followed suit and that marked the revival of the circumcision ritual among Babukusu.

In the pre-European Bukusu community, the decision to hold a circumcision ceremony was made by elders when they determined that enough time had lapsed since the previous one and that time was ripe to have another generation of warriors (Wagner 1949:337). The average interval was three or four years but epidemics and poor harvests could lengthen the period. If the harvest was particularly good (food was meant to feed participants and the recovering initiates), contends Wagner, the period could be shortened by one or two years. This study, however, departs from Wagner's findings. We argue that judging from the current circumcision practice and age-group cycles, circumcision among Babukusu has always been held in even years unless circumstances that are not conducive intervened. An uncircumcised person, regardless of his age, was referred to as omusinde (plural, basinde). However, the term assumed a derogatory connotation when used to refer to a person who was ripe for circumcision, yet he showed no interest in getting circumcised. Among the Pondo of South Africa, he was referred to as an "inkwenkwe" (boy) and was often ridiculed in song "for his foreskin smelled" (Mdibi 2014:15).

In the precolonial Bukusu society, whenever girls met such an individual, they repeatedly mocked him through the song "He who fears circumcision should go to Luoland" until he became embarrassed and ran off, argues Wagner (1949:339). The Luo were then known to be not circumcising their males. Thus music and dance have special didactic value as they enhance the audience's ability to remember the content through repeated performance (Khamalwa 2012:66). In the song above, the words "He who fears the circumciser's knife should go to Luoland" were repeated several times by the chiding girls for the uncircumcised

¹⁷ See p.55. The *sioyayo* is a revered circumcision song among Babukusu.

boy to comprehend the significance of the words. In some cases the boy was ridiculed into submission.

In the pre-capitalist Bukusu society, an initiate who was ready to be circumcised purchased, using a fowl given to him by a relative (children used to be given fowls as presents whenever they visited their relations) strings of beads (butundi), argues Wagner (1949:341). The candidate, he asserts, then wore the beads around his loin so that the ends hang down in front covering the genitals. He wore the beads for about two months, a period within which his father tried to dissuade him from getting circumcised. According to Patrick Wanabule (OI on 4th April, 2013), the butundi beads were not worn by all the candidates. Only candidates from specific clans adorned themselves with beads. As such, candidates from the non-beads-wearing clans verbally informed their fathers of their intention to undergo circumcision. Patrick Mang'oli¹⁸ (OI on 20th April, 2013) believes that the culture of candidates adorning themselves or being embellished with beads was borrowed from Bakisu of Uganda. After displaying his beads to all and sundry for two months, a candidate obtained iron wristlets (birere) and a pair of chinyimba bells from someone who owned them by paying for them using a fowl (Wagner 1949:341). The candidate wore animal skins which were wrapped around the waist to cover just the front and back portions (Senoga-Zake 2000:42).

The chinyimba bells are the main musical instruments meant to accompany circumcision songs. Traditionally, a candidate attached a handle made of twigs from the *Vitex doniana* shrub, locally known as lufufu (plural chifufu) on the chinyimba bells and fastened them together using strips of kumulamalama (plural kimilamalama) or *Piliostigma thonningii* bark, observes Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012). He contends that fiber from wild

¹⁸ Patrick Mang'oli is a harpist and a seasoned teacher of music. He is the headteacher of Kasosi primary school in Bungoma County.

sisal plants (nabiili) were alternatives to the *Piliostigma thonningii* bark. The chifufu are preferred because they are formidable shrubs. They can be bend without breaking.

The chinyimba (singular enyimba) are percussion musical instruments made of metal. They are made by curving a single thin piece of iron plate (of about 20 by 10 centimetres) into a bell shape. The two slits each directly opposite the other, are not sealed. They are clapper-less (without the centre rod) and closely resemble cowbells (Wanyama 2009:44). However, this research established that the traditional chinyimba bells actually had the centre rod known as kumukhupilo and were therefore not clapper-less as described by Wanyama. The clapper improved the quality of sound produced as the rod hit the inside of the enyimba bell. It also bit off pieces of skin from a candidate's hands if not played properly thus serving as a deterrent to immature and cowardly boys who would not stand it and therefore the pain of circumcision, asserts Abraham Mukoyani (OI on 12th June, 2013).

The initiate tied some curved teeth of a wild pig onto his belt together with sharp pieces of iron which protruded on either side of his waist (Wagner 1949:341). Among the pre-European Babukusu, the visual appreciation of circumcision performances was enhanced by the performer's costume. The costumes were also meant to identify the initiate as the focal point of communication (Wanyama 2009:90). These were indicia that the candidate was now ready for the circumciser's knife. After ensuring the conspicuity of his costume, the candidate joined other initiates and together they hit the chinyimba bells against iron wristlets thus producing rhythmic sounds to which they danced. The candidates, however, did not do any singing. A circumcised member of the community and who was a close relative of one of the candidates sang different songs warning them against fearing the circumciser's knife (lukembe) and hinted at the consequences cowardice would bring to their respective families

(Wagner 1949). He, however, encouraged them to take it easy. The candidates responded through groans and grunts.

Khamalwa (2012:65) investigated the role of music and dance in the circumcision (imbalu) ceremony among the Bamasaaba of Uganda and he observes that music and dance have a special appeal in circumcision rituals in that songs have coded messages which capture important historical facts and socio-cultural teachings. Khamalwa's position reflects the significance of circumcision music and dance among Babukusu. Most precolonial Bukusu circumcision songs, which were mainly in a call and response form, for example, condemned cowardice, but glorified courage which was a key criterion in the process of identifying future warriors. In the pre-European era, bloody wars were fought between Babukusu, the Teso and Kalenjin and the warriors therefore were of paramount import among Babukusu, affirms Yakobo Malaba (OI on 2nd May, 2012).

With their guide singing, the candidates visited each other's homes and either a goat or chicken was slaughtered for them. They were also offered eleusine porridge after they had danced for a while. The feasting was meant to fatten the candidates and prepare them for the inevitable loss of blood that was to come, argues Wagner (1949:341). However, this study holds a different view. There could have been no such phase involving the fattening of initiates. Being the chief instrumentalist and dancer, the candidate, as is the case today, is not supposed to be fattened as he would not be agile enough to jog from one village to another, inviting relations to his circumcision ceremony. After a specific date had been set for their circumcision, the candidates either jointly or singly visited neighbours and other relatives who lived far away (except their maternal uncles) inviting them to witness their (candidates') transition to manhood in a phase known as khulanga (literally to call). A frenetic crowd, comprising of youthful men and women, accompanied a candidate while singing and dancing

to the beats produced by the initiate's chinyimba bells. The songs were in a call-answer form with the chorus performed in unison. Characteristic of most African traditional songs, the answering phrases were usually a reinstatement, a continuation or an amplification of the soloist's phrase and could also contain a melodic or rhythmic variation (Gitonga 2010:31).

When a candidate arrived in a home, he engaged in a vigorous dance and he often squatted and moved on his knees (Senoga-Zake 2000:42). However, a candidate playing chinyimba while kneeling is not a common performance in the khulanga phase as claimed by Senoga-Zake. After he had invited his relatives and friends living in far away areas, the initiate together with his family conducted the khuchukhila (literally to pour upon) ritual before inviting neighbours. The khuchukhila ritual involved the candidate seeking blessings from his ancestors (bakuka). During the ritual, the initiate was escorted to a stream by a circumcised relative to fetch water in a pot which he carried on his shoulder. He was not supposed to look over his shoulder as behind him were his ancestors who would strike him dead if he dared steal glances at them, argues Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013).

When the lumbering initiate reached home, he put down his pot and was duly counselled. His father addressed him stressing the fact that since it was his personal decision to get circumcised, he was not to exhibit any signs of cowardice as such a behavior would embarrass his family, clan and other relatives. The candidate then poured the water he had fetched into a small pot (esachi) or khabanga containing beer pellets locally known as chimuma or kamalwa kamakhalange. The coffret had a piece of lukhafwa (*Cynodon dactylon*) grass, around its neck. This grass grows mainly near cattle kraals and was, therefore, a symbol of prosperity- success that was also wished the candidate in his future life. An elder then added more water and placed the pot under the pillar (enjeko) of the candidate's father's house for maturation, contends Wepukhulu.

Before the pot was taken indoors, a mixture of powdered yeast (bufu bwe kamamela) and water was smeared on the candidate by his own or classificatory father (see Plate 3). With a goat, antelope or calf skin covering his buttocks and private parts, the candidate was embellished with beads made from wild seeds. These formed part of his dance costume. Calls upon the ancestors to bestow their blessings on the initiate were then made. A song known as sioyayo (see pp.54-55) was then sang by those present. The song demarcated important phases in the circumcision ritual among Babukusu as will be revealed in this chapter. This concurs with the observations of Kaemmer (1993:69) who notes that, “music is a very important part of ritual ceremonies because it frequently marks the division between the stages of the ritual.” The sioyayo song must have been sang for the first time in its current form in 1800 AD when members of the Kolongolo nandemu or khururwe age group got circumcised. This is when the words extolling Mango’s bravery¹⁹ were captured in the song, argues Stephen Manyasi (OI on 30th December, 2012).

The rhapsodic sioyayo song is neither celebratory nor entertaining. It is most poignant and sends shivers down the spines of uncircumcised boys and mothers whose sons are about to be initiated. Mothers of candidates always ponder over the preparedness of their children. The words, tone, reference and insinuation of this song create an atmosphere where tension and resignation are palpable (Khamalwa 2012:69). According to Ferguson (1960:88), the sounds of certain instrumental timbres, of patterns of melody or harmony or of groups of instruments do not have absolute meanings in themselves. Their meanings, he argues, are assigned by society. Indeed Ferguson’s argument is reflective of the performance of Bukusu circumcision music and dance. This research, for example, established that the sounds of the chinyimba bells when accompanied by the singing of the sioyayo song among Babukusu

¹⁹ Mango killed the *yabebe* serpent which had killed many people. See details on p.48.

usually mean that an initiate has eased into a very significant phase of the circumcision ritual and is henceforth considered a serious candidate.

The sioyayo song adopted from (Makila 1978: 174) goes:

<i>Hee-heee-hee</i>	Hee-heee-hee
<i>Hee</i>	Hee
<i>Hee-heee</i>	Hee-heee
<i>Hee</i>	Hee
<i>Heee-heee</i>	Heee-heee
<i>Heee-heeeh!</i>	Heee-heeeh!
<i>Wangwe maalule wakonile</i>	The fierce Leopard is lying in waiting
<i>Haa-haah</i>	Haa-haah
<i>Omusindewe</i>	You, an uncircumcised (boy)
<i>Haaa-haah</i>	Haaa-haah
<i>Omusindewe</i>	You, an uncircumcised (boy)
<i>Haa-haah hoo!</i>	Haa-haah hoo!
<i>Embalu yefwe ekhalakhale wibele</i>	Our initiation will continue [even if you pull out]
<i>Hoo,</i>	Hoo,
<i>Omusindewe</i>	You, an uncircumcised (boy)
<i>Hoooh</i>	Hoooh
<i>Omusindewe</i>	You, an uncircumcised (boy)
<i>Hoooh-hoooh!</i>	Hoooh-hoooh!
<i>Mango we Mwiala wakuwa embalu</i>	Mango of Mwiala gave us circumcision
<i>Haa-haa</i>	Haa-haa
<i>Wakuwa embalu</i>	He gave us circumcision
<i>Haa-haa</i>	Haa-haa
<i>Wakuwa embalu</i>	He gave us circumcision
<i>Haaha-hoooh!</i>	Haaha-hoooh!
<i>Omusinde oteremaka achia eBunyolo</i>	A coward uncircumcised boy should to go to Luoland
<i>Haaaha</i>	Haaaha
<i>Achia eBunyolo</i>	He should go to Luoland
<i>Haaaha-hoooh!</i>	Haaaha-hoooh!
<i>Embalu eluma bubu eli ematabula</i>	The circumciser's knife which pains is towards the end
<i>Haaaha</i>	Haaaha
<i>Eli ematabula</i>	It is towards the end
<i>Haaaha-hoooh!</i>	Haaaha-hoooh!
<i>Kumoyo nekulimboro wibele</i>	If your resolve is weak withdraw now
<i>Haaa-hoooh</i>	Haaa-Hoooh
<i>Omusindewe</i>	You an uncircumcised (boy)
<i>Haaa- hoooh</i>	Haaa-Hoooh
<i>Omusindewe</i>	You an uncircumcised (boy)
<i>Haaa-hoooh!</i>	Hooo-hoooh!

This song communicates messages aimed at the initiate and those yet to be circumcised.

He is reminded that the fierce leopard (circumciser) is hiding waiting to pounce on him and

that if he is cowardly, he should go to Luoland where people are not circumcised. It advises the initiate that the knife hurts more towards the end of the operation and that if he is not ready for it he should withdraw before it is too late. The song also captures the history of the circumcision ritual among Babukusu stating that it is an age-old tradition started by Mango and which should be continued by both the present and future generations.

The significance of songs as forms of media is underscored by Khamalwa (2012:64). He contends that songs in the pre-European African cultures were the most effective media for preserving information and of transmitting cultural and social values to the younger generations. Historical facts, myths, norms, a community's philosophy of life and other forms of information, he argues, were embedded in songs. Songs thus performed a highly social and cathartic function in a society which had no daily press and no publications. After the singing of the sioyayo song, an ordinary circumcision song followed and the initiate together with the crowd broke into dance in a circular motion. The performance of khuchukhila (to pour upon) ritual is loaded with symbolism intended to prepare the initiate for manhood. Firstly, fetching water from the stream signifies continuity of life. To usher someone to manhood is symbolization that life is a constant "flow." Using running water from the stream, therefore, has a pedagogical implication for the candidate. On becoming a man, he is expected to keep life "running" through siring of children and perpetuating the customs of his tribe (Makwa 2012:76). Secondly, carrying the pot on his shoulders symbolizes perseverance and patience. Every Bukusu man is expected to be patient and persevere whenever he runs into problems.

After the "to pour upon" ritual, the candidate was commissioned to start inviting relatives from his mother's side to his home to witness his facing of the knife. He played the chinyimba bells in harmony with the tempo of the songs sung by the singers-cum- dancers accompanying him. They danced as they jogged at a moderate pace in a frontal movement.

Upon arriving in a homestead, the initiate often vigorously danced and played the chinyimba bells ‘in the air’, his beads pounding his body rhythmically as he alternately lifted his feet off the ground in a performance referred to as “khuanjula chinyimba.” However, when he dances and plays the instruments moderately, this is generally known as “khukhupa chinyimba” (playing chinyimba [bells]).

Whenever in homesteads, the candidate’s escorts danced in a circular motion while moving either clockwise or counter-clockwise at a walking pace as they stamped their feet in a dance style Wanyama (2009:93) calls khuracha. But Wandibba argues that the khuracha dance whose steps were exiguous was performed only when the crowd was singing a particular song known as eracha. As observed today, indeed it is mainly the eracha song that elicits the stamping of the feet but most of the other circumcision songs attract fluid but slow paced dancing. Some of the performers carried sticks, clubs, tree branches and other weapons which as Assimwe (2008:24) found among the Bakisu of Uganda, were for symbolic purposes, a warning to circumcision candidates that any sign of cowardice may be vicissitudinous and could put their lives in danger.

As a rule, a circumcision candidate in the Bukusu culture does not respond to a soloist’s call to sing back in chorus. This is because the songs are meant to encourage him. Otherwise, he will be “singing for himself”, (keminya). This is abhorred. Conventionally, when a praise song is being performed, the individual being praised does not join in the singing but he may participate as a dancer. The soloists were mainly circumcised men as the circumcision ritual was considered masculine. They were at liberty to use the power of song to scorn and outrightly abuse persons or even an entire clan whose members were social delinquents. The “call” phase ended with the initiate visiting one of his maternal uncles who slaughtered a bull for him. Meat from the underside of the bull (luliki) was hung around the candidate’s neck.

The meat was a visual symbol of the uncle's commitment to the process of his nephew's transition from childhood to adulthood and his best wishes for the initiate's future life (Wanyama 2009:53). The esoteric sioyayo song was once again sung to warn him against cowardice and of the "leopard" (circumciser) that was about to inflict unfathomed pain on him. After the sioyayo, the candidate was escorted home amid dance and song. Normally, the candidate was sand-witched amidst the singers and the dancing was frontal (see Plate 7).

On arrival home and upon his mother seeing him with luliki around his neck, she ululated and danced in happiness "since her brother had not humiliated her by not slaughtering a bull for his nephew", affirms Petora Naliaka (OI on 3rd April, 2013). She was then joined by other performers and together they engaged in dance while moving in circular motions. An elated dancer would often break off from the crowd in a solo performance. In the evening, another bull was slaughtered. A piece of its stomach (lisombo) was put around the initiate's neck and the bull's chyme smeared on his body by his father or paternal uncle after which the sioyayo was sung as the initiate played the chinyimba bells. This marked the beginning of a frenzied night feasting, singing, dancing and mocking of the candidate's parents for their various deficiencies.

Among Babukusu, rhythmic instruments such as the chinyimba bells, luengele (wooden board struck with sticks) and leg jingles do not play melodies. Their roles in musical performances include marking the start of a performance, setting the pace, making the music sonorous, motivating the performers, attracting the audience, maintaining the rhythm of the performance and signaling change in performance. They also give cues to singers and dancers and form the interlude (Shitambasi and Baraza 2012). On the other hand, melodic instruments such as the harp, in addition to the above functions, keep the singer in pitch, produce melody and take the solo part as the singer responds, and vice-versa, hence the figurative saying

“litungu lilomaloma”, (the harp talks). The night singing and dancing went on up to dawn with the initiate dancing in the middle of a circle formed by the singers-cum-dancers. The performers’ movements were circular and either clockwise or anti-clockwise. The candidate, however, was allowed a two to three hour break to “sleep” although he did not actually sleep but used the opportunity to rest. Among some clans such as Bameme and Bakhwami, the singing and dancing was accompanied by the sound of the endwitwi drum which was played by applying friction on one of its heads using a palm stick smeared with chyme, argues Anicet Wafula (OI on 1st April, 2013). The endwitwi is a cylindrical double-headed drum (Simiyu 2011:29).

The night-time circumcision songs were mainly danced to on paths and in open spaces, although the candidate’s father’s age-mates, would occasionally break into song and dance in a house specifically set aside for them on the eve of the surgery, observes Patrick Mang’oli (OI on 20th April, 2013). However, Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014) argues that this is a recent behaviour that was not there during the pre-European period. This study found out that while the dancing in the open yard involved extensive traversing of the ground, the dancers in the house remained virtually in one spot due to space constriction. By the dancer’s prevailing awareness of the space in which and through which he moves, argues Martin (1965:64), he relates to himself consciously and visibly to his environment, and not only to the physical aspects of that environment but also to its emotional overtone. Among other songs, the performers sang the emotions-stimulating sioyayo urging their “son” to face the knife with courage.

Most of the songs sung on the eve of the surgery were reifying, celebratory and meant to encourage the candidate to bravely face the knife. Very early in the morning, the initiate was taken to the river, sietosi which literally means “where mud is” and stripped naked to be smeared with mud (litosi). While enroute, they sang among others the “orao bachonga”, i.e.,

“present it (penis) for shaping” song. Babukusu in the precolonial era borrowed terms from other communities which they used as song texts. For example, the term “layoni” (uncircumcised boy) in the precolonial-era song “present it for shaping” is Maasai (Simiyu 2011:78). The Bukusu word for an uncircumcised male is “omusinde.”

At the stream or river the candidate removed his beads and handed them together with his chinyimba bells to his younger sister or to a close relative. He then undressed and dived into the cold water with which he washed out all the chifuniu (*Smegma praeputi*). While discussing circumcision among the Gikuyu of Kenya, Kenyatta (1965:138) contends that candidates sang in unison (while in the water) thus “*Togwe-thamba na munja wa ecanake*” ,i.e., “We have bathed with the cream of youth.” This was done as part of washing away their childhood behaviour. However, in the Bukusu society, the candidates never did any singing. The water, according to Kenyatta (ibid) was meant to numb the candidates in order “to prevent pain and loss of blood at the time of operation.” On coming out of the water the initiate was often slapped several times so as to awaken him to reality and test his resolve to be circumcised. He was warned against exhibiting any form of cowardice before his whole body was smeared with mud.

A small mound of mud was placed on top of the candidate’s head into which a stick of the lusinyande grass (*Sporobolus elongates*) was stuck, observes Nyongesa Sinino²⁰ (TI on 23rd June, 2014). Nyongesa posits that the lusinyande grass and the mound of mud are collectively known as kwa ututu. However, Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014) contends that kwa ututu is actually the species of grass stuck on a candidate’s head. The lusinyande type, he argues, is not used for this purpose. This study established that the grass is generally referred to as kwa ututu. A bird of the vulture family called ututu used to prey on rodents in the ututu grass, hence the name, posits Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012).

²⁰ Joseph Nyongesa Sinino is a traditional circumciser and chairman of Bungoma County Circumcisers Group.

The mud smeared on the candidate served the same purpose as the water he plunged in, i.e., it constricted the body and reduced the flow of blood so that the candidate becomes insensated and does not bleed too much (Wanyama 2009:53). But Senoga- Zake (2000:41) believes the mud is a symbol of how Mango looked after his victory over the legendary snake- yabebe.²¹ If the initiate had a twin sister, argues Raphael Wanyonyi (OI on 27th March, 2013), the mud was smeared on her face and a banana leave (liru) tied around her waist. On his way back home, but using a different path from which he came, the candidate played the chinyimba bells and no other song except sioyayo was sung. Because of the slow tempo of the sioyayo, the initiate played the chinyimba bells in a whumpy manner. The sthenic performers used a different route home for the fear that a witch may have placed charms on the original path which could make the candidate cry out during the actual operation, contends John Mupalia (TI on 24th January, 2014). As mentioned earlier, the sioyayo song is not a celebratory song and as such there is no dancing whenever it is sung. According to Khisa Sikolia²² (OI on 1st April, 2013), it is taboo to sing this song outside its cultural context lest a bad omen befalls the singer or his family. If the offending singer is uncircumcised, argues Sikolia, ancestral spirits would cause his prepuce to swell and a circumciser would be forced to circumcise him regardless of whether it was the circumcision period or not.

The initiate was operated on in the front yard (luyia) of his parents' house. Surrounded by a large crowd of men only, contends Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014), the candidate was not expected to exhibit any form of recreant behaviour. In order to ensure that this did not happen, his father engaged a medicine-man who planted etiang'i, (a herbal root known to give people courage), on the locus where the initiate would stand as he is operated upon. Part of the nervine root would be protruding and the initiate gripped it between the big

²¹ See details on p.48

²² Khisa Sikolia ,Omukananachi, was born in 1918 and got circumcised in 1934. He died in 2014.

and the second toe of his right leg. It is the vistas of manhood that propelled the valiant candidate towards mutiang'i (spot where the etiang'i herb was planted). He was guided to the spot by his real or designated father. The crowd stopped singing when the candidate was a few metres shy of the mutiang'i. While in the mutiang'i, for majority of Bukusu clans, the initiate faces West but for some clans such as Barefu, Bayumbu and Bamwalie, he faces East.

In the precolonial period, the circumciser dressed himself up so as to look as menacing, fierce and awe-inspiring as possible. He wore a headgear made of Colobus monkey skin and leg jingles. His face, the upper part of his body, his arms and legs were spotted with streaks of white, red and black (Wagner 1949:348). The twin girl was “circumcised” by having the banana leave tied around her waist cut. The firstborn of the twins, Mukhwana, was circumcised first. A candidate was not supposed to whimper but keep his countenance during the surgery. Immediately after the surgery which was performed by a fastidious expert and which took slightly over ten seconds, a girl who was in love with the newly circumcised boy, omufulu (plural bafulu), threw her arms around his waist from behind. This was a declaration that she was now engaged to him for marriage (Wagner 1949:351). However, if the omufulu was not interested in her and subsequently abandoned her, the girl was ridiculed by others through songs.

After the operation, the initiate sat in the shade of some bushes or leafy branches stuck in the ground as the crowd in circular unified movements, rejoiced in song and dance. Most Bukusu dances have, from the precolonial period continued to draw much of their inspiration from the movements and shapes of nature. They have remained circular. Martin and Jacobus (1997:300) argue that the circle is the most pervasive and fascinating shapes of nature. The movements of planets and stars suggest circular motion and in a magical-religious way, circular dances have been thought to bring the dancers-and therefore humans in general-into a significant harmony with the divine forces in the universe. The often sung song immediately

the initiate was circumcised was khwera omurwa, (We have killed the enemy). This was a victory song. The initiate and the singers-cum-dancers celebrated the spifflication of the circumciser's knife (read enemy). The precolonial Babukusu were traditional enemies of the Kalenjin who are found in present-day Bungoma County and this song serves to preserve this history. As they sung the "we have killed the enemy" song, the singers-cum-dancers moved in either anti-clockwise or clockwise manner. Some shrieked and leapt into the air in triumph. The circumcised boy, if he so wished, abstemiously moved his head up and down in sync with the rhythm of the song.

The song, "we have killed the enemy," goes thus:

Soloist: <i>Yaya khwera omurwa</i>	My friend we have killed the enemy
Chorus: <i>Aaa khwera omurwa</i>	Aaa we have killed the enemy
Soloist: <i>Sande khwera omurwa</i>	My age-mate we have killed the enemy
Chorus: <i>Aaa khwera omurwa</i>	Aaa we have killed the enemy
Soloist: <i>Papa khwera omurwa</i>	My father we have killed the enemy
Chorus: <i>Aaa khwera omurwa</i>	Aaa we have killed the enemy
Soloist: <i>Chuma khwera omurwa</i>	Chuma we have killed the enemy
Chorus: <i>Aaa khwera omurwa</i>	Aaa we have killed the enemy

When the elders determined that the newly circumcised boy had rested enough, he was taken backwards to a seclusion house known as likombe. This house is symbolically extramundane. While in it, the neophyte is believed to be dead for he is in his own secluded world (Makwa 2012:86). According to Makwa, the term describing the seclusion house, likombe, is derived from ekombe which means the world of the living dead. However, Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013) argues that the prefix "li-" on likombe, delineates a noun, i.e., (house), but the root, -"kombe," means "to enclose." In disagreeing with Makwa, Wepukhulu asserts that, traditionally, Babukusu normally do not draw comparisons between the living and bemakombe (those in the spirit world). The circumciser later in the day visited the neophyte in the seclusion house to give him advice on how to behave as an adult and fed him his first food as a circumcised man in a ritual known as khulumia. Before this ritual, the

neophyte was not allowed to eat any food. In the seclusion house, the neophyte was separated from most of his relatives and could only come into contact with his minders. Namachengeche, usually a female relative, used to serve him food and drinks. Namakhala, an uncircumcised young boy who was also his relative acted as his personal assistant. He accompanied him wherever he went and he carried his (neophyte's) flute. The neophyte treated his wound using dried and triturated leaves of a plant called enguu (*Mirsoglossa pyri*). Boys from the same lineage and who were circumcised on the same day, and on the same yard, could stay in one seclusion house, posits Khisa Sikolia (OI on 1st April, 2013). If a neophyte died from his wound while in the seclusion house (which was rare), the death was not bewailed but communicated informally (Wagner 1949). For example, his minders were told by elders not to bring food for him regularly or that it was sufficient to just cook a little food for him. When a neophyte's mother eventually learned of his death, (after failing to spot him among the others as they sunbathed every morning), she and other relatives started singing circumcision songs and never wailed or sang dirges. If they did the contrary, argues Wagner (1949), it was believed the other neophytes would also die.

The neophytes reminded each other that it was time to “bathe” by playing on their bamboo flutes and the bifwototo. They, however, did not bathe using water. It was feared that if water came into contact with the penile wound, it would not heal fast. They, therefore, smeared their bodies with culturally covenanted white clay known as lulongo which is often found near rivers. They then rubbed the milky substance from the candelabra (*Euphorbia candelabrum*) tree, locally known as kumutua, into their hair (Wagner 1949:358). Whenever the clay dried and started detaching itself from the skin, it did so with the dirt on their bodies. The milky substance, posits Wagner, trapped and therefore prevented dirt from reaching the scalp. However, Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014) believes that the neophytes never applied the sticky substance from the euphorbia tree in their hair as this would in fact

attract more dirt. This study established that it is not a normal practice for neophytes to rub the candelabra sap into their hair. As they ventured out of their seclusion house looking for lulongo clay, the neophytes often met grown-up men but who were uncircumcised and their age-mates who feared getting circumcised. Whenever this happened, the neophytes hit them on the ankles using sticks and ridiculed them through songs. The neophytes also congregated on the meadows to bleed the watery substance that forms at the head of the penile shaft upon circumcision. This was done after the wound had completely healed. In order to free the fluid, soldier ants, (namung'awe), were used to prick the tip of the penis. This practice is known as khukhupa enanaki. They played bamboo flutes as they relaxed in the meadow.

The seclusion period was brought to an end with an elaborate ceremony involving singing, yelling, ululating, drinking beer and dancing known as khukhwalukha or “coming out”. When they had stayed in the seclusion house for about three months and had totally healed, the elders met and agreed on when the kamalwa ke khukhwiyalula/khukhwalukha (beer of coming out), should be brewed, posits Wagner (1949). The “coming out” ceremony was held when the eleusine planting season was over and women who were expected to prepare large amounts of beer and food for the occasion were relatively disengaged from farm work. This was usually between the months of November and December.

On the eve of the ceremony, the neophytes jointly built a dome-shaped hut (lisali), in a nearby banana plantation and after they had eaten supper, each one of them made a long torch using dry chimuli (*Hyparrhenia hirta*) reeds. He then gathered the bloodstained dry banana leaves (lusanja) which hitherto had been serving as his bedding and set them ablaze outside the seclusion house (Wagner 1949). The burning of the banana leaves symbolized the “removal of the boy’s past so as to allow him to begin a new life,” asserts Khamalwa (2012:87). The neophyte then lit up his torch using the fire and without looking back dashed

off with it to the make-shift hut in the banana plantation. And as he ran, the neophyte yelled the name of his circumciser, crying out repeatedly that the circumciser “is eating me”, for instance, “Ooh Teremi²³ wandia! ,i.e., “Teremi is eating me.” This was meant to demonstrate that the circumciser caused him a lot of pain.

The neophyte had to ensure wind did not extinguish the torch lest he became a night-runner, observes Simiyu Marombo (OI on 8th September, 2013). Each neophyte threw his burning torch onto a pre-prepared heap of dry logs thus starting a fire that would warm them throughout the night. They were allowed to hack off as many banana bunches as they wished and roast them for a meal. They playfully hit each other with the roasted bananas and made love to girls who on this occasion were allowed to join them in the banana plantation, argues Wagner (ibid). However, Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012) holds that most of the girls who went to the banana plantation with the initiates were the boys’ relatives and therefore could not make love to them or allow them to misbehave. Furthermore, affirms Yona, Bukusu culture treasured virginity and abhorred sexual promiscuity. In fact, those who were of loose morals, he adds were publicly humiliated through retributive songs. Yona posits that throughout the night, the team only sang songs and made merry as they fed on roasted bananas.

The neophytes had to leave their hut in the banana plantation before sunrise and continue playing in the bush. If the sun shone on them while still in the hut, it was believed they would all die, argues Patrick Wanabule (OI on 4th April, 2013). At about midday, they walked to a nearby stream where they depilated their heads and washed off the white clay which they had been cleaning themselves with (Wagner 1949). But Simiyu Wandibba (OI 23rd January, 2014) observes that the initiates would have long healed by the time the ritual of “coming out” was performed and would already have been bathing with water. As such, he argues,

²³ Teremi was a popular circumciser among Babukusu in the 1970s and 1980s.

there was no longer any clay on their bodies to be washed in the noon of the “coming out” ceremony. He also observes that the shaving of hair was done after and not during the “hatching” ceremony. Indeed the practice, even today, is that the neophyte stops smearing himself with the lulongo clay upon healing and shaves his hair after the “hatching” ceremony.

After cleaning themselves, the neophytes wore new skin clothes prepared by their fathers. These new decorated skins were brought to them by their female minders. They then set off for the home where the “feast of coming out” was centrally prepared for them. As they majestically walked home, showing off their new, nicely tanned and decorated skin-clothes, the girls and boys accompanying them sang the mundubi embia (in a new food plate) song which goes thus:

Soloist: <i>Oo lelo oo lelo</i>	Oo today oo today
Chorus: <i>Lelo mundubi embia</i>	Today(I shall eat) in a new food plate
Soloist: <i>Oo lelo oo lelo</i>	Oo today oo today
Chorus: <i>Lelo mundubi embia</i>	Today in a new food plate
Soloist: <i>Mayi walomanga</i>	My mother, you used to doubt me
Chorus: <i>Lelo mundubi embia</i>	Today in a new food plate
Soloist: <i>Papa walomanga</i>	Father you used to doubt me
Chorus: <i>Lelo mundubi embia</i>	Today in a new plate
Soloist: <i>Senge walomanga</i>	Aunt you used to doubt me
Chorus: <i>Lelo mundubi embia</i>	Today in a new food plate
Soloist: <i>Kukhu walomanga</i>	Grandmother you used to doubt me
Chorus: <i>Lelo mundubi embia</i>	Today in a new food plate

This song signified that the former omufulu had evolved and was now repackaged as a “new” being. Consequently, he was now referred to as omutembete, which means “new and tender one,” asserts Andrew Makhapila²⁴ (OI on 14th May, 2013). The words “today (I shall eat) in a new food plate” are repeated throughout the song. Nketia (1955:104) posits that repetitions in song are not monotonous, neither are they due to barrenness of thought. On the contrary, he argues, they may have a musical mode of meaning or they may be a means of emphasizing points that the performers might wish to make. In the song above, the newness of the

²⁴ Andrew Makhapila is a music and drama teacher at Bokoli high school in Bungoma County.

neophyte is stressed. In most Bukusu circumcision songs, there are omissions of certain vowel sounds at the beginning and end of some words (Simiyu 2011:94). For example, in the “new food plate” song above, the vowel “e” in “embia” is left out resulting in the phrase “mundubi mbia”. Such syllabic omissions, argues Simiyu (ibid), help fit the lyrics into the rhythmic character of a song. On arrival at home, the neophytes were served with large quantities of boiled bananas which were poured out on banana leaves. When satisfied, they engaged in mock fights using the hot bananas. Elders or their fathers then handed each one of them a shield, club, spear and other weapons. Before addressing his son, a father took a draught of beer from a new gourd, swallowed some and spat the rest on his son’s face and chest telling him “my son, you have left behind your mother’s cloth (i.e., prepuce) but now you have been given the father’s cloth...” posits Wagner (1949:364). He went on to give his son advice on sexuality and social relations now that the son was an omusani, a circumcised man. But Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014) argues that the counseling, known as khubita, was actually done before the “coming out” ceremony. However, this research found out that the counseling can be done either pre- or post- the “coming out” ritual.

4.4 Marriage songs and dances

Marriage in the traditional Bukusu society was compulsory. Those who were exempted from it were the mentally sick. Ottenberg (1965:20) established that among the Afikpo-Ibo celibacy was thought to be not only unnatural but also immoral. This was similarly the case with the precolonial Babukusu. The significance of marriage in the Bukusu community was threefold. First, through procreation, the survival of the community was guaranteed. Second, vital affinal links were created leading to social unity and, third, the social status of the couple was enhanced. Marriage symbolized the transfer of a woman’s productive and reproductive capacities from the household and economic unit of her father to that of her husband. And, to the husband, it meant shaping his own and that of his family’s economic

future. Marriage among Babukusu as in most African communities such as the Jie of Uganda (Gulliver 1965: 176) is exogamous. A Bukusu man cannot marry a girl from his own clan or that of his mother, mother's mother or father's mother. Sorority is rare.

The precolonial Babukusu had three types of marriages. These were:- marriage by elopement (khubeya), marriage through abduction (khukhwesa) and marriage by way of a wedding or siselelo (plural, biselelo). This study focused on siselelo because it was the only form of marriage which was celebratory and which involved singing and dancing. When a man wanted to marry, he identified a prospective wife on his own or through his friends, paternal aunts, mother, grandmother or other relatives. Older women were preferred as go-betweens (wamuanda) because it was easier to openly discuss sexual matters with them. It was also believed that they were good at convincing girls to accept marriage proposals.

After the go-between had succeeded in convincing the girl, she relayed the good news to the suitor who in turn (and with confidence) informed his father about his intention to get married. If his father agreed to pay bridewealth for him, he sent another go-between who under normal circumstances was his own mother, to the girl's parents with a request that their daughter marries her son. On arrival at the girl's parents' home and after the usual pleasantries, posit some members of the Nalulingo Cultural Group (OI on 10th May, 2013), the suitor's mother sat next to the door and announced to the girl's parents thus, "I am meant to understand that there is a hoe-handle, kumwini (girl) in this home. I have come to seek it for my hoe embako (son)" (OI on 10th May, 2013). This is known as khuselela. Usually, a girl does not accept a man's betrothal at the first asking and so do her parents (Bulimo 2013b:393). If, during a subsequent visit, the go-between was given food to carry home as a gift, then she knew that her mission was successful, observes Protus Mukenya (OI on 4th April, 2014). Among the Gikuyu of Kenya, the suitor's parents carried with them "njohi ya njoorio", i.e., "beer of asking the girl's hand" to the girl's parents. If the girl took a sip of it, it

meant she had accepted her suitor's proposal but if she refused, then the suitor's parents knew their son's interest in the girl had been rejected (Kenyatta 1965:161).

In the precolonial Bukusu society when a girl consented to her suitor's wish, the latter's father began to brew kamalwa keng'anana (beer of haggling). Stephen Manyasi (OI on 30th December, 2012) explains that the term, eng'anana, is derived from the verb khukhwing'anana, which means "to haggle." When the beer was ready, he invited the girl's father (they called each other basakwa), neighbours and a few members of his and that of his basakwa's circumcision age-set. On his part, the bride's father prepared kamalwa ke siselelo (beer of wedding). He invited his relatives and those of the bride's mother to come and celebrate his daughter's impending marriage. A bull or two were slaughtered to feed the invitees. This feast known as siselelo, contends Wagner (1949:395), lasted for a day or two and "does not revolve around a set of ritual observances but for most part, it is merely a social gathering."

An invited omukhupietungu (harpist), sang songs with texts praising the haecceity of both the prospective bride and her clan. "Each player used to play alone and sing in unison with his instrument... the litungu (harp) was played to the accompaniment of luengele (plural, chimbengele), a long, narrow (hollow) piece of (hard) wood and a board which was stuck with (four) sticks" (Senoga-Zake 2000:148). Harpists and chimbengele players often wore leg jingles or bichenje (see Plate 22). The leg jingles were of two types. The bigger ones were "female", bikhasi and the smaller "male" ones were known as namunjiri. Each had a piece of metal, ekhuli (plural, chikhuli) inside which enhanced the sound it produced. The sound made by the leg jingles enriched the music and made it more appealing to the audience, posits Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012). The bride now wore chindekwe bangles which signified that she was engaged to be married. While taking the kamalwa ke siselelo (beer of wedding), observes Anicet Wafula (OI on 1st April, 2013), individuals (both hosts and guests)

reacted to the harp music by engaging in the kamabeka (shaking of shoulders) dance (see Plate 8). Wanyama (2007:11) explains that different terminologies are used to describe the actual shaking of the shoulder. For instance, khunikinia kamabeka means to make the shoulders tremble or vigorously shake them, khukhupa kamabeka is to flap shoulders backwards and forwards or upwards and downwards and khutiembukha means to sway the upper part of the body, above the abdomen, up and down in response to harp music.

However, Anicet Wafula and Petora Naliaka (OI on 3rd April, 2013) add that in the traditional Bukusu community there were other variants of the kamabeka (shaking of shoulders) dance. These were kumukongo (which entailed moving the back more than any other part of the body), kumuchenje in which women formed a separate line from that of men and both groups danced synchronously with each leaning towards the other as both shook their shoulders in tandem with the harp's rhythm. The rhythm of the harp when specifically tailored for the kumuchenje dance sounded more like that of obokano, the Kisii lyre. The last variant of "shaking of shoulders" dance was bitenga. While performing bitenga, a dancer stood still while shaking his/her shoulders rapidly (Wafula 2012:6). People danced bitenga and kumukongo in pairs or singularly regardless of sex.

However, when an individual breaks into a dance out of an implosion of inner happiness which may or may not be instigated by music, affirms Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012), this performance is referred to as khukhwisolosia or khukhwitikita. African dance entails various parts of the body each accompanying one of the rhythms in an orchestra so that the polyrhythms in the orchestra are reproduced by the dancer's body. The head moves in one rhythm, the shoulders in another; the arms in still a third, the trunk in another and the feet in still another, (Bohannan and Curtin 1988:90). However, this description may only fit the khukhwitikita dance but does not resonate with most Bukusu

dances. Despite its polyrhythmic nature, Bukusu music elicits harmonized movements of a dancer's body parts culminating in a co-ordinated, rhythmic dance pattern. A dancer among Babukusu often synchronizes his/her dance movements with the beats of instrument(s) or rhythm of a song. In the precolonial Bukusu wedding, the full attendance of the bride's relatives was a necessary requirement for the auspiciousness of the siselelo (wedding) ceremony. Furthermore, "if they were all not there, the bride would not get a child quickly and they would grumble and blame it on an absentee relative, that she or he bewitched the bride," argues Patrick Mang'oli (OI on 20th April, 2013). While taking the "beer of wedding" members of the girl's father's age-set (babakoki) sat around a beer pot placed in the house of the bridegroom's "eldest" mother. Other guests sat in groups dotting the compound from where beer and food was served to them. Warriors, basoleli naitirian, guarded the compound.

Harpists received rewards usually in the form of meat or beer. Enticed by such rewards, they engaged in triumphalism by pelting out music whose verbal texts praised the industry of the bride and the popularity and achievements of her clansmen. If, for example, she came from the Bakitwika clan, the harpist praised the clan saying, "Omukitwika Mbirira, Machabe, Kutusi, Omusilikwa, Omurwa we Mbayi, wakenda ne chikhendu sikanda," observes Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012). In this song, the harpist praises the bride's clan as one that deserves to rule others since the clan is traditionally entitled to an elder's robe. This type of singing is called silao (formed from the verb khulaa, "to praise"). The silao is not isolated from the compositional thought process of the entire musical piece and was meant to also elongate the music (Masasabi 2011:24). The harpist improvises styles, uses proverbs, and bilao (praises) to suit the occasion and to also build his profile as a musician. This is captured in the Bukusu saying "litungu lifumia owalifua," i.e., "the harp praises whoever rewarded it." Nzewi (1997:67) argues that "Africans practice improvisation as well as performance-composition... In performance-composition, a performer-composer re-creates a piece

spontaneously in order to fulfil the demands of an extra-musical intention (such as bilao) or a non-musical context.” Wanyama (2007:8) contends that:

sometimes the litungu (harp) player...creates variation by singing in a different rhythm from (sic) that of the instrument. He may also engage in a solo-response... between himself and the instrument by calling as the instrument responds and vice-versa...The player may also purposively (sic) initiate interest in his performance by varying singing with chants or normal conversation .

In this type of performance, the harp is said to be “talking”, i.e., “litungu lilomaloma.” When being played, the harp is usually placed across the lap with the performer in a sitting position (see Plate 1). The strings, chisianyama, made from tendons found on the back of an old cow, are then plucked to produce sound. The separation of a dancer from the musician in a Bukusu music performance is not always easy. This is because when music builds to a climax, the player often stands up and joins in the dancing. In the precolonial period, it was customary for the player to first introduce himself, his instrument and his performance by stating the song title. This continues to date. However, with the advent of bands, a group’s leader often introduces his entire team as well as the title of the song.

According to Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013), before colonialism, Bukusu women taking part in weddings ululated while dancing in chinyinja and biyula waist wrappers. The chinyinja wrappers were donned by women whose marriage had been reconfirmed through the sitekho (marriage reconfirmation) ceremony. It is instructive to note that women in the pre-European Bukusu community wore different types of waist wrappers which also served as their daily costumes regardless of their initial purpose and significance. Furthermore, they danced in these wrappers as there were no special dance costumes. On the other hand, mature men danced in chinakwe (castanets won on the arms) and hide cloaks, observes Anicet Wafula (OI on 1st April, 2013). The use of space by dancers during weddings

was differentiated. Those inside houses had their dance movements restricted to limited space within the houses but those outside were free to utilize the abundance of space before them.

The “beer of haggling,” brewed by the bridegroom’s father, was drunk over schismatic bridewealth negotiations. The bride’s mother never took part in dances performed as the “beer of haggling” was being taken. The persons sent to relay the invite to the bride’s father carried two pots of “beer of carrying” (kamalwa ke khusuta) for her and her friends since cultural dictates prevented her from attending or dancing in any meeting whose subject was her daughter’s bridewealth (Wagner 1949:400). The prospective bride’s entourage which included at least one of her paternal uncles was invited to sit in a circular manner in the suitor’s mother’s house where a large bulbous pot containing the “beer of haggling” was centrally positioned, contends Reuben Khaemba²⁵ (OI on 3rd April, 2013). Each man took the beer from the pot using a long beer siphon, lusekhe (plural chisekhe), while sitting on a four or three legged “Bukusu” stools, known as wambulwa. His wife, if present, sat between his legs and used a shorter siphon referred to as sikuku (plural bikuku) to take beer. Their dancing to harp music was therefore confined to the interstice between the beer pot and the stools on which they sat.

The party was, however, less elaborate when compared with the one thrown by the bride’s father. In fact, Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012) contends that there was no playing of the harp, chimbengele and dancing kamabeka (shaking of shoulders), while taking the “beer of haggling.” The theme for the meeting, he elucidates, was bridewealth negotiation which demanded acute focus and thus did not invite any singing or dancing. Furthermore, argues Mupalia, it was the first official meeting of the in-laws, and modesty was therefore of paramount significance. However, Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014) has not a scintilla of doubt that there was drinking of beer and playing of harp music

²⁵ Reuben Khaemba is the proprietor of Nyokha music store in Bungoma town.

after the bridewealth negotiation was over. Both the hosts and guests, observes Wandibba, performed the “shaking of the shoulders” dance as they familiarized themselves with each other “over a pot of beer.” Women present participated in the dancing and spiced the occasion with ululations. This study established that whenever traditional beer is served in a carnival environment, there is often music played to entertain guests. Even among the Bagwere of Uganda, this occasion involved a lot of feasting and dancing (Tumusiime 2011:98).

On the morning following the day of bridewealth negotiations, a delegation comprising among others of the bride-to-be’s brothers came to the suitor’s home to ascertain the health of the cattle that were to be given as bridewealth. If there were any unhealthy ones, they returned after a week or so hoping that weak and sickly animals had been replaced with healthy ones. If they were satisfied with the general condition of the animals, they drove them to the girl’s father’s compound in a ritual known as khukhwaula. This term literally means “to separate” or “isolate” implying that livestock meant for bridewealth were separated from the rest and given out. An average period of three months elapsed between khukhwaula and the beginning of the process of consummating the marriage, argues Penina Kerre (OI on 23rd May, 2013).

A few days after the payment of bridewealth, the bride visited for the first time, her would-be-in-laws. Before she left, several rituals were performed. She, together with a group of bridesmaids (bakesia) numbering about thirty, bathed in a nearby stream and had their hair cut. They then proceeded to the bride’s home where her mother spread out her (mother’s) sleeping hide in the yard near her house’s door (khuluyia). The preponderant bride and two of her favourite maids (baloli) stood on the hide and one of her brothers’ wives (who had to be a mother) then adorned them with necklaces. She then anointed them with ghee and an

unconscionable amount of *simsim*. This was intended to enable the bride to “get blood” khunyola kamafuki (conceive) fast. By stepping on her mother’s sleeping hide, fertility was supposedly transferred from mother to daughter. It was on her mother’s sleeping hide that she was conceived and that is why she had to step on it, asserts Selina Nabangala²⁶ (OI on 1st April, 2013).

While in the company of her bridesmaids and young men, the bride left for her future home amid song and dance. One of her acolytes known to be a good soloist was chosen to lead others in song and dance. Singing and dancing was meant to psychologically “shorten” the distance they were to travel, that is, it made them arrive at the bridegroom’s home without exhausting themselves. They spread out on the footpaths with the bride in the middle of the group. With clanking hoe blades (chimbako) which they hit against each other over their heads serving as their musical instruments, the bridesmaids, most of them in their nubility, sang songs praising the equanimity of the bride, her beauty, luscious body curves and other virtuous attributes.

The hoe, being a significant musical instrument in this context, symbolized “hardwork,” posits James Otung’uli²⁷ (OI on 11th April, 2014). The girls, by hitting the hoes against each other, communicated the bride’s readiness to farm and generate wealth for her husband when she finally got married. However, the use of hoe blades by the maids, items not originally intended to serve as musical instruments, demonstrated the extent of musical discrimination and subjugation women were exposed to in the traditional Bukusu society. According to Makwa (2012:71) women are portrayed as vulnerable people in the wider society; they are segregated during performance practice, and are given roles which demonstrate “their place” in society. Boys in the bridal entourage played the endoli drum which was strapped to hang in

²⁶ Selina Nabangala is an octogenarian who wedded traditionally in 1950.

²⁷ James Otung’uli is a renowned musician among Babukusu. He started playing the guitar in the late 1960s.

the armpit and struck with open palms. A popular precolonial wedding song was entitled ndumbu yo mwana wefwe (our child’s [leg] calf). It was sung in praise of the bride’s heavily built (healthy) legs. Girls with fat legs were particularly preferred by suitors (Bulimo 2013b:388). Plumbness was considered desirable especially for women due to its association with love, nurturance, power, hardiness and fertility. It also symbolized care and generosity. Those with a strong physique were more desirable as wives because they could cultivate large parcels of land and undertake other menial duties. The song “our child’s calf” as sang by Rose Nafula²⁸ (OI on 27th March, 2013) went thus:

Soloist: <i>Ndumbu ndumbu yo mwana wefwe</i>	The calf calf of our child
Chorus: <i>Eeh yakhomela</i>	Eeh it is big
Soloist: <i>Ndumbu</i>	The calf
Chorus: <i>Yakhomela</i>	It is big
Soloist: <i>Ndumbu</i>	The calf
Chorus: <i>Eeh yakhomela</i>	Eeh it is big
Soloist: <i>Ndumbu ya Nafula wefwe</i>	The calf of our Nafula ²⁹
Chorus: <i>Eeh yakhomela</i>	Eeh it is big
Soloist: <i>Ndumbu</i>	The calf
Chorus: <i>Yakhomela</i>	It is big
Soloist: <i>Ndumbu</i>	The calf
Chorus: <i>Eeh yakhomela</i>	Eeh it is big

The term “yakhomera” is not Bukusu. Its usage must have diffused into the lexis of Lubukusu from the other Luyia dialects in the precolonial period, argues Christopher Mupalia (TI on 3rd June, 2015). The Lubukusu equivalent is “yabofuwa”.

The praise songs sang by the bridesmaids were meant to build the confidence and self-esteem of the bride who never took part in the dancing or singing. She was instead supposed to be decorous and punctilious and any behaviour to the contrary would not be deemed as culturally appropriate. The bridesmaids salaciously gyrated their waists in response to the sounds of the hoes and the endoli drum, observes Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012). This was a provocative dance with sexual innuendo meant to entice and encourage

²⁸ Rose Nafula is a soloist who is often called upon to perform in various ceremonies.

²⁹ Nafula is the name of the bride.

young men who were accompanying them and those they met on the paths to marry and procreate, posits Yona. According to Jairus Sikolia (OI on 1st April, 2013), the bride and her maids who were engaged wore chindekwe (bangles) on their hands and butundi (beads) on their waists. Other than serving as nonverbal communication tools, these bangles and beads enhanced the artistic character of their dance movements. If the bridegroom's home was close by, the party made a detour to ensure maximum publicity of the forthcoming marriage.

The bridesmaids composed *ad hoc* songs to condemn social miscreants through whose homesteads they passed. Most of the songs addressed specific crimes the persons committed, for example, if s/he had bewitched someone or eloped without following the "proper" betrothal and marriage procedures. This behaviour resonates with the observations of Ojaide (2001:44) who contends that dance songs are used satirically to castigate those who commit crimes within the community as "songs strongly attack what the traditional society regards as vices." When they arrived at the bridegroom's compound, the bride's team encountered a singing and dancing party comprising the groom's relatives. In the place of cordiality and mutual politeness, both parties adopted an exceedingly contemptuous and haughty attitude towards each other. Each group parodiously reprehended and provoked the other with sardonic and abusive songs. Some of the abuses were merely grotesque while others exaggerated the actual deficiencies of the bridegroom's family (Wagner 1949:415).

The travelling party ridiculed, in song, the "poverty" in the bridegroom's home, sarcastically demonstrated how the cattle kraals were empty, how the compound was unkempt and the slowness with which they were being served with food. In response, the bridegroom's party would castigate the quality of beer that was brought to them from the bride's family arguing that they must have boiled a corpse in it and "that is why it was so thick." The contemptuous maids would in unison reply that it must have been the suitor's

sisters who boiled a corpse in the beer! (Wagner 1949). They would proceed to discredit the handsomeness of the bridegroom and humiliate him through songs such as seya. The term seya is derived from the word khuseya which means “to snide.” The song seya sang by Rose Nafula went thus:

Soloist: <i>Seya seya seyilamo</i>	I snide, I abuse inside [the bridegroom`s compound]
Chorus: <i>Seya</i>	I snide
Soloist: <i>Mumikele</i>	(His) legs
Chorus: <i>Seya</i>	I snide
Soloist: <i>Seyilamo</i>	I snide (him in his compound)
Chorus: <i>Seya</i>	I snide
Soloist: <i>Mukurwe kwe</i>	(His) big head
Chorus: <i>Seya</i>	I snide

The abusive songs although seemingly denigrate, served as a reminder to the youth that they should behave well in society lest their reputation be soiled in song during their marriage ceremonies. However, they were largely for amusement and entertainment. Amuka (1991:1) explains that oral texts (in music) are part of a discourse that considers the audience as a significant component. He argues that the audience is a crucial factor in the determination of words to be used in a song. Amuka’s position reflects the use of words by the bridemaids in Bukusu traditional weddings. For example, the bridemaids in the precolonial era used abusive words against their in-laws (audience), and vice-versa, in order to provoke more singing and dancing from the opposing audience. This ensured that the occasion became carnival, inviting and more interesting. Furthermore, culture accorded both parties the “antagonistic” liberty.

At night, the bride was escorted together with one or two of her bridemaids to a bachelor’s house, esimba, belonging to one of her future husband’s friends. The bridegroom’s friends slept with her in the same house (supposedly to guard her chastity) as the suitor himself slept in a different one, argues Wagner (1949). In the morning, her future husband’s friends refused to open the door for her to exit the esimba. The bride was not supposed to engage them physically or otherwise in an effort to free herself since culture dictated that she was to

remain calm and respectful. A girl who oozed confidence and a sense of self-assuredness was seen as rude and perhaps even wanton (Bulimo 2013b:366). The bridesmaids regrouped in the morning to “rescue” the bride through song and dance in a ritual known as khukhwikula omwea (to open the bride). Singing high pitched lampoonic songs, the bridesmaids danced around the esimba, ridiculing the negativities of the bridegroom’s family and demanding that their girl be released. As the day wore on and few people were left to guard the esimba in which the bride was held incommunicado, the bridesmaids forcefully opened its door and extricated her. Having freed the bride, the bridesmaids were now assigned duties by the bridegroom’s mother. The bride, however, was exempted from performing any work at this point.

The length of the bride’s stay at her future home was dictated by the amount of work her bridesmaids were given and availability of food to continue feeding the guests. Usually it did not last more than two days. It was, interestingly, the bride who determined when it was time to go home and not her hosts or the bridesmaids. The bride suddenly sprang to her feet and in a sprint took off towards her home with her maids in tow, observes Selina Nabangala (OI on 1st April, 2013). She was not supposed to look back, stumble, fall down or allow water to touch her feet as she ran home. If any of these happened, a sheep had to be sacrificed to appease the spirits or else she would not be able to conceive and give birth, argues Nabangala. Meanwhile, an advance party would have relayed information to her family members that the bride was on her way home.

On arrival home, the bride was met by a singing and dancing party constituted mainly by her paternal aunts wearing waistline wrappers made from wild sisal, observes Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). Those who were married or engaged, he asserts, wore the chindekwe arm bands. The bride’s paternal aunts sang songs in praise of their niece,

extolling her wisdom in choosing to be married “properly” and not through elopement. However, there was no use of musical instruments at this point. The aunts clapped, stumped their legs and swung their waists as one of them led them in a call and answer song, usually “the calf of our child”. They ululated in happiness. Ululations were an important ingredient in any celebratory musical activity and moreso if beer taking was involved. According to Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012), the aunts engaged in the khukhwisolosia or khukhwitikita dance. Among Babukusu, this dance functions within the artistic realm of a performer’s self expression.

After song and dance, one of the aunts smeared soot on the bride’s face. She then hung two pieces of raw meat on her niece’s ears and gave her eleusine porridge on a cooking stick to lick (Wagner 1949:421). This ritual, he asserts, was supposed to ensure that she prospered as a house wife and cook. “She was expected to soil her hands and face with soot as she laboured to prepare meals for her husband. The cooking stick would henceforth be her main weapon with which to please her husband,” contends Beatrice Kerre (OI on 23rd May, 2013). After this ritual, the taciturn bride moved a few steps towards her mother’s house but stopped short of entering it. It was only after she was showered with gifts that she agreed to enter the house.

Meanwhile the bridegroom’s friends would “notice” that the bride had escaped from the esimba in which she slept and they would give “chase.” One arriving at the bride’s homestead, the chasers were scolded in song by the bridemaids and young men from the bride’s clan. The visitors engaged their hosts in a mock fight which entailed throwing beer residue (kamasifwa) at each other. After the “fight,” both groups sang and danced around the house in which the bride was holed up in the singorio-like style which entailed making short dashes, leaping into the air, stumping feet on the ground and shrieking loudly. Singorio was

traditionally a men-only leisure dance whose choreography was socially learned from the Maasai, argues Yakobo Malaba (OI on 2nd May, 2012). Strumpf (2012:36) agrees with Malaba's position. He affirms that "(f)rom the early nineteenth century, (there were) musical influences on East African music traditions from early migrations southwards of the present-day (Elgon) Maasai people...". When the bridegroom's friends became exhausted, they together with their hosts, sat down for a meal of ugali prepared from eleusine, meat and vegetables served on woven plates (bitelu) smoothed with cow-dung affirms Beatrie Kerre (OI on 23rd May, 2013). The bride remained abstemious. Thereafter, she was summoned and asked to step on her mother's sleeping hide placed outside their house. Her paternal aunt (representing her father) then gave her advice on how to be a good wife. She was counselled on sexuality, hard work, obedience, faithfulness, etc., through the use of folktales, proverbs and song.

According to Petora Naliaka (OI on 3rd April, 2013), a maternal uncle (representing her mother) spat traditional beer from kumwendo kumululu (raw unrefined gourd whose contents are bitter) on the bride as he gave her lessons on marital life. Wagner (1949:424) records that "taking a sip before each sentence and spitting a few drops into the bride's face, the uncle said "I have given you beer and you have tasted it. Now, the important thing that makes people live happily at their home is khukhualana (have sexual intercourse)...". The uncle, asserts Naliaka, added that even if the bride was frying eleusine, and her husband demanded his conjugal right, she was to leave what she was doing and respond to the call immediately. After the counselling session, beer was served and harpists entertained people well into the night. However, if the bridegroom's home was not far away, his team retreated back home at nightfall.

About a week later, the bride paid her second and final visit referred to as sifuororo, to her future home (Wagner 1949:426). (The ghee with which the bride was smeared was also known as sifuororo). The singing and dancing bridal entourage remained at the gate of the bridegroom's fort and refused to enter until the bride and her maids were given presents, a hoe for the bride and wristlets among other gifts for the bridesmaids. However, this second visit was not characterized by any hostilities or animus witnessed during the first bridal tour (Bulimo 2013b:418).

The singing and dancing bridesmaids then escorted her to a new sleeping hide spread out near the door to her future mother-in-law's house. The bride stepped on the hide and was prepared for her first night with her husband. However, before stepping onto the sleeping hide, she insisted on being given another hoe as a present. In insisting to be given a second hoe as a present, the bride was communicating her interest in farming and hard-work which were significant virtues, argues Petora Naliaka (OI on 3rd April, 2013). She was also gifted with "a cow of love," ekhafu ye lukosi, by her in-laws. Her co-wife or sister-in-law then anointed her with ghee. Her head was festooned with ribbons made from banana fibres and her arms and ankles were fitted with iron rings. The bridegroom was also anointed and adorned from the same hide but with the help of his elder brother. In the evening, the bride now known as omwea (a newly married woman), was taken to the bridegroom's house by her sisters-in-law for the consummation of their marriage. She was referred to as omwea, for the next three months or so, affirms Margaret Musamia (OI on 17th December, 2012).

4.5 Death songs and dances

Most precolonial African communities believed that death was not a natural phenomenon. For example, Evans-Pritchard (1956:426) observed that among the Azande people of Sudan, death was caused by evil mystical powers especially witchcraft. The Banyankole of Uganda

had a similar belief hence their saying “Tihariho mufu atarogirwe”, i.e., “(t)here is nobody who dies without being bewitched” (Tumusiime 2011:62-63). The precolonial Babukusu similarly believed that death did not occur naturally. Apart from witchcraft, death was also blamed on nonfeasance, failure by one to observe taboos and on the use of brutal force on an individual by another (murder), argue members of the Nalulingo cultural group (OI on 10th May, 2013). However, death only ended the physical existence of an individual. He/she continued living as a spirit. Any person who dies leaves one phase of his existence to enter another one not only as regards his/her own individual existence but also as regards the place which he/she will henceforth occupy in the community of the living (Wagner 1949:447).

The emotion of grief over the departure of the deceased from the living was coupled, on the one hand, with the feeling of hatred and vengeance towards those whom the bereaved held responsible for the death and on the other hand with a feeling of apprehension that the deceased might blame an innocent person for his death or that he might try to return and take other people with him. As aptly put by Wasike (2013:28), “Babukusu regard death with a mixture of fear and reverence, a mixture of awe and trepidation bordering on palpable anxiety which is, consciously or unconsciously, projected even in ordinary banter and interactions during occasions of death.” The death of a wealthy and influential elderly person was more significant than that of a poor or young individual. A woman’s death also elicited lesser sense of loss as compared to that of a man. This was because the Bukusu society is patriarchal and a man is considered the pillar that holds his family together, not the wife. Among the precolonial Babukusu, observes Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014), a man was supposed to die at night or at dawn. If by bad luck one died during the day, people were barred from wailing or singing dirges and were warned from disclosing the death in any way. The preferable time for making public the death of an old man was at dawn because the Luyia believe that an elder who dies during the day mutates into a bad spirit which returns to

haunt or kill clansmen (Bulimo 2013b:470). However, Wasike (2013:32) posits that announcing the death during the day would have disrupted daily routine and activities.

In many precolonial Luyia communities, the occurrence of death was announced by sounding a horn and beating a drum (Lihraw, cited in Bulimo 2013b: 470). However, among Babukusu, no horn or drum was sounded. Instead both women and men wailed loudly. The wailing noises can be described as drawn out cries of a melodious but melancholy tinge intermingled with high-pitched, discordant shrieks and screams, posits Yakobo Malaba (OI on 2nd May, 2012). As was the case with the Bagwere of Uganda whose death rituals were investigated by Tumusiime (2011:98), if someone did not wail, he/she could be suspected of having a hand in the deceased's death. Each of the dead man's widows took either their husband's spear, or tabouret, or shield, or beer siphon and ran around the village passing the death message to every homestead. They communicated the message by singing laments about the cruel hand of death that had taken their husband away. Nenola-Kallio (cited in Alembi 2002:53) defines a lament as an "improvised song of complaint drawing on a traditional stock of linguistic and musical expression usually performed in the context of rituals connected with death...". Indeed, most of the precolonial Bukusu dirges were improvised to suit specific individuals, families or clans.

Bukusu dirges were similar to those of the Yoruba of Nigeria. The latter's funeral songs were topical and ephemeral (Finnegan 1970:148). This implies that they were composed for use at the funeral of one individual and related to her/him only. Therefore, mourners were to be creative as to compose *ad hoc* dirges. While singing a dirge, women usually held both their hands over their heads while men raised their walking sticks. Some even hit buildings in anger, observes Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014). A mourner would lament in song about the unknown fate of the orphans the deceased left behind and wondered why the

spirit of death did not visit her or him and leave the deceased alone to take care of his children. Before running around their neighbourhood informing people (in song and wails) about the death of their husband, widows wore a belt on which one or two cowbells were fastened (Wagner 1949:454). The cowbells, he asserts, served as both musical instruments accompanying the dirges and as communication tools alerting people of the occurrence of death. Wahome (1986:56) concurs. He observes that “these bells, known as mbugi among the Kikuyu, were used in accompanying songs and dance.”

However, Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013) and Wasike (2013:33) argue that the widows actually wore leg jingles (bichenje) and not cowbells. Wepukhulu contends that under no circumstances could anyone wear artefacts meant for livestock. But Wandibba (OI 23rd January, 2014) believes that the widows wore cowbells to signify that the owner of the livestock in their homestead was dead. This study determined that leg jingles had no symbolic value in death-related rituals among Babukusu and widows must have worn cowbells which, as artefacts, are rich in symbolism. As the widows moved, these instruments produced a melodious sound to which they danced. If there were not enough belts for each widow, they wore the available ones in turns. They then proceeded to a nearby stream where they immersed themselves in water before smearing their bodies with clay and a special ash called “bukhuchakali” (Wasike 2013:33). The clay and ash not only identified them as bereaved widows but also served as a “dancing costume” which exaggerated their subsequent dance movements and isolated them as the main performers.

Upon their arrival home from the stream, the widows were received by their sisters-in-law who prompted them into a wailing, singing and vigorous dance session. During such performances, preceding each line and between the frequent repetitions of a dirge, a mourner in a low-pitched voice, chanted the monotonous wailing tune *yee yee ohe* varying the pitch

only by a semi-tone or a tone. The use of such words as *yee yee oh yaya* was to show emotion, observes Masasabi (2011). According to Wagner (1949:462), the dirge itself was sung in a slightly higher pitch and in a faster rhythm, the melancholy monotony of the wailing-tune changing over into a more emotional although restrained outburst which has an undertone of a challenge or reproach. He asserts that some mourners sang laments while performing clownish or obscene gestures in front of the deceased. They then burst into loud and sustained yells ending up in roars of laughter. This apparently indecorous behaviour, demonstrated the pain, loss and helplessness of the mourner, argues Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012). A body was buried a day after death. This was particularly the case if the dead individual was an ordinary person. Babukusu reasoned that a single night was enough time to enable the relatives of the deceased to congregate before burial. However, leaders were buried on the second or third day after their death. This was because a leader's death attracted many people from far and wide.

Occasionally some bodies were not buried but discarded in the bush. This only became possible if the deceased had warned before his death that no soil should touch his body when he dies. In such a scenario, the corpse was merely carried into the bush, laid on the ground and covered with leaves (Wagner 1949:470). Men, he argues, were often buried inside their houses "because they were the head of the homestead and in order to prevent wild animals from exhuming the body and devouring it." Women, on the other hand, were buried outside their houses. However, care was taken to prevent hyenas from digging up their bodies. The Bukusu word for grave is silindwa. The term literally means "that which is guarded." Both women and men were, however, buried in graves of similar size measuring an average of three metres deep.

On the burial day, the widows, either wearing the deceased's goatskin or carrying some of his personal paraphernalia, sang dirges as they aimlessly traversed their homestead. Led by the senior-most of them, they maundered towards the main gate of the compound uttering shrill sounds. Spears and shields formed part of the costumes which spiced this war-like performance. Wagner (1949:471) posits that those holding spears simultaneously raised and thrust them into the ground, then raised them again before pointing them towards the roofs of the houses in the homestead. This behaviour, he observes, communicated the significant role their husband played as a warrior.

Dancing in funerals also denoted celebration of life over death. Before entering the house where the body of their husband lay, they rested the spears against the various houses in the compound. Traditionally, this was a signal that the body could now be removed from the death-house for burial. Funereal male relatives of the deceased then carried the corpse out of the death house feet first. As they moved towards the grave mourners burst into sang laments, dance and wails with renewed vigour because “the deceased body being taken to the grave confirms that indeed he/she is dead”, contends Yakobo Malaba (OI on 2nd May, 2012). According to Wagner (1949), burial ceremonies were conducted in the afternoon. However, Abraham Mukoyani (OI on 12th June, 2013) argues that burials were performed in the morning. Most burials the researcher has attended are usually done before noon. This may be the norm among many African communities. For example, when Nelson Mandela, the former President of South Africa died in December 2013, he was buried just before noon. This was in keeping with his Aba-Thembu clan traditions (Munene 2013:6).

Among Babukusu, a layer of ebonga grass (*Cymbopogon sp*) was put inside the grave on which the corpse, wrapped in a fresh hide, was laid lying on its right hand and with his back facing his house “so that he is able to see any intruders sneaking into his compound”, posits

Patrick Wanabule (OI on 4th April, 2013). But only influential and rich individuals were buried wrapped in hides. In the necromantic Bukusu society, kamasiopo leaves from the *Vernonia auriculifera* plant were used to cover the corpse's ears to prevent soil from blocking them as "he still needed to hear and communicate with the living", observes Wanabule. Sticks were then placed on top of the corpse before ordinary soil was put on top to create a mound.

Before the grave was filled to its mouth, close relatives of the deceased threw a handful of soil from the mound dug from the grave into it. According to Edward Kaiga³⁰ (OI on 20th April, 2013), this was to wish him acceptance in the spirit world and to confirm to the dead person that "I never participated in your death." If any of his widows was unfaithful, she avoided throwing soil into the grave as doing so would be tantamount to inviting death upon herself. Nyamwaka (2008:38) noted that among Bakisii a pregnant woman was not allowed to come close to a grave. As such she could not sing dirges near a grave. It was believed that if this happened, she would miscarry or expose the unborn child to worldly sorrows. This also happened in the precolonial Bukusu society. Because of the Bukusu law of avoidance, daughters-in-law were not supposed to view the body of their father-in-law or go near his grave. In fact, it was only after burial that they congregated in the deceased's house where they sang dirges "with abandon," argues Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012). This, contends Mupalia, is because when the deceased was still alive, they were denied the opportunity to freely enter his house as family members. Members of the deceased's circumcision age-grade and his basakwa (parents to his sons and daughters-in-law) were neither allowed to sing dirges near his grave as the burial was in progress nor even thereafter.

Out of compunction and fear of an instant death, men who had adulterous relationships with the deceased's wives while he was alive sang dirges away from the body. After burying

³⁰ Edward Kaiga is a teacher of music and drama at Chesamisi High School.

their husband, widows among the precolonial Babukusu sat with their legs stretched under the right-hand side eaves (kamatoche) of the death-house. Their widowed sisters-in-law brought them very little eleusine ugali and vegetables prepared and served on potsherds (bikolonjo). The widows were expected to eat reluctantly the small amount of food offered to them for four days as a way of showing grief following the demise of their husband. After the meal, they were led to a nearby stream to wash off the clay and ash on their bodies which they smeared upon themselves on the day their husband died. It was believed that by bathing in the stream, the widows cleansed themselves of everything connected with their dead husband. That is why they submerged their bodies completely in deep sections of a stream (Wagner 1949:483; Bulimo 2013a:543).

After the ceremonial bath and in the company of women relatives, the widows sang dirges, clapped and danced their way home. Singing of dirges was therefore just one of the many types of activities mourners indulged in. This was also common in other African cultures. For example, among the Akan of Ghana, “speech (is) inlaid with music, sobs and tears and conjoined to bodily movement” (Nketia cited in Finnegan 1970:153). Most of the laments sang in the precolonial Bukusu society were heavy with similes. This is demonstrated by Wagner (1949:466) who quotes a mourner lamenting in song thus “... (M)ayi ewe, basamule sebalota?”, that is, “You mother, are those who have gone to work not coming back?” The mourner was demonstrating her anger that she will never again see her departed relative.

Other dirges were in praise of the deceased. The widow praised her late husband saying, for example, that “my husband was very good to me, he gave me many children. He was a very brave warrior and he killed a lot of enemies” (Mbiti 2008:149). The verbal content of a dirge was therefore paramount. As Nketia (cited in Finnegan 1970: 163) observes, “it is not

so much the beauty of the voice as the depth of the verbal forms, in particular the range of the praise appellations that count. However, musical aspects of form and performance also play some part in the artistry of the dirge as actually heard.”

Among Babukusu of the pre-European epoch, if a widow was faithful throughout her marriage to the deceased, she climbed onto his grave and danced on it as she sang dirges in his praise (Bulimo 2013b:527). However, a widow who had “eaten rats” (*khulia chimbeba*), i.e., had been adulterous, secretly underwent cleansing with special herbs before she could freely engage in the grave dances, argues Bulimo. But this research established that dancing on top of a grave may have simply been out of an impulsive reaction to the feeling of loss and was not sanctioned by tradition. To most Babukusu a grave is sacrosanct and is not to be desecrated in any way. Performing dances on it, therefore, is invidious. It would be regarded as destructive and as a show of impiety and disrespect to the deceased.

Harpists in the pre-capitalist Bukusu society entertained mourners after burials and in other social functions with compositions that they could not lay claim on. Patrick Walubengo (OI on 20th April, 2013) argues that music was communal and therefore musicians had no copyrights over their songs. “Whereas in the western art music context scores of music are provided, each giving credit and acknowledgement to the composers/arrangers of text and/or music, in Africa the composition of music is not always credited to a specific person. The folk music in (the) African society is communally owned” posits Masasabi (2011:44). According to Mugambi and Kirima (1976:102) dance and music performed in funerals “are intended to please the spirit of the dead person and to also comfort the bereaved family.” Indeed Bukusu musicians entertained and comforted the mourners the whole night, argues Patrick Walubengo (OI on 20th April, 2013). They were then rewarded in kind, for example, with meals, chicken, eleusine, etc. Playing music popularized musicians. In fact, contends

Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012), many girls fell in love with harpists because of their dexterity on the instruments and fame. Wanjala (2003:90) agrees. He observes that themes of (traditional) dances (were and) are emphasized for marketing the performing artist.

Three days after a burial ceremony, another ceremony known as khurusia lufu (literally removing of sickness) was held. During this momentous ceremony, the hair of persons closely related to the deceased was shaved. It was believed that since they were in close contact with the dead individual, the lufu (sickness) which killed him may have stuck in their hair and was likely to spread in the community. On this occasion, the widows were assigned a “new husband” who was either a real or classificatory brother to the deceased. The new “husband” was actually supposed to be a caretaker of the deceased’s family and not necessarily have conjugal access to the widows. A widow remarried if she so wished, at the end of the mourning period which came a year or two after her husband’s death. In the “removing of sickness” ceremony, people who owed the deceased pledged to pay back the debts and close relatives of the dead person too indicated to his debtors how they would be paid. The climax of the “removing of sickness” ceremony was a ritual known as khuswala kumuse (literally stepping onto the arena). However, only specific clans perform this ritual for their dead. Clans such as Basibacho, Bamuki and Bakhurarwa do not observe it, argues Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012).

The elder who presides over the khuswala kumuse ritual is known as oswala kumuse, (one who steps onto the arena), or funeral orator. Wanjala (1985:78) refers to him as a funeral preacher. Some of the popular precolonial Bukusu funeral orators were Maina owa Nalukale, Mutonyi owa Nabukelembe, Chesekweli, Wakhulunya and Namunyu Lubunda. The funeral orators possess the spirit (kumusambwa) of counselling the bereaved through songs, poetic laments and chants. When a novice is possessed by kumusambwa, he may fall seriously ill

and even lose his mental balance and engage in dialogue with leading Bukusu ancestors such as Wachiye wa Naumbwa. According to Wanjala (1985:84), the words he will be using in his sang laments and chants are picked in the course of this sickness. They counsel people against embelekeu (disdain for the aged and the community), bubeyi (cunning, deceit and blatant lying), kamaya (useless fights), bikhonde (deep hatred), bulosi (witchcraft), bubwifwi (theft), kunywanywa (moral corruption), kumunyasi (concupiscence) and buchwanjwani (currying favour and other machinations). The Bukusu community's traditional values and secrets are reposed in these cultural raconteurs.

While discussing the functions of oral poetry among the Kikuyu of Kenya (which can be equated to khuswala kumuse) Kabira and Mutahi (cited in Alembi 2002:50) state that oral poetry teaches, informs, warns, entertains, trains, advises and helps to transmit culture from one generation to the other. Bukusu funeral poetry serves these purposes. The verbal texts of the khuswala kumuse ritual are similar to those delivered during post-burial funeral harangues among the Limba of Sierra Leone. Commending on the Limba funeral poetry Finnegan (1970:454) notes that “(t)hese oratories are full of moralizing and dwell very little on the character of the dead man and instead reflect on the importance of the dead, the duties of the living, the function in life of the various groups listening to them and the general philosophy and ideals which they presume their listeners to share.”

The “stepping onto the arena” ritual among Babukusu is performed for a man who had witnessed the circumcision of at least one of his grandchildren. Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014) argues that even those who had circumcised a son were eligible for the ritual. If the deceased had outlived his elder son or grandson, his funeral was not marked by this ritual (Bulimo 2013b:538). However, the ritual can also be performed on the basis of one's age (kamase kamakora) and maturity (buangafu) even if one had no circumcised male

grandchild by the time of his death (Nangendo 1994:150). The art of funeral oration is specialized and gendered. Only certain clans produce funeral orators. These clans are Babulo, Bakhwami, Babuya, Bachemai and Bakitwika. Before the counselling of a bereaved family begins, the mourners sit down on an arena (kumuse) according to gender and age. In the precolonial Bukusu society, men sat on traditional stools while women sat on the ground or animal hides on the opposing end. Children formed a circle with their backs against the women and like them, they sat on the ground.

To date, funeral orators among Babukusu remain male and the ritual is performed for men only. According to Benge (cited in Wasike 2013:6) gendering in oral art forms is “more often structurally influenced by the societal issues and communal perceptions that are continuously generated and regenerated into culturally-nuanced and cogent gender regimes.” Commenting on gender relations among the Gikuyu of Kenya, Kabira (cited in Wasike 2013:48) argues that “differences between men and women are socially constructed... (and) very often nature is invoked in an attempt to explain these differences. The differences are seen as inborn and hence beyond the scope of social change.” Kiesling (cited in Wasike 2013:5) contends that “masculinity (in gender relations) is more often than not associated with ‘dominance’, ‘authority’ and ‘power’ and to be a man is to be strong, authoritative and in control, especially when compared to women...”. This could explain why women in the precolonial Bukusu society were made to sit on the ground while men sat on stools as they listened to the funeral orator singing and chanting. However, close family members of the deceased all sat on the ground regardless of their gender.

The funeral preacher performed in a head-gear known as ekhorere or ekutwa made from Patas monkey skin and decorated with cowries (chisimbi). He draped himself in a cloak (ekutusi) also made of Patas monkey skin. On his upper right arm, contends Yona Nabichikhi

(OI on 8th September, 2012), he wore a broad ivory armband (epokoto) and on his the left arm a copper or gold bracelet (sirere sikure). Usually he held in his right hand a flywhisk (see Plate 5). The performance regalia he wears are a symbol of the pinnacle of elderly manhood (Wasike 2013:41). Any impostor who dons the regalia and attempts to perform, it is believed, will drop dead on the arena. While performing, the orator never swallows saliva but instead spits it out as a sign that no impurities are acceptable in the good words and counsel he promulgates, argues Wasike (2013:41).

In the traditional Bukusu society, the funeral preacher performed within a circle formed by the bereaved family members, friends and neighbours (see Plate 9). After several peripatetic movements within the arena, he pushed his *ekhendie* walking stick into the ground and the resultant hole marked one end of his performance space (ibid: 98). He walked in a straight line occasionally breaking into elegiac poetry. This kind of poetry includes poems and songs performed at funeral or memorial rites (Finnegan 1970:75). She asserts that “(m)usic is so common in African (funeral) poetry that its occurrence has sometimes been taken as one of the main differentiating marks between prose and verse ...”. According to Wasike (2013:97-98):

structurally and stylistically, the (“stepping onto the arena”) narrations are fluid with no fixed conventional opening or closing formulas... (T)he narrator has the leeway to assemble various oral sub-genres, oral stylistic devices and thematic concerns into one amorphous grand narration... (F)rom songs, riddles, folk narratives, puns, metaphors, imagery and chants to tongue twisters, proverbs, lampoons and obscenities, *kumuse* is an amorphous bricolage of Bukusu idioms, anecdotes, allegories, axioms, witticisms and conceited-like phrases.

Usually, the tempo or rate of their delivery to the audience is accelerated. These oratorical displays entertained the bereaved, and they although in a subdued manner, enjoyed it for “every African native is a born orator and a connoisseur of oratory...” contends Finnegan (1970). The hastened delivery also enables the orator to communicate more within a short

space of time, asserts Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012). The bricoleur advised the bereaved to accept death as inevitable. More misfortunes including deaths, he warned, would befall the family if they were to accuse each other of being behind the death of their clansman. He concluded by advising them not to harbour any thoughts of revenge and retaliation. The pinnacle in the cultural raconteur's pronouncements is underscored by his play with ordinary onomatopoeic words and ideophones in order to create, musicality, rhythmical resonances, assonance and alliteration (Wasike 2013:115).

A funeral reciter usually has the sole discretion to control the structure, length and content of his texts at will. He may make his recital long or short according to the discipline of his audience, the character of the deceased and the condition of the weather. Any absquatulation by the orator is always as a result of a member of the audience offending him. If this occurs, the funeral preacher ends his recital abruptly and demands his fee (Wanjala, cited in Wasike 2013:122). The discourse of *kumuse* texts often goes beyond the common usage of words. "Be they songs, proverbs... their intended meanings within *kumuse* are usually pitched at a level of cryptic puzzles and conceit-like images that require utmost wisdom to understand the multiple meanings, undertones, silences and ironies embedded in them", argues Wasike (2013:113). Wasike quotes an oratorical delivery by John Manguliechi in which the latter says "engunyi ekhale, engunyi seli yaluno ta... balebe mukhalila ta... Olabona engokho etima nende kamala ke eyasie, yosi balitima nende kamala kayo..." i.e., "Grief is age-old, grief hasn't come today... my kinsmen don't cry. When you see a chicken running around with another's innards, even its own innards will face the same fate". To an ordinary listener, posits Wasike, this sang words simply underscore the ubiquity and inevitability of death but to the culturally initiated, they condemn those who celebrate the deaths of others forgetting that they too will die.

According to Bulimo (2013b:538) the funeral orator did not panegyricize at the funeral of his circumcision age-mate (bakoki). Furthermore, no two orators attended the same ceremony even if only one of them was to do the counselling. The “stepping onto the arena” performance had no instrumental accompaniment. After the khurusia lufu (removing of sickness) ceremony of which the “stepping onto the arena” ritual was a segment, the widows were expected to avoid any form of sexual contacts since they were in a state of ritual impurity. This was despite the fact that they were allocated new “husbands” during the “removing of sickness” ceremony.

Throughout the entire mourning period of one or two years, each widow wore her goatskin inside out and tied ropes (kimikoye) of beads or plants around her head, neck, arms and ankles, posits Penina Kerre (OI on 23rd May, 2013). While in these attires, they wailed, danced and sang dirges (especially in the evenings) at the grave of their husband. However, only an individual who was overwhelmed by emotions following the demise of her husband would on a particular day sit at his graveside to mourn him in song and dance. This normally happened when she was, in bad faith, reminded by someone that she was namulekhwa (literally the one left behind). The widows never purposely congregated at the burial site to sing dirges but their meeting there would be purely coincidental, observes Raphael Wanyonyi (OI on 27th March, 2013).

Every traditional house among Babukusu has lusuli (plural chisuli), the rod that protruded through the apex of the roof. The lusuli, argues Wanyonyi, was a symbol of masculinity and signified that the head of the house was alive and in charge of his homestead. On the eve of the “removing of sickness” ceremony, a nephew to the deceased, or the widows themselves, removed the chisuli from their houses now that the head of these houses was dead. This is the only occasion a woman is allowed to climb onto the roof of a house. They also removed one

“male” stone from the three hearthstones (kamaika) in each house. (The “male” stone is the one in front of the two others). It was then disposed off in the forest and no one, more so the deceased’s daughters, was supposed to see it as “it was on this stone that their father stepped as he made them,” contends Selina Nabangala (OI on 1st April, 2013). During the “removal of sickness” ceremony, harpists and limoyi players entertained the people gathered. After elders in the dead man’s clan determined that it was time to remove the ritual impurity from the widows in order to allow them enjoy the benefits of marriage once more, they asked the widows and their sisters-in-law to prepare ‘the beer of washing ash’(kamalwa ke khusinga likokhe), affirms Nabangala. Any man who wanted to marry a widow had to first get her concurrence. If in the course of seducing her, she showed the suitor a wrinkled leaf, he instantly knew that his advances were unwelcome, observes Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012). But if he was presented with a smooth leave, that was a sign that she was willing to marry him, argues Mupalia.

The men who were “accepted” and were to therefore inherit the widows provided a white goat each during the “washing of ash” cleansing ceremony. They also provided the eleusine that was used to prepare ugali for the guests who would grace the ceremony. The men slaughtered the goats and each took chyme from the animals’ stomachs and smeared it on the face, arms, legs, hair and body of the widow he wished to inherit. The chyme supposedly made the widow ritually clean and she was now allowed to move into a new house with her husband, contends Mupalia. It is, however, not clear why goats were used to cleanse the widows of ritual impurity. Many African societies use sheep as sacrificial animals.

During the “washing of ash” ceremony, harpists, limoyi and luengele players separately entertained people, posits Khisa Sikolia (OI on 1st April, 2013). Their audience responded with kamabeka dance. However, despite them being officially allowed to remarry, the widows did not remove the bead ropes (kimikoye) on their bodies. These were cut during the

khukhala kimikoye (cutting of ropes) ceremony which, according to Bulimo (2013a:549), also involved khukwisia likubili (demolishing the deceased's house). This ceremony was preceeded with mudding of the deceased grave (khumala silindwa) meant to appease the dead man and assure him that the living still cared for him, contends Sikolia. The “cutting of ropes” ceremony was held after crops had been harvested (between November and December) a year or two after burial and in an odd year (sikumenya). Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012) calls it, the “year of the dead” (kumwiko kwe bafu). A lot of food and beer was prepared for the expected attendees.

In the morning of the ceremony, cattle from the deceased's clan were assembled at a common place. They were then driven mainly through the neighbourhood to the meadow where they were allowed to graze while their men escorts spotted themselves with clay as if going to war. A man who had killed many enemies at war normally attracted a large cattle drive (Bulimo 2013b:522). A bull from amongst the cattle was identified by one of the deceased's grand-daughters for slaughter in honour of the deceased. She did this by smearing it with mud. The eldest son to the deceased, dressed in Colobus monkey skin and headgear and armed with a spear, shield and a sword led the group as it drove the cattle towards the home of the deceased. The entourage sang the wobilo and chabuyabuya songs. These songs were accompanied by the sound of a single horn trumpet locally known as ekhombi (see Plate 4), observes Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012).

The song, “wobilo,” which is still sung today, arouses in its performers a “combative” and “war” mood. Feelings and state of mind relevant to the song are thus given vivid embodiment in the dancers' body movements and gestures. Simiyu (2011: 23) asserts that wobilo is a “spiritual dance whose name is derived from a person the dance was originally performed in honour of.” According to Anicet Wafula (OI on 1st April, 2013) , this frontal dance and song commemorates a renowned Bukusu warrior known as Wobilo who died in

battle and his body was left at the mercy of vultures, chingosia (singular, engosia). The “wobilo” song sung by Anicet goes thus:

Soloist: <i>Wobilo</i>	Wobilo
Chorus: <i>Wobilo</i>	Wobilo
Soloist: <i>Wobilo</i>	Wobilo
Chorus: <i>Wobilo wa ngosia</i>	Wobilo of the vultures
Soloist: <i>Wobilo</i>	Wobilo
Chorus: <i>Wobilo</i>	Wobilo
Soloist: <i>Wobilo</i>	Wobilo
Chorus: <i>Wobilo wa ngosia</i>	Wobilo of the vultures
Soloist: <i>Kolongolo</i>	Kolongolo
Chorus: <i>Wobilo</i>	Wobilo
Soloist: <i>Nyange</i>	Nyange
Chorus: <i>Wobilo wa ngosia</i>	Wobilo of the vultures
Soloist: <i>Maina</i>	Maina
Chorus: <i>Wobilo</i>	Wobilo
Soloist: <i>Sawa</i>	Sawa
Chorus: <i>Wobilo wa ngosia</i>	Wobilo of the vultures

The above mnemonic song, contends Stephen Manyasi (OI on 30th December, 2012), captures within its texts the names of the circumcision age-sets among Babukusu. This educates the youth on the community’s circumcision history. The chabuyabuya song celebrates the wealth the deceased person left behind, argues Manyasi. The term chabuyabuya refers to the act of digging into ant-hills or heaps of soil by bulls using their horns and legs particularly when agitated and readying themselves for battle.

Upon their arrival home, the animals were driven across the deceased’s grave and some men, armed with spears, shields and clubs, performed a singorio like dance which involved shrieking and leaping into the air. Their moves were not synchronized. The performers of this rivoltade dance engaged in mock fights using their weapons. They thumped the ground so hard the rattling sound adding melody to the shindig. It was a menacing affair purposely choreographed to resemble an advancing army out to terrorize the enemy (death) into submission (Bulimo 2013b:523-524). This spectacular dance pays a lot of attention to the surface, to virtuosity and the exploitation of personality. The bull identified earlier was either

killed on this day or at a later date through suffocation and chyme from its stomach was then scattered on the grave.

This ceremony was intended to drive away the spirit of the dead man so that it does not linger around the homestead and cause misfortune (Mbiti 2008:150). In the wee hours of the night, the widow's house (likubili), was pulled down and the ropes on her body cut and removed. This officially marked the end of the mourning period. If a family migrated from a settlement where it had buried an elderly relative whose spirit after some time started haunting them for leaving him behind, a ceremony known as khuuya (to migrate) or khulotia (to take home), was performed. Accompanied with a herd of cattle and singing the wobilo and chabuyabuya songs, the dead man's relatives visited the burial site and picked the stone that was usually placed on graves during burial. The stone marked the location of the grave and was a symbol of the deceased's spirit. The "to migrate" ritual was performed for a male person who had witnessed the circumcision of at least one of his grandsons before his death.

Conclusion

Among the precolonial Babukusu, song and dance were significant components of any ceremonies entailing rites of passage. They permeated birth, initiation, marriage and death rituals. Song and dance were therefore used on both happy and sad occasions. The dances and songs were useful entertainment and communication tools. Such were dances and songs performed during birth celebrations, initiation, and during story-time. "Shameful" and "annoying" messages that could be difficult to communicate under normal circumstances were passed on to the intended recipients through song. Dance and song were also used to encourage people to face challenges ahead without fear. For example, bereaved families and initiation candidates were consoled and motivated to move on through song and dance. In the precolonial Bukusu community, there were no dance costumes, save for organic beads,

Colubus monkey headgear, leg jingles and the armlets known as chinakwe. All the others, for example, kamakutu (skin cloaks) and biyula (sisal waist wrappers) were normal clothings while khukhwirona (body spotting using clay) was work of art meant to instill fear in an enemy.

Musical gender discrimination was apparent in the traditional Bukusu community. Women were not allowed to play any other musical instruments except small drums. They had to turn to non-musical instruments such as hoes which they hit together and miniature harps which they constructed from millet stalks. “Women’s” musical instruments were never significant enough as to be used during important communal celebrations which demanded dancing and merrymaking. However, women were allowed to participate in all dances. They joined men in dancing “shaking of shoulders” and “singorio” which involved leaping into the air. The main musical instruments in the precolonial Bukusu society were the harp, luengele (board struck by sticks), the fiddle-like limoyi, flutes, chinyimba bells, horns and a variety of drums. Most traditional Bukusu songs were in a call and answer form. The songs which were mainly vocal were performed by children, men and women. The chorus sections were performed in unison. However, female performers sang an octave higher than the male.

In the next chapter we discuss change in Bukusu music and dance traditions during the colonial period occasioned by cultural borrowing, innovations, and the activities of Christian missionaries and the colonial government. Continuity in aspects of the precolonial Bukusu music and dance will also be analysed.

CHAPTER FIVE

BUKUSU MUSIC AND DANCE DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD, 1900-1963

5.1 Introduction

Between 1890 and 1905, the British fought to establish colonialism among Babukusu. Charles William Hobley became the first administrator with whom the Bukusu had direct administrative dealings. He built a permanent station at Mumias in 1894 from where, with the help of Nabongo Mumia, the king of Bawanga, established British rule over Babukusu (Ochieng 1973:73). The almost simultaneous completion of the railway line to Kisumu and the substantive establishment of the colonial administration in Western Kenya opened up the area to Christian missionaries. The missionaries then became the chief purveyors of Western education and culture among Babukusu. They, however, played a double role in the process of socio-cultural change in the Bukusu community. According to de Wolf (1977:17), they brought people together in a formal organization which transcended the traditional limits of effective social interaction and with the same measure they also isolated members from neighbours and kinsmen with whom they could no longer share many interests.

There were four main Christian denominations which established themselves among Babukusu in the early years of colonialism. These were the Friends African Mission (Quarkers), the Catholics, Anglicans and the Salvation Army. The first mission station and school in Bukusuland were built by the Quarkers at Lugulu near Webuye in 1912. This position is supported by Reverend Charles Wakhisi³¹ (OI on 2nd January, 2013). Wagner (1949:35) adds that the Quarkers later built another one at Ndakaru in 1922. The Friends African Mission penetrated Luyialand through the efforts of American friends Willis Hotchkiss, Arthur Chilson and Edgar Hole who first established a mission station at Kaimosi in 1902. The Salvation Army first opened a mission station at Kolanya in the neighbouring

³¹ Reverend Charles Wakhisi, Omusibacho, joined the Friends Church in the 1930s and later became the first African General Superintendent of the Friends African Mission in East Africa.

Busia County in 1927. It attracted a large following from the local population which comprised mainly of Babukusu and Batesio (Iteso) because its services were interspersed with drumming and rhythmic singing which the Africans found interesting (de Wolf 1977). Father Christopher Wanyonyi³² (OI on 28th March, 2013) observes that the missionaries were also bearers of “civilized” European music and dance culture which they introduced to the Bukusu.

The Catholics sang hymns without any instrument accompaniment while the piano was widely used by the Anglicans, asserts Father Wanyonyi. He argues that the latter opened a mission station at Malakisi in 1916. Kibabii Catholic Mission of the Mill Hill Fathers became the central catechumenate for the Kitosh in 1921 and ten years later, in 1931, posits Father Wanyonyi, it became a fully fledged mission station with two resident priests. The Salvation Army established their second mission station at Ndakaru in 1927. The primary Missionary instrument of cultural coercion was the Bible and catechism and missals associated with it, observes Father Wanyonyi. The colonial administration was helpful towards the missionaries. They both believed that the “whiteman’s burden was to protect and uplift the native races and impart them civilization” (Strayer 1940:82).

According to Anderson (1973:14), all Christian missionaries were generally pessimistic about the world. They saw a growth in unbelief, materialism and immorality. Much of their condemnation of African customs, he argues, was based on their attitude that most culture, including music and dance is “worldly” and against Christ. This research established that similar sentiments were voiced against Bukusu music and dance by the missionaries. African dance during the onset of colonialism sent some admiring western poets and artists into ecstasy and many Christian missionaries and colonialists into a state of horror (Hanna 1973:166). Hanna observes that while some European artists referred to it as “the

³² Father Christopher Wanyonyi is the Parish priest at the Christ the King Cathedral in Bungoma town.

quintessential aesthetic form,” Christian missionaries and colonialists described it as “the expression of moral turpitude.” Early European observers of Bukusu culture did not consider the community’s music and dance to be such since it was not in tandem with European classical ballet or foot-tapping folk dance, contends Reverend Charles Wakhisi (OI on 1st February, 2013). Stone (1998) asserts that Europeans described African music as rather monotonous, static and inactive. Their misconception came from a lack of appreciation of African musical subtleties, including language of performance. The precolonial Bukusu songs did not escape this description.

The Missionaries believed that African culture was heathen and that Africans were supposed to be rescued from their own primitive lifestyles. John Boyes (cited in Anderson 1973:85) , contends that “all missionaries seem to be officially compelled to subscribe that the African Negro is or can be made by education, the moral and intellectual equal of the whiteman. He is completely skeptical that the inherent characteristics resulting from centuries of savagery can be utterly nullified ...”. Europeans who disliked African music responded to it in several ways. Some said the music was so monotonously repetitive that it just dulled the senses. Others argued that the music was so complicated rhythmically that they got confused and could not make any sense of it. Europeans who were less tolerant felt their sanity or their morals challenged and “even took the truly remarkable step of forbidding Africans from making music” (Chernoff 1979:33).

African music and dance were therefore dismissed as only good for historical inquiry. They were regarded as being too close to the original rudimentary forms of ancient music and dance. For example, according to Koole (1952:254), “one reason the music historian should study African music is in order to use it in his efforts to determine the origin of music... (T)he music is similar to that which was made by their ancestors in the Stone Age.” Harry

Johnstone, Governor of Uganda in 1900 (cited in Ehret 1976:3) argues that “Africa, in fact, is like a wonderful museum to illustrate the past conditions of life...” Christian missionaries described African dances as licentious, bestial displays which manifest savage heathenism antagonistic to “true faith” (Hanna 1973:166). Indigenous African musicians were in the eyes of the Europeans “quacks”, non-specialists and non-professionals (Nettl 1983:10). Hornbostel (cited in Sachs, 1943:23) asserts that;

“(T)he (African) primitive singer...often refrains from utmost pitch and power; but when frenzy pushes him to extremes, his singing is strained... He ventriloquizes, sings through the nose, cries and yodels, yells and squawks, but is never what modern singers strive to be: at liberty and natural.”

African songs and musical instruments were banned from Christian worship as they were considered devilish. In their place European hymns and chants were taught to the congregations while harmoniums and organs replaced African musical instruments. Attempts were made to translate European hymns into African languages but were quite unsatisfactory because of the tonal inflections of African languages, where a single word could mean different things depending on the intonation of alphabets (Emielu 2006:27).

Since the objectives of the Church Missions were geared at the time to the musical requirements of Christian worship and the religious and social life of the Christian converts, “associated musical types which were introduced by the churches- the music of the mass, the oratorio, the cantata- became as much a part of the Christian musical culture in sub-Saharan Africa as the western hymn” (Nketia 1971:4). Because missionaries considered schools as important foundations of the church (since all who went to school became Christians), the development of the new western musical culture was closely related to the spread of formal education. For example, the Church Missionary Society (later the Anglican Church of Kenya) built one of the earliest schools in Bungoma County at Butonge in 1920 (de Wolf 1977:171). By 1921 there were sixteen schools in Bukusuland with an average population of one

thousand eight hundred pupils. The children admitted to mission schools learned not only reading, writing and other subjects but also music (Darkwa 1980). African church choirs, singing and brass bands were formed by the missions and mission schools. However, Babukusu did not embrace Western culture enthusiastically. According to Reed (1954:7) they “did not manifest the eager desire of the Gikuyu to emulate the Europeans, but they still were interested in European education. This gave the missionaries a wedge for prying them loose from their old customs.” The goal of Western education was, as we found out, to make Africans appendages of European interests. Thus, argues Dzobo (1971:10), Western education became a tool of separating the educated African from his/her village folks, from his indigenous culture and from the illiterate masses of his society.

Among Babukusu the missionaries built Christian villages, popularly known as “lines” where young Christian recruits stayed as they were taught how to read and write. “In the 1920s we were taught in a rebus manner. We read out aloud the letters of the alphabet sewn onto a piece of cloth. Each pupil pointed to the right letter using a long stick upon being instructed by the teacher,” observes Patrick Wanabule (OI on 4th April, 2013). The pupils also sang Christian hymns, learnt how to pray and catechism. They were eventually baptized.

The villages were referred to as “lines” because the “hostels” were built in a straight line formation. No one was allowed to leave the “lines” without permission. Violators of this requirement were excommunicated from the villages. The aim of this strategy was to ensure that the young Christian postulants were not misled and “contaminated” by the pagans in the surrounding areas, affirms Reverend Charles Wakhisi (OI on 1st February, 2013). “Heathen” practices such as beer drinking, dancing and playing of secular music were not tolerated in these villages and residents were punished for not being properly dressed, that is, in European attires (de Wolf 1977:171). The Quakers built Christian “lines” at Lugulu in 1914, Ndakaru

1922 and Bisunu in 1925. The Anglicans built theirs at Malakisi in 1916, at Butonge in 1920 and Tunyo in 1926. The Mill Hill Fathers constructed a “line” at Lwandanyi in 1928 (de Wolf 1977:171). They also built one at Sichei where the late Cardinal Maurice Otunga³³ went to school (Ogola and Roche 2008:50). The Salvation Army established “lines” at Lukalo in 1936 and at Nabuloli in 1937. Chiefs and headmen were responsible for the recruitment of the youth into the Christian villages. Patrick Wanabule (OI on 4th April, 2013) gives an example of Rasto Sifunjo, Omusibacho, who “captured” children for the Quarkers at Lugulu in the 1920s. However, the “lines” were not as successful as envisioned. In fact, by 1940, they had been abandoned after the inhabitants quit following their parents’ refusal to allocate land to “spoiled and recusant children still living in Christian villages,” observes Wanabule.

5.2 Birth songs and dances

In the colonial Bukusu macrocosm, musical performances continued being used to welcome and integrate a newborn child into the society as they did in the pre-European era. The birth of twins, however, remained the most significant as it elicited enhanced celebration through song and dance. The now apparent fertility of the twins’ parents was celebrated. The traditional names designated for twins remained as they were in the precolonial epoch; the first born was called Mukhwana and the second-born Mulongo. These two names continued featuring in the popular twinship song “engeye” (see pp.118-119) performed among Babukusu before the coming of Europeans. However, in situations where the parents were Christians, they also gave the twins Christian names. But the Christian names did not form part of the verbal-texts of the deictic “engeye” song. Some Babukusu who had converted to Christianity dismissed the entire “opening of twinship” ceremony in which twins and their parents were cleansed, as heathen and refused to take part in the dancing and singing that

³³ Maurice Otunga was the first Omubukusu and indigenous Kenyan to become a Bishop of the Catholic Church. He was consecrated as Titular Bishop of Tacape by the Apostolic Delegate at Mukumu on 25th February, 1957.

usually accompanied the festivities. They instead invited fellow Christians to their homes who prayed, sang Christian hymns and thanked God for the twins.

It was in the colonial period that Babukusu began celebrating the birth of a single child in song and dance publicly, contends Stephen Manyasi (OI on 30th December, 2012). This, posits Manyasi, was as a result of influence from Christianity. Some non-Christians kept away from the “twinship dances” for fear of being burnt by the deleterious mystic bukhwana (twinship) powers. But Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014) observes that it is the Protestants who were very strict in adhering to the Christian doctrines and practices and not the Catholics in-as-far-as Bukusu traditional mannerism was concerned. Wandibba’s observation resonates with that of Reed (1954:8) who commends that “...although the denominations were many (in Bukusuland), all were opposed to some or all of the old Bukusu customs. The Roman Catholics though are considered to be more tolerant and this is the opinion held by officials elsewhere in Kenya and in Tanganyika.” To the traditionalists the “opening of twinship” ceremony was so critical a segment of their culture to be allowed to die.

The cleansing of the twins and their parents began, as was the case before the coming of Europeans to Bukusuland, with the parents’ relations bringing them gifts such as grains, groundnuts, beans and roasted beer pellets which were accumulated in the couple’s compound. Traditionally, the most important gift was a bull or cow which was decorated with the kamabombwe (*Strychnos sp*) leaves and spotted with different colours of clay, affirms Petora Naliaka (OI on 3rd April, 2013). But imported items such as sheets of cloth, blankets and money which were not available in the precolonial era were presented as gifts to the parents. A paternal uncle to the twins then kicked open the door to the seclusion house and

wrapped a freshly slaughtered sheep's skin around the waist of the twins' father, the way it was done before the arrival of Europeans in Bukusuland.

The twins' mother's kinsman then broke into the seclusion house and wrapped the *Strychnos sp* leaves (kamabombwe) around her body. She danced in these leaves. However, this "retrogressive" practice was rarely observed from the late 1930s as Babukusu became "civilized" and Christianized, argues Yakobo Malaba (OI on 2nd May, 2012). The mother remained dressed as her body was embellished with the kamabombwe leaves. The kumubombwe plant always looks healthy and grows very fast. This vibrancy, posits Malaba, was wished on the twins through their mother by way of adorning her with the leaves. Both parents were then tied with withered banana leaves, kamasanja, to signify the reduced potency of the twinship powers inherent in their bodies. The banana leaves also served as dance attires. The twins' parents were thereafter led out of the seclusion house by their respective kinsmen, as tradition demanded. Upon seeing them, the crowd waiting outside suddenly broke into song and the "dance of twinship." Reminiscent of the pre-European era, this phase was the most significant segment of the whole ceremony. Songs and dances were performed throughout the day with occasional rests.

The "dance of twinship", like its pre-European predecessor, was in sync with the beats of a small drum known as endongoli played by small boys and girls, observes Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). As is the case with the lutaya (flute) of Bakisu of Uganda, the drum was "played for entertainment and (had) no significant part in (the) ritual" (Cooke 1971:82). This probably explains why the endongoli was played by children and not adults in both the pre- and colonial epoch. According to Wepukhulu, the art of playing the endongoli was socially learned from Bamia (Iteso) who neighbour Babukusu to the South. This and other types of drums among Babukusu were tuned in the traditional way, i.e., by

being warmed near a fire or in the sun. Due to the influence of the European military band music, some young boys playing the endongoli drum hoisted it to the abdomen level using straps of leather and hit it using two sticks in a version similar to that of *Dini ya Musambwa* adherents (see Plate 12). Traditionally, it was held on one hand or in the armpit and played using a single stick or an open palm. The hoisting of the endongoli drum in a European military style was observed and socially learnt by Bukusu boys. However, there was significant continuity in the main structural form of the precolonial “dance of twinship” songs as the Bukusu community transitioned into the colonial era. The singing of “songs of twinship” in both pre- and colonial periods, for example, involved the soloist providing leading cues and the rest of the dancers-cum-singers responding in a chorus. The soloist, posits Protus Mukenya (OI on 4th April, 2013), remained a woman. Akpabot (1986:109) describes the nature of African choral folk songs as being “...usually in the call-and-response pattern. The cantor improvises his song as he goes along and the chorus answers intermittently with an unvarying chorus line which can be exact repetition of the solo, derived in part from it, or made up of entirely new material.” Indeed this description reflects the form of “songs of twinship” performed by Babukusu.

Choral performances without lead singers were rare in the pre- and colonial era Bukusu society. The “opening of twinship” songs in both periods demanded creativity from the soloist. And unlike most Bukusu songs which retold historical facts, these songs, as the precolonial ones, continued to capture “current affairs” whose thematic value related mainly to sexual activities in the community as they did in the precolonial epoch. “Thematic development (in songs) is based on spontaneity, extemporization and creativity...” observes Wanyama (2006:6). Women dancers-cum-singers did not wear biyula wrappers on their waists as they did in the precolonial days. Instead most of them wrapped themselves, from the second decade of the 20th century, in large bands of glass beads known as kimikomeri

(singular kumukomeri). Girls wore the narrower kimiyela (singular kumuyela) bead wrappers, argues Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). In the 1930s and 1940s, however, girls and women danced in sheets of imported cotton cloth. Bitweya (singular sitweya) also made of cotton material, served as inner wares.

The biliko which were waist wrappers made from banana stem and wild sisal fibers were abandoned in the 1920s, affirms Wepukhulu. Most young male dancers quit wearing calf, goat or antelope skins on their waists at about the same time. They now wore imported shirts and shorts made of cotton wool. Many older male dancers abandoned the pre-European-era kamakutu (hide cloaks) for blankets, shirts, shorts or trousers. However, children below the age of ten continued with the precolonial behaviour of dancing naked, observes Wepukhulu. Despite the fact that the first shop to sell imported items to Babukusu opened at Malakisi in 1909, Western and Oriental cloth materials remained unaffordable to many Babukusu a decade after the end of the First World War (Wagner 1949:33). A 1913 report by the Nyanza Provincial Commissioner (PC), however, confirms that the adoption of Western dressing style by Babukusu increased just before the onset of the First World War. The PC states that “the natives generally are increasing in prosperity. Their demand for clothing and luxuries is greatly on the increase causing of late a very large influx of imported goods”. According to the Report, “the general improvement is mainly confined to the Kisumu and North Kavirondo districts; to a smaller extent it is noticeable in South Kavirondo” (KNA PC/NZA 1/8). But it must be noted that the Western clothes were for daily use and were therefore not specifically worn as dance costumes.

Both the colonial and precolonial “opening of twinship” dancers-cum- singers mimicked sexual acts and sang obscene songs that they would not have dared to sing under normal circumstances (Wagner 1949:326). This freedom of song was also noted among the Chopi by

Tracey (1954:237) who posits that “you can say publicly in songs what you cannot say privately to a man’s face and so this is one of the ways (the) African society takes to maintain a spiritually healthy community.” According to Khamalwa (2012:67) suspension of the moral code is actually common and is associated with such ceremonial undertakings as the birth of twins and acts as a safety valve for pent up tension to be vented and dissipated with people being allowed to use language which would be otherwise considered obscene. The imitating of copulation movements by individual performers and the singing of obscene songs can be explained in terms of “psychic forces, drives, sexual impulses, repressed wishes, structural or (simply) cultural imperatives” (Blacking 1982:17). However, in the case of Babukusu, the choreography and composition of obscene twinship dances and songs was more of a response to cultural structures than sexual and psychic forces. Given the apparent freedom of African song lyrics, argues Merriam (1964), one would expect to find considerable obscenity, not necessarily for its own sake but rather directed towards some aim or used simply to increase the effectiveness of the desired message. “The mimetic faculty (in the “dance of twinship”) was employed not to reproduce actuality as an end in itself, but only to provide a means of meeting the spectator where he/she is in the world of actuality,” contends Martin (1965:142). Men and women synchronized their dancing in pairs, he asserts, “because the pleasures derived from dancing together makes each participant to enjoy the sensation of sharing in a joint movement which is of greater power than any he/she could make alone.”

Some Christian denominations and the colonial government, however, termed the “dance of twinship” as immoral and obscene and were, therefore, totally against it. One missionary is quoted by Reed (1954:7) commending on the dance thus, “(A)t those native dances, it is just catch as catch can be between the boys and the girls. Oh, they are disgusting!” Rosman and Rubel (2004:345) observe that:

When a colonial administration was set up in a tribal area, concerted efforts were made to abolish those practices that violated the colonizers' moral code, a product of their own Western European cultures. Missionaries were the most zealous enforcers of these kind of changesWesterners frequently isolated the formal-movement aspects of rituals and ceremonials as dance [for condemnation], neglecting the role such movements played in the total social phenomena within which they were performed.

The penetration of Western education and Christianity into the various facets of Babukusu's lives drastically reduced the enthusiasm with which Babukusu were known to engage in the "opening of twinship" dances. In the colonial period, most Christian converts and the educated, for example, resorted to watching from afar and refused to take part in the dances. "With the growth of intellect and rationalism (acquired through Western education and Christian doctrines) and their inhibitory effects upon free motor response," argues Martin (1965:135) "there has come a slackening of the habit of venting our emotional overcharges through direct action (on ritual practices)." This is best illustrated by Wagner (1949:326). He witnessed an "opening of twinship" ceremony among Babukusu in the 1930s and reports that:

At a dance (of twinship) I saw in Kitosh (Bukusuland) there were far more curious onlookers than people who actively took part in the dancing... As there were numerous (Christian) mission boys and girls among onlookers, the dance at first did not come into proper swing till all these passive elements had been driven away with the comment that they were 'spoiling the custom' by idly standing about.

Christian Mission stations and schools were undeniably gnawing away on the ageless ritual's future by churning out a young generation which refused to totally embrace it but instead idly stood about bemused as the "unenlightened" and 'heathen' struggled to manoeuvre it (ritual) through the turbulence of modern mannerism. The youth were supposed to take part in the dancing and singing so that "when they grow up, they will have acquired the knowledge and will be capable of conducting related ceremonies..." (Odaga 1991:110). However, not all Bukusu Christians and elite sneered at the "opening of twinship" and other traditional

ceremonies. Some continued fulfilling their cultural obligations which resulted in frequent clashes with the missionaries. They indulged in the “opening of twinship” ceremony to a “sensible” extent. For example, some educated and pseudo/para-Christian Bukusu families sung Christian hymns and gracefully and thankfully danced to the Lord on the day of the “opening of twinship” instead of the traditional obscene songs and erotic dances. But some educated families still encouraged the observance of the traditional “opening of twinship” ceremony, observes Simiyu Marombo (OI on 8th September, 2013). The reaction of Africans and therefore Babukusu to European cultural imperialism can be broken down into three main categories. According to Curtin (1995), there were those who wanted to preserve their culture as it was or return to a remembered past before Western impact. Curtin refers to them as ordinary conservatives. Others, known as utopian reactionaries, wanted to depart from the actual way of life and that of the recent past to seek refuge in a glorified image of a more distant past. The last group, defensive modernizers, wanted to preserve as much as possible of the traditional way of life though realizing that the cost of defense was some form of modernization.

Most Babukusu in colonial Kenya, we found out, were defensive modernizers. As much as they wished to preserve their culture, it was not lost to them that the world was moving forth and they had to move with it. They went to school, acquired western education and learnt the religion of the Whites but they did not completely abandon their traditional way of life. As such some educated parents of twins still remained quarantined in seclusion houses albeit for a shorter period and went through the “opening of twinship” ceremony before they rejoined the larger community. Strayer (1940:85) observes that:

Mission communities represented the introduction of a new cultural cleavage into African society. There is evidence however, that most mission adherents themselves did not desire a total break with their society. What was desirable for the missionaries, however, was not always possible, for the impulse among African Christians to retain links with their own society

came into frequent collision with the cultural demands of the missionaries. The result was a consistently high rate of turnover among mission employees and the constant exercise of church discipline as missionaries sought to enforce their version of Christian culture while Africans sought to retain some social standing in their societies and access to the cultural resources of their people.

However, Babukusu whose allegiance alternated between devotion to their culture and Christianity were duly punished by their churches. “Grievous” sins which led to Christians being disciplined or even dismissed included beer drinking, leaving the mission compound without permission, sexual immorality, consulting traditional healers and participating in native feasts and dances (Strayer 1940:85). Church discipline which also involved denial of confirmation as a church member (through baptism), had to be exercised “frequently and severely owing to the recent emergence of Africans from savagery,” he contends. In order to subdue Africans further, Europeans limited their cultural freedom and introduced a Hut and Poll taxation system which forced the Africans to provide labour on their farms. This limited the leisure opportunities for Babukusu to engage in musical activities. Between July and August 1916 Babukusu migrated in large numbers to Trans Nzoia and settled as squatters on European farms (KNA DC/EN/3/1/1). They were, however, not allowed by their European employers to cleanse twins and their parents of the inimical twinship powers by way of the “dance of twinship” ritual. According to Cohen (cited in de Wolf 1977), colonialists banned African dances on their farms “because the dancers’ dynamic musical accompaniments and the spectators’ enthusiastic shouts of joy sometimes disturbed sleep or work of the Europeans or the dance distracted the attention of the Africans working on settler farms and who were in turn tempted to join the dancers.”

Most of the Europeans considered the “dance of twinship” as pagan, primitive, uncivilized, savage, retrogressive and detrimental to the Whites’ efforts to modernize Babukusu, observes Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012). They unfortunately went to the extent of equating African musical culture to animal behaviour. Merriam

(1964:30), for example, posits that “primitive life (of Africans) is almost uniform; despite all differences in temperament, character and intelligence, every act, be it practical or artistic, is understood by the fellow tribesmen, much as an animal’s act is understood by its fellow creatures...”. During the colonial period, the British Secretary of State gave native (African) courts and the Commissioners authority to alter or modify any traditional African custom. For this reason, in 1937 the colonial Government made it illegal to host or take part in the “opening of twinship” dances. Section 128 of the Native Authority Ordinance of the same year banned all public dances in Bukusuland excepting those performed during weddings and funerals. Violators of this law were slapped with a hefty fine of Sh.500 or served six months in jail (KNA DC/EN3/4/1). This law effectively discouraged some Babukusu from participating in the “opening of twinship” dances for fear of being arrested and fined. Before the 1930s, most Babukusu never allowed their children to enroll in schools. As a result of this reluctance, the Quarkers chose to forcefully take Bukusu children to schools within Christian villages with the help of chiefs and church elders. The children remained in school and only visited home occasionally, contends Patrick Wanabule (OI on 4th April, 2013).

Schools and missions greatly interfered with the enculturation process of Bukusu children. The youth who were supposed to learn how to play the endongoli twinship drum and the choreography of the “dance of twinship” through participant observation, now spent time in schools or “lines” where they were indoctrinated by being constantly reminded that the “opening of twinship” ceremony was a backward and heathen practice. The exasperation of parents over the loss of opportunity to socialize their children appropriately provoked the use of force to remove the children from the mission stations (Strayer 1940:85). This forced the colonial government to enact a law under the Native Authority Ordinance that criminalized utterances meant to wound religious feelings and any one found guilty of

disturbing a religious assembly was fined Sh.500 or faced a six months jail term in default (KNA DC/EN3/4/1).

During the colonial era, birth songs and dance movements were, unlike in the Pre-European Bukusu community, written down and electronically recorded by early European researchers. According to Ames (2003:297), early recordings were made in East Africa, largely by linguists, “primarily recording song texts, stories, riddles and the like”. At the turn of the 20th century, these researchers made recordings using microphones and wax cylinders. However, in the 1940s and 1950s, observes Strumpf (2012:36), early forms of disk and acetate recording technology was used. While contrasting “primitive” (unwritten) African music with Western (transcribed) music, Nettle (1954:81) contends that “...no generalizations can be made about composition techniques in primitive music which contrast with the music of high cultures, with the exception that it is, in contrast to the latter, composed without written (or otherwise preserved) records.” Some, albeit very few musically-trained missionaries and researchers provided early transcriptions of East African music using staff notation (Strumpf 2012:36).

The following “opening of twinship” song titled ‘engeye’ (tail) which was also performed during the precolonial era, was, for example, transcribed into English and published by Wagner (1949:327)

Nanu okhokhina?

Who is dancing?

Khakhina nga eng’eni

He is dancing like fish

Khekhukhine kamabeka nga Fwamba okhwa Wasula

Let us dance the dance of shaking shoulders like Fwamba, son of Wasula

Benyaa nyaa anje ano ne munju balichana

They play out here but in the house they are eating each other

Kalukhasia maayi wange Mukonambi alole khumbala

Turn around my mother for Mukonambi to see her wound

Ngeye nyina wa mwana ngeye salikhunyuma

The tail, the child's mother is at the back
Maayi omwene bana ngeye salikhunyuma
The mother of the children the tail is at the back

Okinganga okulenge ne okhukonia ali wae khumubone?
You carry around your big leg but where is the one who sleeps with you so we see him?
Kumunie kwo mukhasi likina Nandakhaulila wakhapa
The vagina of a woman is like a stone which does not hear even if you beat on it

Namuloli omusoleli wa Nguyo kakona ne omukhana wa Luboya khumatochi butiu bwaanyukha
Namuloli, the son of Nguyo copulated with the daughter of Luboya under the eaves and the sperms splashed

Despite the fact that the hitherto oral traditional Bukusu music was now changed and became text-bound, it retained its communicative value. This is because the “dance of twinship” and its attendant songs grew out of societal needs, making them purpose-related and efficacious, with overt and covert meanings, argues Joseph Matifari³⁴ (OI on 15th April, 2013). There was a strong link between the pre-and colonial “opening of twinship” songs and dances among Babukusu in-as- far- as the meaning of the dances and songs was concerned. The public re-enacting of the otherwise private bedroom sexual acts “communicated the theme of abundance of fertility in the bones of the twins’ parents” posits Matifari. This remained the main theme of the “dance of twinship”. The dancers were expected to expose their genitalia which are key symbols of sexuality among Babukusu, asserts Petora Naliaka (OI on 3rd April, 2013). But with the advent of Christianity and Western education, the “indecent” exposure of genitals during performances was stopped. The performers of the “dance of twinship,” however, continued using metaphors and euphemism to communicate its thematic principles. Music is known to perform both communicative and associative tasks (Nasong’o 2009:69). It often functions as a medium through which actors may express alternative interpretations of reality and/or counter-cultural discourses.

While discussing termite harvesting songs among Babukusu, Khaoya (2013:112) posits that “...songs draw their imagery from nature...” For example, in the “engeye” song (see pp.

³⁴ Joseph Matifari is a teacher of Literature at Bungoma high school.

118-119), the soloist likens a woman's vagina to a natural stone which feels nothing even when one hits it. These song-texts urged men to pound the "stone" and procreate in large numbers as a large family was a reservoir for human resource needed on farms, for security and was a replacement for victims of infant mortality and other vagaries of nature. Unmarried women were reminded through the "engeye" (euphemism for penile shaft) song that they should get married in order to access the "engeye" that will enable them to get children, contends Petora. The word "wound" in the song is used euphemistically and figuratively to mean a woman's birth canal. "... (T)here is clear- cut evidence that language used in connection with music differs from that of ordinary discourse," observes Merriam (1964:197). The "engeye" song also functioned as an education tool in both the colonial and precapitalist periods. It condemned immorality as much as it encouraged procreation. People were encouraged to procreate but within the institution of marriage.

Birth songs in both the pre-and colonial era Bukusu society were dynamic since they had no fixed length of performance. The length of a song was determined by the creative ability of the soloist and the amount of excitement the song elicited from the dancers. The more exciting a song or dance was the more the audience yearned for more. The physical fitness of the dancers-cum-singers also dictated the length of a song. A soloist could not continue performing to a tired and unreceptive audience. The "opening of twinship" songs in the colonial and precolonial Bukusu community were principally sung in the Bukusu language. However, there is evidence that they had words adopted from other Luyia dialects. For example, in the "engeye" song the terms "nyina" and "okulenge" which are not Bukusu words are used. For Babesukha, Bakabras, Banyala and most Luyia sub-groups found in Kakamega and Busia Counties, the words "nyina" and "okulenge" mean "mother" and "big leg" respectively. The Bukusu word for "mother" is mayi and the equivalent of "okulenge" is kukele.

The influence on Bukusu verbal-art culture by other Luyia sub-ethnic entities may have resulted from intermarriages between them, argues Raphael Wanyonyi (OI on 27th March, 2013). Persons related by marriage came together to jointly celebrate births, circumcision, weddings, and mourn deaths, activities that involved singing which provided a platform for “cross-diffusion” of song-texts and other musical cultures. This study refers to the communal borrowing of musical traditions as “cross-diffusion” because the diffusion did not flow in one direction. The communities borrowed from each other. During the “opening of twinship” ceremony, for instance, the performers, regardless of their varied sub-ethnic background, jointly sang and danced in the yard outside the seclusion house. In the 1950s, Lutubula Songoi, Omukabalasi, for example, not only entertained people in his adopted Tachoniland with his harp but also performed at Bukusu traditional ceremonies, observes Wanyonyi. Kennedy Khaemba, a contemporary Omunyala wa Ndombi musician, uses Bukusu terms in his lyrics. The cross-cultural diffusion of words usually occurs between communities which have a mutual subcultural language and are alike in personal and social characteristics (Rogers 1995:19).

The tradition of isolating twins was not abandoned in the colonial period. Twins remained isolated in the seclusion house until they were old enough to walk on their own even as their parents interacted with the other members of the community normally, asserts Petora Naliaka (OI on 3rd April, 2013). Within this period, she argues, Babukusu believed that the harmful mystic twinship powers the twins possessed would have weakened. But most Christian families exposed their twins to the world after the third day although non-Christians avoided coming into contact with them and their parents for fear of the twinship powers, contends Petora.

5.3 Circumcision songs and dances

Although the Colonial Government banned circumcision songs and dances in 1937 (KNA DC/EN/3/4/1), Babukusu continued performing them. This, contends Stephen Manyasi (OI on 30th December, 2012), was because Babukusu considered them to be very important cultural activities that helped to transit boys into men, and fight vices in society. Circumcision was the epitome of Bukusu masculinity. The ban on circumcision dances and songs was not enforced because Christian missionaries and European settlers perceived them as being not as expressly obscene as the “dance of twinship,” asserts Manyasi. However, the Government and the missionaries encouraged parents to take their sons to hospital for circumcision rather than unnecessarily “torture” and ultimately circumcise them under “unhygienic” conditions and without anaesthesia. For example, the Elgon Nyanza District Commissioner is quoted in the 1958 annual report (KNA DC EN/2/2) as saying “(F)rom time to time the most horrible mutilations are seen following male circumcision ceremonies in the Bantu tribes. In one mission hospital a few young boys were seen where external genital organs had been completely destroyed as a result of trauma and infection. There have also been instances of tetanus following these cruel and unnecessary operations.” The condemnation of traditional circumcision by the colonial government and Christian missionaries was not restricted to Babukusu. Among the Gikuyu, for example, children from families whose parents upheld the practise and in particular clitoridectomy, were barred from attending missionary schools (Kenyatta 1965:125).

It was only after the First World War that Christian missionaries established dispensaries in some parts of Bukusuland and started disseminating information on the advantages of circumcising children in hospitals. Before 1930, staunch Christian converts in chief

Murunga's³⁵ North Kitosh which was predominantly Protestant, took their sons to Kaimosi Friends Mission Hospital for circumcision, argues Reverend Charles Wakhisi (OI on 1st February, 2013). In the late 1930s, however, Lugulu Mission Hospital was established near Webuye and as argued by Rev.Wakhisi, among others, Noah Mukhobe, a trained nurse and Omuala by clan pioneered the circumcision of boys in the facility. By 1937 there were fourteen dispensaries in North Kavirondo (Wagner 1949:35).

In the 1950s, concerted efforts of the Government, missionaries and the African District Council saw the number of dispensaries and health centres increase in Bukusuland. There were two Government health centres in the district each with an ambulance link to Bungoma (County) Hospital and several others run by Missions by 1958 (KNA DC/EN/1/3). The current Bungoma County Hospital, then known as Bungoma Health Centre, was officially opened by the Colonial Secretary James Griff and Chief Sudi wa Namachanja in 1950 (Ogola and Roche 2008:39). The circumcising of boys in hospital was, however, strongly condemned by traditionalists. Boys who underwent the cut in hospital under anaesthesia were dismissed as timorous beings and were derogatorily referred to as *babacha khulupao* (literally “those who went to the board”). This was in reference to the wooden boards in hospitals on which boys lay as they were being circumcised, argues Stephen Manyasi (OI 30th December, 2012).

Realizing the danger hospitals posed to the initiation rite and in a desperate move to protect it, anybody who was circumcised in hospital was ridiculed in song during circumcision festivities. According to Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013), he was also permanently banned by elders from carrying out certain cultural activities such as smearing a circumcision candidate with mud (*khulonga*). Babukusu derive pleasure in

³⁵ Chief Murunga wa Shiundu who ruled North Kitosh from 1909 to the 1930s was a brother to Nabongo Mumia, the King of the Wanga.

calling their fellow age-group members bakoki. Even a woman would proudly call her husband's peer bakoki. But if one was circumcised in hospital, he was in the colonial period, barred from referring to members of his supposed age-group as bakoki and he never enjoyed or benefitted from their solidarity. Instead he was ridiculed in song wherever he went and girls were discouraged from marrying him. The victim, notes Wepukhulu, not only suffered psychological torture but also earned a social stigma for he could not speak in public with the full force of his personality.

Families that had embraced Western medical culture discontinued the practice of singing and dancing to circumcision songs. They instead took their boys to hospital for the cut. Undeniably this reduced the opportunities Babukusu had to perform initiation dances and sing circumcision songs. This is because the initiates who underwent the cut in hospitals were never subjected to traditional Bukusu initiation rituals which involved singing and dancing. In the colonial epoch, candidates who were the main performers in circumcision ceremonies were circumcised at an average age of sixteen years unlike in the precolonial era when they were much older. The British government had a police force with which it defended Kenyan communities from external aggression and there was no need therefore for circumcision to be a physical and mental appropriateness examination for those who were to become tribal warriors. That was why, argues William Wekesa (OI on 8th April, 2013), the age of circumcision candidates reduced from an average age of twenty-two (in the precolonial period) to sixteen years. However, as was the case in the precolonial era, initiation songs and dances and the subsequent circumcision of boys continued to propel them from boyhood to manhood, observes Penina Kerre (OI on 23rd May, 2013).

In a reflection of the pre-European era, the colonial Bukusu society celebrated the initiation ritual with song and dance between the months of July and December of every even

year. However, epidemics such as disease outbreaks, famine and war could lead to the postponement of the bi-annual singing and dancing to circumcision songs. During the Second World War campaign, for example, many youthful Bukusu males were forcefully enlisted in the Carrier Corps (Kariokor) as part of the Commonwealth Forces in 1938, a year of circumcision. The absence of enough circumcision candidates and the prevailing war atmosphere (the Second World War which began in 1939 was looming) argues Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014), forced elders to postpone the rite to the following year, 1939. Consequently circumcision songs and dances were performed in an odd year or sikumenya. Normally odd years are reserved for rituals for the dead members of the Bukusu community.

Before Christianity was entrenched in the Bukusu belief system, initiates were never circumcised on Sundays. This continued into the colonial age. As such, circumcision songs and dances performed on the eve of the surgery were not performed on Saturdays. However, Babukusu working for the Whites in the European settlement areas were denied leave on working days and were often forced to continue with the singing and dancing on Saturdays in order to circumcise their candidates on traditionally unpreferred Sundays, observes Wandibba. The pre-capitalist era songs which castigated boys who were perceived to be old enough to get circumcised yet they had feared the knife were also performed in the colonial period. Girls, as well as newly circumcised boys, persistently ridiculed them through songs (Wagner 1949:339). The song texts which were full of derision, chided the boys to undergo the cut or else they should move to Luoland where uncircumcised cowards reside. Merriam (1964:197) concurs that “songs are sometimes used through admonition, ridicule and in some cases even direct action to effect actual change in behavior of erring members of society.”

The art of preparing the chinyimba bells substantially metamorphosed during the colonial age. In the precolonial period, the candidate attached the musical instruments to a handle made of chifufu (*Vitex doniana*) twigs and fastened them together using the bark of the same plant, or that of the *Piliostigma thonningii* tree (kumulamalama) or wild sisal. However, in the late 1950s, a new innovation occurred. Initiates began replacing the wild sisal, the *Vitex doniana* and kumulamalama barks with strips of old rugs. Rugs were thought to be stronger and more elastic than the kumulamalama bark. They were also used to hold iron wristlets (birere) in place (see Plate 21). However, the chinyimba bells retained the pre-European metallic gongs, kimikhupilo, that hit on the inside of the bells whenever they were played.

Murdock (1959) contends that musical culture change begins with the process of innovation in which an individual forms a new habit which is subsequently learned by other members of his society. He identifies four different types of innovations. These are variation, invention, tentation and cultural borrowing. An innovation, he argues, remains an individual habit, however, until a second process occurs, that of social acceptance in which the innovation spreads from the originator to other persons until it becomes universally practised by all members of the society. Murdock's description of how an innovation can contribute to music change resonates well with the change that occurred in circumcision musical instruments among the colonial Babukusu. We can, therefore, conclude that use of rugs to firm the chifufu twigs and iron wristlets was not an initiate's individual habit but an innovation since the practice spread throughout Bukusuland.

During the colonial period, initiates continued to adorn themselves with dancing outfits which included curved teeth of wild pigs fastened onto their belts together with sharp pieces of iron which extended on either side of their waists (Wagner 1949:341). The sharp pieces of iron were deliberately swung around by each candidate in order to create enough dancing

space for himself and anybody who dared dance near him was spiked. The realization that hurting performers using iron spikes in an otherwise celebratory occasion, negated the whole essence of solidarity with the candidate. Babukusu, therefore, felt the spikes were an encumbrance to free enjoyment of dance, argues Simiyu Marombo (OI on 8th September, 2013). This, he posits, culminated in the abandonment of the use of spiked iron belts as dance costumes by the initiates in the 1940s.

Khisa Sikolia (OI on 1st April, 2013) asserts that the use of the otiose iron pieces as dance attires was actually discarded after they simply ran out of fashion. We believe the abandonment of the spikes was for a practical reason. Their continued use hurt performers hence their disregard as embellishments in circumcision dances. The practice of using pig-teeth as musical ornaments too started fading in the 1940s and eventually ended in the 1950s following the dwindling numbers of wild pigs of the *Hylochoerus* and *Potamo choerus* species, also known as chimbichi (singular, embichi) in Lubukusu. The colonial Government issued orders to the people of Nyanza Province to hunt down and kill the pigs whenever they were asked to do so by their chiefs (KNA DC/EN3/4/2). The Native Authority Ordinance of 1953 read in part, “Every person shall when ordered to do so by the chief assist in the hunting and destruction of wild pigs, porcupines and other animal pests.” As a result of this law, the populations of wild pigs in the province dwindled and candidates were unable to easily access wild pig-teeth.

The intentions and roles of the precolonial and colonial circumcision music and dance performances among Babukusu were similar. For example, in both periods, the cyclic and linear dance performances clearly demonstrated solidarity among performers and created the necessary festival mood. Khamalwa (2012:68) contends that “(circumcision) music and dance play the psychological role of assuring the initiate that he is not alone and of reminding him

that others have gone through the ordeal successfully. The dichotomy of the initiate being part of a wider community whose solidarity he can count on... is played out.” Although Khamala’s findings are based on his analysis of the contemporary imbalu dances among Bamasaba, they are coterminous with the pre-and colonial Bukusu circumcision dance performances in which relatives, neighbours and friends danced in solidarity with the initiates. The singing and dancing crowd kept them company throughout the rite. At night performers encircled the candidate and called out to each other to “surround the “child” (candidate) for him to get warmth”, i.e., umba omwana anyole luluyia, observes Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014). The resultant performance created a befitting carnival mood.

With his father’s blessings, and with a circumcision date determined, the mandatory joined other initiates each evening in practice sessions in which they demonstrated to each other their individual agility and prowess in playing the chinyimba bells. The performing of rehearsals began in the late 1950s, contends Yakobo Malaba (OI on 2nd May, 2012). However, in what has persisted from the colonial era, prospective candidates start practising playing chinyimba bells using dried maize leaves as early as they are four years old (Wanyama 2009:44). This “childish” behaviour stops when the boy is about eleven. The “serious” practice session performed a few weeks to khulanga could be equated to the isonja phase of Uganda’s Bakisu circumcision ritual. The isonja was one of the few instances where circumcised men were allowed to perform the circumcision dance again in order to teach and demonstrate the steps to the candidates (Khamalwa 2012:67). After learning how to play the chinyimba instruments and the dancing movements expected of him, the candidate dressed in a pair of shorts and barefoot, was commissioned by his father to start inviting his relatives, friends, and neighbours to his home to celebrate with him his graduation to manhood. Unlike in the pre-European Bukusu society when a candidate strapped himself with the seed-derived

chindili and butundi bead belts, some initiates now wore belts made of imported glass beads known as bibiuma (see Plate 3). The donning of the Colubus monkey hat and beads as dance costumes by candidates was optional for members of some clans such as Basibacho, Bamuyonga and Baala. However, the Government in 1937 through the Game Ordinance banned the hunting and trapping of wild animals including the fancied *Colubus guereza* monkey. One had to obtain clearance from the government to engage in game hunting. With this restriction many families were unable to acquire the prestigious ekutwa headgear made from the skin of the Colubus monkey for their initiates. While candidates in the period preceding the 1930s wore bead chains around their loins so that the ends hang down in front covering their genitals (Wagner 1949:341), from the 1930s they began wearing the beads across their chests, argues Joash Murutu (see Plate 3). This, contends Murutu, was because shorts were replacing goatskins as waist covers among boys and it thus became unfashionable to wrap bead-chains on a waistline that was already holding a pair of shorts.

When the candidate was appropriately attired, a guide who had to be a close relative who was conversant with the locations of the various homes of the candidate's relations and who was himself circumcised led the initiate through the khulanga (to call) phase which entailed the initiate inviting people to his circumcision ceremony. The crowd which escorted the perambulatory candidate as he moved from one homestead to another sang various thematic songs as it danced along paths with the initiate ahead of it. This was not different from what used to happen in the precolonial era. Individuals sang, danced and dramatized but the candidate remained silent. He was only allowed to dance to the beats and rhythms of his canorous chinyimba bells. The dancing, singing and dramatizing was meant to communicate various messages to the audience they met on the paths or in homesteads.

Khamalwa (2012:65), while discussing Bamasaaba imbalu music argues that "... in music, dance and drama, communication is facilitated and made more effective as one or several people say and do different things at the same time in a way that is harmonious and pleasing to multiple senses. The same person may sing, dance, dramatize something at the same time; several people may do all the three activities together; or one group may sing, while another dances and yet another dramatizes. Whatever the case, the final outcome is more beautiful than if the individual did only one thing and alone." This observation resonates with the Bukusu circumcision rituals. Incited by the prevailing carnival mood, individuals in the crowd accompanying the initiate rolled on the ground, shrieked, leapt into the air, gestured, hurled obscenities at real or imaginary adversaries and generally amused themselves.

These prescribed acts and songs of obscenity are made to emphasize the suspension of ordinary laws in the 'marginal periods' in passage of rites (Evans-Pritchard 1965). Although Evans-Pritchard did not investigate the performance of Bukusu rites of passage, his findings relate favourably to the circumcision songs sang by Babukusu during the pre- and colonial periods. The performers of Bukusu circumcision songs were also at liberty to use the power of song to scorn and outrightly abuse persons or even a specific clan whose member(s) were regarded as social delinquents (see "Babuya" song on p. 193). In order to elongate and therefore optimize the effects of such songs, the soloists' cues were often sung pleonastically. The colonial circumcision dance styles were similar to those performed in the pre-European Bukusu society. Waving walking sticks and twigs, the people escorting the initiate and who comprised mainly of youthful men and women performed the khuracha dance, a slow paced jogging and foot stamping "dance on the move", among others. The dance movement became circular when the performers arrived in a home. They moved either clockwise or counter-clockwise because enough dancing space to allow circular motion was now available.

In most African dances, circles are preferred to straight lines. Manns (2006:40) attributes this bias to the fact that “circles symbolize continuity. They depict the circularity of life.”

The initiate had the option of dancing in a circular manner or in one spot (see Plate 21). He never took part in singing but the cathexis he attached to his chinyimba bells made him play and dance to their sound vigorously, argues Patrick Mang’oli (OI on 20th April, 2013). The owners of the homesteads the singing and dancing party visited offered gifts such as green maize, ripe bananas or green bananas to the lead singer and candidate. In the colonial era, they were gifted with money besides the farm produce. Other members of the entourage were occasionally rewarded too. This initial giving of gifts to the initiate (khufua or khukangisia) was a congratulatory gesture to him for taking the bold decision to get circumcised. The other performers were rewarded for volunteering to accompany the candidate throughout the village and beyond, posits Mang’oli.

Within the colonial period, there were changes in the attires dancers to circumcision songs wore. Up to the 1930s most of the girls escorting the candidate danced in waist wrappers made of glass beads. These were known as kimiyela. When three of the kimiyela belts were intertwined, they formed a larger band known as kumukomeri (plural kimikomeri) which the initiate wore across his chest from either side of his shoulder. Conventionally, women dancers wrapped the kimikomeri around their waists. An elated paternal aunt would take one of her kimikomeri and adorn her nephew with it when he came to invite her to grace his circumcision ceremony. The beads enhanced the delicacy as well as intricacy of a candidate’s dance movements. However, the use of kimikomeri bead wrappers was discontinued in the late 1940s when most women in Bukusuland began wearing either sheets of cloth or dresses, argues Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). Some missionaries also campaigned against the custom of Bukusu women wearing beads and removing the

lower centre teeth leading to the abandonment of the tradition among Christianized women (Reed 1954:7).

Despite the changes in the colonial-era dance costumes, there was continuity in the form of circumcision songs performed. In both the precolonial and colonial periods, singing during the “calling” and across all phases of the circumcision ritual was in the call and response form. The soloist was described as oramo kumwenya (literally one who puts in the song). This description anticipates that after the soloist gave the lead cue, that is, aramo, the rest of the performers were to “receive,” khukhwakanila, or respond in chorus to his cue. There was also continuity regarding the gender of the lead singers in circumcision songs. In both the colonial and precolonial epochs, the soloist was usually male denoting the perception that the circumcision ritual was masculine and as such within the domain of men.

On the final leg of the “calling” phase, as was the case in the pre-European period, an initiate toured the land of his maternal uncles. Before embarking on this journey, the khuchukhila (literally to pour upon) ritual which involved the initiate mixing beer pellets with water in a small pot, was performed.³⁶ As was the case in the precolonial period, there was no singing or dancing as the candidate walked to the river. The pre-capitalist belief that the initiate would be struck dead by his ancestors if he dared glance back as he came home from the river still held sway in the colonial Bukusu society. Babukusu were convinced that ancestral spirits resided on river banks and to show their solidarity with the candidate, the spirits escorted him back home as he carried water on his shoulders. It was considered a breach of the rules of engagement between the dead and the living if the latter looked in the direction of the former, observes Humphrey Wangila (OI on 13th May, 2013). No singing was allowed when the initiate was under the escort of spirits. The candidate poured the water into a pot placed in front of his father’s house. This pot, in whose neck the lukhafwa

³⁶ See a detailed description of the “to pour upon” ritual on pp. 53-56.

(*Cynodon dactylon*) grass is tied, has up to date, not been substituted with any other container.

A musical aspect of the “to pour upon” ritual which has not changed from the precolonial era is the singing of the sioyayo song after the candidate empties his container into the pot in the yard. And whenever the song is performed, it has continued to invigorate candidates and elicit a very serious and heightened mood that “signifies the climax of the circumcision ritual,” observes Wanyama (2009:109). The song, however, does not necessarily signify the “climax” of the circumcision ritual in its entirety as Wanyama puts it. From the precolonial period, it segments four significant phases of the circumcision ritual, i.e., khuchukhila (pouring), khufwara omusinde likhoni (adorning the candidate with a bull’s hind underbelly meat), when the initiate’s neck is adorned with a piece of a cow’s stomach (lisombo) and, finally, when the boy is heading home from the river to be circumcised. But elders who belong to the age-group of the candidate’s father may sing the sioyayo song as they partake of beer in a house specifically set aside for them on the eve of the actual surgery.

However, traditionally the candidate’s father’s age-mates never took part in singing and dancing for him (candidate) during the night preceding the morning of the surgery. They only came in the morning after the initiate had been circumcised to be given lubaka meat as a gift by the initiate’s father, argues Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014). The reverence of the sioyayo song predates colonialism. As a demonstration of the significance of the song, whenever it is sung, the initiate stands alert and plays the chinyimba bells with equanimity and with his hands close to his chest. And neither him nor the crowd dances. The sioyayo song is literally the anthem of the Bukusu sub-nation. It is taboo to sing this song at any other time other than within the circumcision context (Wanyama 2009:58). The song’s texts which are full of metaphors have never changed since the precolonial period. And as

happened in the pre-capitalist Bukusu society, very few women, if any, join in the singing of sioyayo. It is thus dominated by men. This, according to Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012), is because the song is considered masculine since whatever messages it is laden with are about men and their experiences. It, for example, captures the history of the Bukusu circumcision ritual, discourages cowardice, and warns a candidate to anticipate a lot of pain during the actual surgery, themes that are not in any way related to women.

The khulanga (calling) phase as was the case in the pre-European Bukusu society, ended with the initiate visiting one of his maternal uncles who slaughtered a bull for him and hung the sirloin (luliki) from the animal around the candidate's neck. The candidate was then joyously escorted home from his uncle's place by a singing and dancing crowd. The crowd, in a precolonial version, danced neither in clockwise nor anticlockwise style but in a linear manner (see Plate 7). This was a procession dance meant to enable the performers to move forward and inch closer to the candidate's home. The melodramatic ones leapt into the air and even rolled on the ground either to display their dancing capabilities to the public for admiration or were simply buoyed by the candidate's maternal uncle's gesture of slaughtering a bull for his nephew. Collective dancing and rejoicing strengthened community solidarity and emphasized the corporativeness of the whole group (Mbiti 2008:120). Reminiscent of the precolonial epoch, when the dancing and singing party arrived home, observes Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012), women ululated and the dancing progressed in a circular motion. Among Babukusu, ululating is the preserve of women. When the performers became tired, they fed and rested awaiting another dance period that would start in the evening. The candidate placed his chinyimba bells on the roof of his father's house as his predecessors in the precolonial age did. It was a cultural requirement that the bells do not come into contact with the ground until after the initiate was circumcised. This is because they could be scuppered if bitten by an ant known as chukunwe and thus prevented from

producing any percussive sound (Wanyama 2009:59). However, the actual motive behind this behaviour was the “fear that witches would bewitch the musical instruments and cause the initiate to cry out during the actual surgery if they were carelessly kept,” argues Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012).

Normally the candidate in both the pre- and colonial Bukusu society was timed to arrive home from his maternal uncle’s place late in the afternoon. Later that evening, a bull/cow was slaughtered and a section of its rumen cut off and hung around the initiate’s neck. Chyme was then smeared on the candidate’s body by his real or classificatory father or paternal uncle as he reminded the initiate to protect the reputation of his clan by courageously facing the knife. Thereafter the sioyayo song was sung for the third time as was customary even in the pre-European era. The assembled crowd comprising invited relatives, friends and neighbours then embarked on a frenzied dancing and singing session that proceeded overnight only breaking temporarily when the languid candidate went to “sleep” at about midnight.

However, in a departure from tradition, the candidate’s father’s age-mates (babakoki), together with their wives, filled the void with mainly anti-febrility songs sang from inside a house set aside for them. The babakoki are given special treatment because it is believed they can harm the initiate through their utterances if mistreated by their host (Wanyama 2009:53). After about two hours of rest, the candidate and the crowd resumed their dancing and singing. In a continuation of what prevailed in the precolonial epoch, individuals danced either clockwise or anticlockwise, but collectively, while waving walking sticks and clubs. This way they ensured the candidate remained in the middle of the circle created. The clubs and sticks were a constant reminder to the candidate that any inappropriate behaviour from him would not be tolerated (see Plate 3). However, in 1953 the Government banned the carrying of clubs and other “weapons” at drinking parties and dances in Bukusuland and other parts of

Nyanza Province except with the written permission of the chief (KNA DC/EN3/4/2). Nevertheless, this did not in any way affect the performance of circumcision songs and dances among Babukusu, argues Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012). Sticks and clubs continued serving as accompaniments to circumcision songs.

Before the coming of Europeans, Babukusu sang thematic songs on the eve of the actual circumcision morning. This tradition spilled into the colonial period. For example, a popular song sung during the night session of the circumcision ritual known as “Matere” centred on the theme of highhandedness by a colonial chief known by that name. It was sung thus:

Soloist: <i>Materee</i> x 2	Materee x 2
Chorus: <i>Haaa</i>	Haaa
Soloist: <i>Matere wa Lumonya alifwa</i>	Matere son of Lumonya will one day die
Chorus: <i>Haaa Matere kafwa bali aliyo haaa</i>	Haaa Matere died but they say he is still alive haa ³⁷

These texts were repeated several times. Khamalwa (2012) believes that repetition in music ensures that the listeners understand the message in the song. He posits that “music and dance have special didactic value as they enhance the audience’s ability to remember the content through repeated performance.” Music, contends Wekesa (cited in Nason’go 2009:70), is a means of making history, and interpreting reality. Indeed the song above crystallizes part of the colonial history of Babukusu and narrates the burden a section of the community endured under a ruthless colonial headman called Matere. According to Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012), the loathsome Matere who hailed from Kamukuywa publicly punished anybody who he suspected had committed an offence. His misfeasance saw him punish rainmakers who failed to cause rain to pound the ground during dry spells or to stop it when there was too much of it that caused farms to flood. A District Commissioner for Elgon Nyanza district commended on Matere thus: “Matere is in my opinion the most stupid headman in the district and has no conception of his work. Why he is allowed to draw a

³⁷ Song performed by Yona Nabichikhi, op.cit.

hundred and eighty Rupees a year I cannot imagine...” (KNA DC/EN3/1/1). Matere was so loathed that when he died people celebrated. They could not believe that he was no longer alive hence the song texts “Matere died but they say he is still alive.”

The composers of the “Matere” song (and some other political songs in colonial Kenya), asserted the right of the popular classes to interpret social experiences and bring to the public sphere alternative discourses that were omitted from official renderings of the social reality imposed from above by dominant classes (Gecau cited in Nasong’o 2009:71). The role of music in this regard “represents a contestation between the subaltern classes and dominant classes over who has the right to define social reality and to impose its meanings”, argues Nasong’o (2009:71). Beats of the endwitwi drum often accompanied the night singing and dancing. The use of this drum particularly by specific clans such as Bameme and Bakhwami was carried forward from the pre-European epoch.

The pre-European compositional style of topical songs continued into the colonial period. For example, a new song titled “toilo” was composed in the 1950s for use while escorting the candidate to the river. Its content was informed by the activities of Europeans in Bukusuland. The repertoire which went: lelo mbialile toilo, “I have planted toilo,” was in praise of a high yielding sweet potato variety developed by Mr. Toil at the Sang’alo Agricultural Institute. Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012) argues that the song “toilo,” serving as an advertisement tool, encouraged farmers to adopt the growing of the “wonder” potato. Continuity was also evident in the spirit and thrust of the songs sung on the night before the actual surgery. In both the pre- and colonial periods, all the songs were celebratory safe for sioyayo. They objurgated immorality and encouraged the candidate to prepare for the pain that was awaiting him in the morning. The kumutarakwa kwafuna ekawa (the *Juniperus procera* tree broke the coffee [tree]) composed in the 1950s when coffee planting was

introduced among Babukusu was sang for fun, observes Stephen Manyasi (OI on 30th December, 2012). Other songs dealt with the history of Babukusu and the importance of preserving Bukusu traditions whose survival was threatened by the spread of Christianity, Western education and Colonialism. Wars, right from the precolonial period, provided content for Bukusu circumcision songs. The singing of war-related songs which demonstrated masculinity continued into the colonial era. For example, after the Second World War, new circumcision songs relating to the imperialist war were introduced among Babukusu. An example is the song “Amba Omutalia” (capture the Italian) which became very popular. Many Bukusu men, posits Pius Kakai (OI on 12th October, 2011), fought alongside the British in the Second World War against the Italians in Ethiopia.

The song Amba Omutalia was composed by soloists who listened to tales from the veterans of the Second World War who narrated to anyone who cared to listen about their exploits in battlefronts even when most of them were actually porters. They told of how they defeated and humiliated the Italians in Abyssinia (Ethiopia), argues Kakai. The song (adopted from Simiyu 2011:60) goes:

Soloist: <i>Amba omutalia</i>	Capture the Italian
Chorus: <i>Hooh---hooh</i>	Hooh---hooh
Soloist: <i>Basoleli amba omutalia</i>	Warriors capture the Italian
Chorus: <i>Amba omutalia</i>	Capture the Italian
Soloist: <i>Buchunju, buchunju</i>	Pains, pains
<i>chanjalikha sobona</i>	spreading you see
<i>bwola ne mungubo</i>	reaching inside the cloths
Chorus: <i>Amba Omutalia</i>	Capture the Italian
Soloist: <i>Embalu yecha,</i>	Circumcision came,
<i>eye Bakisu mulwakhakha</i>	of the Gishu from Iwakhakha
<i>Basuna mungaki</i>	they jump up and stand there (for the
<i>ne bema</i>	operation)
Chorus: <i>Amba Omutalia</i>	Capture the Italian
Soloist: <i>Ekindi yecha,</i>	Another one came,
<i>Eye bayobo eye mulukulu</i>	of the Saboat from the mountain
<i>basuna mungaki ne biyula</i>	they jump up with waist wrappers
Chorus: <i>Amba Omutalia</i>	Capture the Italian.
Soloist: <i>Basoleli amba Omutalia</i>	Men capture the Italian
Chorus: <i>Amba Omutalia</i>	Capture the Italian
Soloist: <i>Sibula Khukende</i>	Allow us to go

Chorus: <i>Haa</i>	Haa
Soloist: <i>Basoleli khusibule khukende</i>	Men allow us to leave
Chorus: <i>Amba Omutalia</i>	Capture the Italian

In the song, soldiers (read initiates), are being urged to push forward with their effort to annihilate the Italian adversary (circumciser's knife).

The use of circumcision songs to archive historical events among Babukusu continued into the colonial period. For example, the sioyayo song sang in the colonial age preserved historical details within its texts just as it did in the pre-European epoch. New historical songs were also composed in the colonial period. For example, the song "capture the Italian" above freezes in the consciousness of Babukusu the role gallant Bukusu soldiers played in the Second World War. This is in consonant with the observation made by Johnston (1974:334). He argues that, songs "open a door to deep, unconscious psychological and historical factors which become amenable to perception and understanding."

In the morning after the nightlong dance and singing, the initiate was led to a stream where he was stripped and smeared with mud.³⁸ The songs sang as he headed towards the stream, were homiletic and rhythmically similar to those performed in the precolonial epoch. They were slow and the chinyimba bells' percussive beats lazy, subdued and lacking in vibrancy "since the time of reckoning had arrived," observes Patrick Mang'oli (OI on 20th April, 2013). However, the precolonial song, "present it (penis) for shaping", which challenges the candidate to present his penis (to the circumciser) for "shaping" continued to be sang as the initiate was escorted to the river. Continuity was also demonstrated in the manner songs were performed as the initiate was on his way back home from the river. For example, the colonial-era initiate, as did his precolonial counterpart, played the chinyimba bells only up to a few steps shy of mutiang'i (a spot where a candidate stands as he is

³⁸ See description of the process on pp. 59-60.

circumcised) asserts Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014). The only song sung on this occasion as it happened in the pre-European era was the sioyayo. The sioyayo elicits no excitement and therefore it never attracts any dancing. Similarly, among the Gikuyu of Kenya, “there is no more dancing and jumping... the singing is in slow and gentle voices (since) this is a moment of great anxiety...” (Kenyatta 1965:139).

About twenty metres from the candidate’s homestead, the singing stopped. The initiate was received by his father and led to a preset spot (mutiang’i) where the circumcision occurred. Up to the 1950s, the circumciser adorned himself in likutu (skin cloak), a headgear ekutwa, made of Colobus monkey skin and spotted his face, the upper part of his body, his arms and legs with white, red and black clay. He also wore leg jingles, posits Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). The jingles, observes Wepukhulu, produced a musical rhythm as he paced up and down, while elegantly shaking his Colubus monkey hat. From the early 1950s, however, there were significant changes in the use of circumcision performance costumes. For example, most circumcisers abandoned the use of the ekutwa headgear. They wore shorts instead of skin cloaks but many of them wore no shoes, argues Christopher Mupalia (OI on 8th September, 2012). But this could not have been out of choice or cultural prohibition. The price for purchasing shoes was too high for most of them. The use of leg rattles by circumcisers was discarded in the late 1960s after they were found to be serving no significant purpose, contends John Mupalia (TI on 24th January, 2014).

Traditionally, if a girl wanted to claim a newly circumcised boy as his lover, she wrapped her hands around his waist from behind immediately the circumciser was through with the surgery. But if her gesture was rejected, she was further humiliated in a song keyenyela, “she wants (him) for herself.”³⁹ This practice was, however, frowned upon by the elite and

³⁹ See song in Wagner, G. (1949) “The Bantu of Western Kenya” p.352.

Christians as primitive. It was subsequently discontinued in the 1950s thus marking the demise of the song keyenyela among Babukusu, argues Khisa Sikolia (OI on 1st April, 2013).

There was continuity in the musical performances that followed a candidate's victory over the knife. Performers in the colonial period began singing the precolonial khwera omurwa or "we have killed the enemy" song (see p.63). This song is exoteric and celebratory. It was traditionally sung by Babukusu after defeating their enemies. The term "omurwa" generally means "enemy" although it is also used to refer to a Saboat, affirms Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014). The dance movement at this point remained circular. Gifts, for example, eggs, sorghum, millet, maize and livestock were given to the candidate for overcoming the knife. But monetary gifts were also offered during the colonial time. The oral texts and thematic intentions of the precolonial "we have killed an enemy" song remained the same in the colonial period.

The newly circumcised boy, now referred to as omufulu, sat on a bench-like sit called kiti moto. Before the coming of Europeans, he sat on a log known as sikhomekho. When he was deemed to have had enough rest, the candidate, as was the tradition was led backwards to a seclusion house known as likombe. John Manguliechi (OI on 7th April, 1993)⁴⁰ observes that the neophyte was often guided into the seclusion house backwards to symbolically recognize Mango's killing of the serpent *Ya bebe* which used to enter its cave backwards.⁴¹ The performance of death songs relating to newly circumcised persons changed in the colonial period. Up to the 1930s, if a neophyte died from his wound or from any other cause while in the seclusion house, the death was not bewailed with the performance of dirges. His relatives were supposed to instead sing circumcision songs. It was feared that if they wailed and sang dirges, the other neophytes living with the deceased in the same house would also die,

⁴⁰ The researcher interviewed the late John Manguliechi, a funeral orator in 1993. He (researcher) was then an undergraduate student at the Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi.

⁴¹ See details on p. 48.

contends Manguliechi. However, colonial chiefs and government health workers demanded that such deaths had to be promptly communicated to the relevant authorities “for the cause(s) of death to be ascertained,” observes Manguliechi. As such, a mother backed by the law, sang laments in a low tone upon being informed of her son’s death in the seclusion house. She was not supposed to wail or lament publicly as such a death was considered unusual and a bad omen.

However, there was continuity in the way neophytes in both the pre- and colonial periods used musical instruments to communicate and entertain themselves. The newly circumcised boys left their seclusion houses in groups to look for the lulongo clay with which to smear their bodies and the milky substance of eurphobia tree to rub into their hair. And in order to call others to come out of their seclusion houses so that they could together go and “bath,” a neophyte played on his bamboo or Napier grass flute. It was taboo for anyone to play on the flute if he was not newly circumcised, argues Raphael Wanyonyi (OI on 27th March, 2013). However, Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014) contends that apart from the neophyte, his male minder, namakhala, though uncircumcised, was allowed to also play the flute.

Before the Napier grass (*Pennisetum purpureum*) was introduced by the Europeans in Kitosh in the late 1930s, Babukusu were fashioning flutes from bamboo trees (kamateka), which grew abundantly in areas such as Mateka, Siboti and the slopes of Mt. Elgon, argues Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012). He believes that neophytes from the Bakinyikeu age-group of the late 1930s were the first to use flutes made from the Napier grass (kumulele). The flute which measured about 30 centimetres was held vertically and it had four finger holes and a notched mouth hole. The singing of songs of ridicule by neophytes in the precolonial epoch continued into the colonial era. Whenever they ventured out into the villages and encountered their age-mates who feared the knife, they sang songs

ridiculing them (Khamalwa 2012:87). An example of such songs is nembona sikonela, that is, “when I see one who feared the knife.”⁴² However, the periods in which circumcision songs were performed changed in the colonial period. Traditionally, elders determined when initiation ceremonies were to be held (Wagner 1949:337). But with the introduction of Western education in the colonial period, the time to perform circumcision songs and dances was predetermined and specific. The circumcision practice had to conform to the national school calendar. The ceremony started in late July when schools were about to close or had actually closed and ran throughout the month of August when schools were out of session. The end of the liminal period for the neophytes, in both the colonial and precolonial Bukusu community was marked with song and dance in a ceremony known as “hatching”.⁴³

The neophytes stayed overnight in a banana plantation. They left the banana plantation early in the morning to continue playing in bushes near river banks. At about midday, they bathed in a nearby stream and put on new clothes bought for them by their parents. In the early years of colonialism when people still wore skin cloths, they would remove their old skin-clothes and wear new ones prepared by their fathers. Their female minders namachengeche, brought them the new clothes. Traditionally girlfriends would do so, argues Wagner (ibid). However, this open display of a love affair between a boy and a girl was discouraged from the 1940s and thus girls refused to expose themselves to ridicule from their parents and those of the neophytes by taking clothes to him. But Raphael Wanyonyi (OI on 27th March, 2013) asserts that taking new outfits to the neophytes was always the responsibility of young female relatives of the neophytes and not their girlfriends. Smartly dressed in new clothes, girls and young boys who had come to escort them home sang the “in a new food plate” song (see p. 67). This song retained its structure from the precolonial epoch. Wanyama (2009:68) contends that music items performed on the circumcision day

⁴² See song in Wagner 1949 “The Bantu of Western Kenya” p. 359.

⁴³ See description of the “hatching” ceremony on pp. 65-68.

and thereafter, for example sioyayo, “we have killed the enemy” (see p.63) and “in a new food plate” are somehow fixed in terms of form, text and presentational style. They do not change with time. The song “in a new food plate” portrayed the neophyte as a newly “hatched” man or omutembete,” argues Japheth Musa (OI on 23rd April, 2013). Babukusu believed that the abecedarian had just “hatch” into the world of men. There was no change in the musical performances that accompanied the omutembete home.

In the pre- and colonial periods, the mostly young teenage girls and boys escorting the neophytes home, walked at a snail’s pace while clapping and singing the “in a new food plate” song. This song was not accompanied by any dancing. When they arrived home, the neophytes were served with large quantities of cooked bananas on banana leaves or wooden droughs. When they had eaten to their full they started to playfully throw hot bananas at each other. Traditionally, they were then each handed a shield, club, spear and other weapons by their respective fathers and told to consider themselves warriors, argues Patrick Wanabule(OI on 4th April, 2013). However, colonialism brought with it a police force which enforced law and order among Babukusu and other communities in Kenya. Subsequently the presenting neophytes with spears, and clubs became an irrelevant symbolism that was finally abandoned in the 1950s, contends Wanabule.

5.4 Marriage songs and dances

The institution of marriage among Babukusu was greatly impacted by the introduction of Christianity and colonialism in the community. Marriage which was traditionally compulsory was no longer mandatory for persons who opted to join seminaries to train as priests and nuns. These individuals caused the community to miss out on singing and dancing opportunities were they to wed traditionally. Marriage through force or abduction which was not uncommon in the pre-European era was considered illegal from the late 1930s by the colonial government (KNA DC/EN/3/4/2). As such if one was ready to marry, one either had

to have a Christian, civil or traditional wedding. Many, however, eloped with their partners. Singing and dancing was therefore limited to church and traditional weddings. But some couples who had civil marriages occasionally held after-wedding receptions where their families and friends sang and danced to either traditional or Christian music.

In the pre-independence Bukusu society, a man whose girlfriend was betrothed against her will to an elderly man, gathered his friends and together they sang songs ridiculing the girl whenever they found her working in the farm (Wagner 1949:395). They also made derogatory remarks about her husband with the intention of making her run away from him. An example of such songs was titled “Memba wa Kalabayi” (Memba daughter to Kalabayi) which castigates a girl by the name Memba for ignoring advances from young men and marrying an old man described as kurenyakhu (firewood picker).

Up to the late 1950s, pseudo- and non-Christian families, continued brewing kamalwa ke siselelo (beer of wedding), and invited friends and relations to make merry with them. Harpists, and fiddlers, just like they did in the years prior to the period entertained both the hosts and their guests. Their audience performed the several variants of the traditional kamabeka (shaking of shoulders) dance. With the introduction of European clothings among Babukusu, “dance costumes” began to change. For example, before 1930, most women dancers wore sisal or banana fiber waist wrappers while each mature man wore chinakwe (arm ornament made of wood) and kamakutu cloaks made of animal skin, affirms Anicet Wafula (OI on 1st April, 2013). But in the 1930s most women were already dancing in sheets of cloth which was, however, their routine dress code. Most youngmen were clad in shorts with the older ones dancing in blankets wrapped around their bodies. Both men and women danced barefoot as they did in the precolonial era.

The performance of music in weddings and other social occasions among the pre-European and colonial Babukusu was such that it was difficult to separate the musician from

the dancer. This was because the musician usually teamed up with his audience in dance performances and the latter joined him in singing. Finnegan (1970:82) and Miruka (2011:111) concur with this observation. They argue that there does not seem to be a passive audience in Africa. The audience and the artist, they assert, interact to such a degree that in many performances, there is no clear dividing line between them. This precolonial behaviour continued into the colonial era with ebullient “shaking of shoulders” performers dancing either clockwise, anticlockwise or while standing. An individual dancer was at liberty to utilize his/her space as he/she wished. However, the manner in which musicians were rewarded changed. The harpist and fiddle-like limoyi players were rewarded with money. Coins, in the case of the harp, were dropped into a hole on the harp’s resonator. Traditionally, they were rewarded in kind, e.g., with farm produce and poultry.

In the pre-independence period, Babukusu believed that that it was the music spirits in musicians that were actually rewarded, observes Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012). Masasabi (2011:191) agrees with Murutu. She asserts that the spirits of the ancestors of musicians influence their performance compositional process and that “those who are not from a litungu performance lineage, even if they were to learn the playing techniques of the instrument, cannot play as well as those who are born with litungu performance spirits.”

The manner in which a harpist commenced his performance in the precolonial epoch remained the same during the colonial age. A harp song usually started with an instrumental prelude where the “harp spoke”. The melody played by the harp, argues Wafula (2012:47) was the same as what the harpist sang. In some instances, whenever the harpist sang, the harp in response imitated the same melodic motif. However, there were cases where the harp played a different tune from what the harpist sang. The resonators of the harp and limoyi were traditionally made mainly from the soft wood of kumukhuyu nandere (*Ficus sycomorus*), kumutua (*Euphorbia candelabrum*), kumurembe (*Erythrina abyssinica*) and

kumuefubulu trees. However, a big blow was dealt local musicians in 1937 when the Government outlawed the cutting of these and other trees. Any person found doing contrary to the law was fined Sh.150 or served a two months jail term (KNA DC/EN3/4/1). As such, musicians had to umbriferously obtain wood from which to fashion musical instruments. This made them, in some cases, to settle for trees that were not traditionally meant for the making of musical instruments so long as they were easily available, argues Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012). This marked the beginning of fashioning harps and fiddles from trees other than the traditional kumuefubulu, *Erythrina abyssinica*, *Euphorbia candelabrum* and *Ficus sycomorus* whose wood is not susceptible to boring insects or to rotting easily. Colonial laws therefore forced Babukusu to start making musical instruments from “unsuitable” wood.

A new instrument, the fiddle (see Plate 15), was incorporated into Bukusu musical ensemble in the late 1930s, argues Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). Indeed most of our respondents argued that the siilili was not a traditional musical instrument of Babukusu and was only introduced into the society in the colonial age. According to Wepukhlu, the siilili got its name from the sound it makes, i.e., siilila. The wooden resonator of the siilili is cut to about fifteen centimeters long and twelve centimeters in diameter (Senoga-Zake 2000:138). The stick that forms the neck of the tube passes through the resonator protruding about 1 centimeter on the opposite side. In the precolonial era, harpists, chimbengele players and limoyi fiddlers were the only music performers who were invited to entertain guests during beer parties and other social gatherings, posits Khisa Sikolia (OI on 1st April, 2013). Sikolia believes that the art of playing the fiddle was borrowed from the Luo. The resonator of the fiddle is open on one side and is similar to orutu of the Luo. The interaction between Babukusu and the Luo together with other ethnic groups in Western Kenya was greatly enhanced with the completion of the Kisumu-Butere railway line in 1935 and of the Kenya-

Uganda railway which passed through Kitosh in 1927, argues Elias Randiga⁴⁴ (OI on 6th June, 2013). The grip on the fiddle's bow-string was ensured by moving the string several times through a chewing gum-like substance known locally as bunyanya. This gum, asserts Christopher Mupalia, was obtained from the kumunyanya, a species of the *Ficus* tree and was attached to one side of the fiddle's sound-box.

The way the fiddle was played and tuned in the colonial period remains the same today. It is played by bowing. The player alternates the bowing with fingering. With the right hand holding the bow, the fiddler moves it to and fro across the tightened string. The left hand fingers alternate their positions along the string to create different notes. When being played, the arm of the fiddle normally points away from the player while the resonator is positioned on the left side of the instrumentalist's chest. However, not all ethnic communities play the fiddle the same way as Babukusu. For example, Senoga-Zake (2000:139) notes that among the Gikuyu, the wandindi player places his thumb on the top or side of the string, while the pointing and the middle fingers are under the string, i.e., between the string and the stick that forms the neck. The other two fingers firmly hold the stick. By tightening and loosening the tuning peg at the end of the fiddle's arm, the fiddler gets the desired pitch. A higher pitch is obtained by tightening the peg and a lower pitch by loosening the peg.

From about 1948, a variety of siilili with two strings was made. This "improvement" was as a result of "suggestions from those coming back from the Second World War", argues Senoga-Zake (2000:139). The second string, he observes, is used as a drone and adds an extra note at a close. However, this two-stringed fiddle is yet to receive widespread acceptance among Babukusu as the single-stringed one. Patrick Mang'oli (OI on 20th April, 2013) believes this is because the modified fiddle does not produce sounds that blend well with traditional Bukusu rhythms. The coming onto the Bukusu musical scene of the harmonica

⁴⁴ Elias Randiga is the Assistant Museum Curator at the Nairobi Railway Museum.

(sinanda sie khumunwa) and accordion (sinanda sichaanula) in the late 1940s ushered into the community an era of a new dance style known as ekorasi ye lulumbuchu (chorus of dizziness) -the waltz. Waltz dancers spun around in pairs of man and woman until they became dizzy hence the name “chorus of dizziness” argues Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012). Kilikinji Mumbwani okhwa Lumonya, who hailed from near a European settlement, Kamukuywa, was a renowned player of both the accordion and the harmonica. He belonged to the Kananachi age-set. He performed in both Christian and traditional weddings. Kilikinji popularized the Waltz dance in the 1940s and 1950s. Bukusu men who were conscripted into the King’s African Rifles (KAR) to fight in the Second World War, one of whom was Masakhalia okhwa Musolongwa, Omulunda from Sirisia near Lugulu, returned home after the war to spread the waltz dance which they had encountered while serving with the KAR, observes Reverend Charles Wakhisi (OI on 1st February, 2013).

Most Kenyans were sent to fight in Ethiopia, India and Burma and were drafted into the Carrier Corps as well as entertainment units from where they acquired new musical skills. After returning to Kenya, they formed music bands in which they incorporated their new skills (Gitonga 2010). However, among Babukusu, the returnees focused on performing the waltz dance than forming bands. In fact, there is no known Bukusu returnee who formed a music band. The introduction of Christianity and Western education also altered the performance of traditional wedding songs in the colonial Bukusu society. A researcher who witnessed a traditional wedding ceremony (siselelo) in the 1930s in Bukusuland reported that:

At most present day wedding feasts, the differentiation of the visitors into several groups is further marked by the segregation of Christians and pagans or ‘old timers’ and ‘moderners’... At a wedding I attended in Kitosh (Bukusuland), detachments of schoolboys... matched in a formation to the yard and in the midst of beer-drinking groups of elders gave short drill performances or sang songs in English.... Young men and girls in European clothes danced in European fashion to the accompaniment of an accordion, a drum and a triangle or had a musician sing songs of praise for one another (Wagner 1949:411).

Christianity and Western education therefore became powerful tools for separating the Christianized and educated Omubukusu from his/her village folks, from his/her indigenous culture and from the “heathen” and the illiterate masses of society. For young men and women, missionary activities also provided an opportunity to migrate to towns and get employment as a way of bypassing gerontocratic patriarchal power strictures (Wasike 2013:66).

Most colonial wedding songs, just as those in the precolonial Bukusu society, were panegyric. They praised the bride and her parents. Harpists and fiddlers sang in long-winded songs and named all the (host’s) ancestors. This usually pleased the host and he finally stood up and danced (Wagner 1949:412). Such praised individuals usually rewarded the musicians for as Babukusu say “litungu lifumia olifuile”, i.e., “the harp praises the one who rewards it” (Masasabi 2011:142). Musical instruments in the Bukusu community have from the precolonial period been personified hence comments such as “litungu lilomaloma, ekita elomaloma, siilili silomaloma” which means, “the harp talks, the guitar talks, the fiddle talks.”

The introduction of Western industrial education into the colonial-era Bukusu society influenced change in the content of some of the community’s wedding and other songs. For example, the 1950s and 1960s saw women advance their sewing, spinning and cooking skills at the Bungoma Homecraft Centre. This enticed Laisa Omuliuli to compose a song titled “e Bung’oma mu Spinning” (spinning in Bungoma) which was also performed live in weddings, observes Wangila (2004:3). The rendition encouraged Bukusu women to enroll for industrial training in order to improve their living standards. Babukusu who had realized the benefits of western education therefore used music as a medium through which they urged their fellow Babukusu to acquire education. The brewing of the “beer of haggling” drunk as in-laws

expostulated over bridewealth issues continued into the colonial period. A large pot holding the “beer of haggling” was placed on a holder (engara) at the centre of a house. Men sat on traditional stools surrounding the pot and imbibed the beer using siphons fashioned from plant reeds (chisekhe). Space was, however, not created in the house for persons who after taking a little beer wished to dance to fiddle or harp music. One danced where one was seated as it was the case in the precolonial era. Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012) posits that invitees together with their hosts engaged in the “shaking of shoulders” dance. Women spiced the occasion with ululations as they, together with the men, drunk the ‘beer of haggling’ just like they did in the precolonial epoch.

Apart from the fiddle, another instrument introduced into the Babukusu society in the colonial era was the ekengele (nail used to hit a circular metal). The “ekengele” (see Plate 10) was “invented” in the 1940s to accompany the guitar and fiddle music played in weddings and other functions, argues Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012). Harpists, in a practice that pre-exists colonialism, did not perform solo in weddings or other social functions. Each harpist was accompanied by an instrumentalist who played luengele - “a long, narrow piece of wood (and) a board which was stuck with sticks.” The harp never ‘walks’ alone, it ‘walks’ with luengele,” confirms Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012). The harpists and luengele players often had leg jingles fastened on the ankles of their right legs. When the leg was rhythmically stamped, the jingles produced percussive sounds which blend well with the harp lyrics.

The limoyi, which resembles a fiddle but with a larger resonant, was a precolonial era musical instrument which saw its usage in weddings and other occasions continue into the colonial period. Some members of the Nalulingo Engo Cultural Group (OI on 10th May, 2013) affirm that the playing of limoyi diffused into the Bukusu community from the Khayo

and Wanga Luyia sub-groups. The resonator of the limoyi was made from a calabash. The string was divided into two. The shorter part played a high pitch while the longer part gave a lower pitch. The player held the resonator against the belly and struck the two segments of the string with a metal rod (Shitambasi and Baraza 2011:116). However, the use of the limoyi in Bukusu musical events, observes James Otung'uli (OI on 11th April, 2014) came to an end in the 1950s. This, he observes, was after it failed to match the “beautiful, satisfying and emotional” music produced by its stringed competition- the harp and the fiddle.

Music played during wedding ceremonies in both colonial and precolonial Bukusu society was dominated by the harp accompanied by the luengele. The technique of playing the harp which traditionally entailed the musician using his right hand to articulate the drone irrespective of whether he was left or right handed continued into the colonial period (see Plate 1). Some musicians among Babukusu adopted the use of the left hand in playing the drone. This, according to Masasabi (2011:169), was due to influence from the Bakabalasi who traditionally use the left hand to excite the drone. However, this study found that the use of either the left or right hand to play the harp is not inherently cultural. A harpist may use either of his hands depending on whether he is left or right handed. To play the harp, a musician may place it either across his lap or at an angle in front of himself (see Plates 1 and 18 respectively).

Most wedding dances in the pre- European Bukusu society took place between the month of September and November when many families had harvested eleusine. However, with the introduction of the money economy by the British imperialists, foodstuff required to feed visitors in a wedding such as dry maize (ground to make flour for ugali) was bought from markets. As such weddings were held anytime of the year. Traditionally when the bride, escorted by her bridesmaids, left for the groom's home for the first time, the party sang songs

in praise of the bride as they hit hoe blades against iron armlets (Wagner 1949:414). But Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014), asserts that the hoe blades were actually hit against each other and not armlets. This continued into the colonial era. From the late 1940s, however, men playing imported musical instruments also joined the bridal party. Kilikinji okhwa Mumbwani, a harmonica and accordion player, for example, used to be invited to join the maids. Selina Nabangala (OI on 1st April, 2013) posits that Kilikinji was part of her wedding entourage of about forty escorts in 1950. Selina contends that other instruments employed during this occasion were traditional drums of the endoli type, harps and fiddles. The guitar, believes Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012), was introduced among Babukusu in the 1940s but was never used in weddings until the 1960s. It was accompanied by shakers known locally as “chiyukasi” and only the youth appreciated it.

The precolonial single-headed endoli, remained the main drum in traditional weddings performed in the colonial period among Babukusu. This drum had a symbolic significance. As Manns (2006) observes, “(I)nherent in its meaning is the hollow vessel shape (female) that receives the (male) pounding on the membrane. Together a great energy and sound is awakened symbolizing life on earth.” It was not only the use of the traditional endoli drum that transited into the colonial epoch. The pre-European era praise song “our child’s calf” (see pp.76-77) sung in praise of the bride’s heavily built (healthy) legs among others was also performed in the colonial period. The rendition of this song remained as it was in the precolonial era. It and other praise songs sung by the bridemaids continued to serve the purpose of building self-belief and esteem in the bride.

The bride, while being escorted to the groom’s home, did not perform any dance nor did she sing. She, as was the case in the precolonial epoch, remained meek, a symbol of a good, quiet, obedient and respectful wife, contends Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012).

However, her maids, just like those in the pre-capitalist Bukusu society, engrossed themselves in erotic dance movements, gyrated and wined their waists and breasts to the admiration of the male audience, argues Nabichikhi. Selina Nabangala (1st April, 2013) who wedded in 1950, contends that her escorts also danced in the new waltz style in response to the accordion music played by Kilikinji okhwa Mumbwani. Waltz was originally an Austrian and Bavarian peasant dance involving gliding steps and rapid turning movements.

Apart from the popular “Our child’s calf,” other wedding songs sung in the colonial Bukusu community include “Ango wa bene okenda bwioya” (when in someone else’s home you walk slowly), “Njolilo” and “Yabunje yamala bulo” (A rodent of the yabunje type has eaten all the eleusine). In the former, the lead singer cautions the visiting party to carry themselves with decorum so as not to embarrass the bride. The latter song ridicules the biting poverty in the groom’s homestead since “rodents have eaten all the grains in the granaries which are now empty.” Both songs predate colonialism and never changed in form or performance. Before the 1930s, observes Khisa Sikolia (OI on 1st April, 2013), many female escorts in a bridal party who were engaged danced in chindekwe and biyula. The rest wore the the biyula only. But from the late 1930s, the maids started wearing sheets of imported clothes made from cotton cloth. The soloist remained female and as her precolonial predecessors, had to be a creative artist. She demonstrated overwhelming musical erudition by composing songs while on the move. Most of these songs castigated bad behaviours exhibited by wayward individuals in the community.

When the bridal party arrived in the groom’s home and reminiscent of the pre-capitalist Bukusu society, they ridiculed and abused their hosts in song. According to Selina Nabangala (OI on 1st April, 2013), the hosts retaliated in a similar manner. The visiting raucous party “regretted” that their beautiful daughter was going to marry not only a “pauper” but an “ugly”

groom. The song “I snide” (see p.78) sung in the pre- European Bukusu society continued being performed even in the colonial period. This song retained its form and performance style. The maids hid the bride from view amidst them until the hosts gave them gifts including a “cow of love” (ekhafu ye lukosi), argues Nabangala. However, unlike in the precolonial period, the bride and her dancers were also given rupees (in early colonial era) and later shillings, hats, dresses, blankets and sheets of cloth. After trading abuses (in song) for a while, the antagonistic revilers settled down for a meal of eleusine ugali and meat. Following the introduction in Luyialand of maize (nasimia), mainly of the Hickory-King variety by white farmers in 1908 (Bulimo 2013a:42), ugali prepared using maize flour was also served. Boiled bananas were eaten. And unlike in the precolonial period when the bride refused to eat any food offered to her, she ate together with her maids but “with respect” so as not to appear a glutton or recusant.

As in the pre-capitalist Bukusu society, the non-loquacious bride was held hostage in the groom’s house, esimba, by the groom’s friends for a day. Ultimately, she was freed by her assiduous maids who performed dances around the esimba and sung songs of khukhwikula omwea (to open the bride) which included the precolonial “yabunje rodent has eaten all the eleusine.” Later in the day, the bridal party left for the bride’s home where her paternal aunts had gathered. The party sang the “khuli barende” (we are strangers) song as they left. The song as sang by Selina Nabangala (OI on 1st April, 2013) goes thus;

Soloist: <i>Khuli barende</i> ×2	We are strangers ×2
Chorus: <i>Khuli barende khulechila</i>	We are strangers we will leave
Soloist: <i>Khulekhele abene sialo</i>	We leave the land to the owners
Chorus: <i>Khulibarende khulechila</i>	We are strangers we will leave

The texts of this song indicate that the bride was yet to be integrated, at this point, in the groom’s family although in actual sense, since the bridewealth had already been paid, her being part of the groom’s family was as well as concluded.

Before the 1930s, when the use of glass beads had not spread among Babukusu, the aunts receiving the bride danced in waist wrappers made from banana stems and wild sisal fibers, posits Rose Nafula Wanyonyi (OI on 27th March, 2013). Thereafter, they began wearing the guilloche-like kimikomeri bead-bands and cotton sheets. This continued up to the 1950s when many women among Babukusu began wearing dresses, argues Nafula. However, it must be noted that these attires were not purposely worn as dance costumes but as day-to-day clothing. In North Kitosh chief Murunga spearheaded a campaign to have his people wear clothes, go to school and learn handicrafts at the turn of the last century (de Wolf 1977:166). The paternal aunts, while welcoming their niece, repeatedly sang the precolonial praise song “our child’s leg calf.” This song was a call and response one. Ululations filled the air as the aunts danced around their niece. They moved their limbs, heads and backs in the precolonial khukhwitikita dance style.⁴⁵ The bride was later ushered into her mother’s house but only after money and other gifts had been gifted to her.

Up to the late 1950s, the groom’s relatives would follow the bride in order to “bring her back to her husband” after her “escape” from her “husband’s” house. But this did not happen from the 1960s, contends Penina Kerre (OI on 23rd May, 2013). This meant that the singorio-like dance style usually performed by the pursuers of the bride as they engaged her relatives in a mock fight was no longer performed. (Singorio was a social dance similar to the Maasai morans’ dance which entails leaping into the air). Kerre asserts that it was found to be of no value chasing after a bride who would obviously be coming back to her groom. This marked the death of the singorio-like dance in Bukusu weddings. As it was done in the pre-European Bukusu society, on the day the bride was to leave “permanently” for her future home (about a week later), her maids gathered in her parents’ homestead ready to escort her to her matrimonial home. This final visit known as sifuororo, involved fewer maids and subdued

⁴⁵ See the description of the dance on p. 71.

dancing and singing when contrasted with the first visit. In fact Selina Nabangala (OI on 1st April, 2013) confirms that she was escorted with only four dancers when she got married in 1950.

When the singing and dancing bridal party arrived at the groom's gate, they declined to enter until they were given presents. Traditionally the bride was given a hoe "which she will use to till her piece of land." In the colonial period, apart from the symbolic hoe, she was also given money. In the evening, the bride now known as omwea (a newly married woman) was taken to the bridegroom's house (esimba), by her sisters-in-law for the consummation of their marriage. Some Christianized Babukusu in the colonial period preferred church weddings. In Christian weddings, the approach of the bride's party to the church was made in the form of a gracious, slowly advancing dance by the bridal pair who were surrounded by their attendants and a few relations (Weman 1960:194). Weman contends that "(I)t was a calm and discreet dance, which emphasized for the entourage that it was the most worthy way of approaching the church at this, the most solemn moment in their lives. The dance was an expression of the fact that the whole personality is occupied, both body and soul. For the African, everything is action and movement; prayer for him is an action, a performance which breaks out spontaneously into dancing," A clear difference between the church dance and the traditional Bukusu wedding performance is that the former was a well planned, rehearsed choreography while the latter although systematic was unrehearsed and spontaneous.

There was no dancing of kamabeka (shaking of shoulders) in Christian weddings and musicians played European instruments such as the accordion, harmonica and the piano, argues Reverend Charles Wakhisi (OI on 1st April, 2013). The "heathen" harp, fiddle and other traditional Bukusu musical instruments were not allowed in church music. The bride danced in a bridal gown while the groom usually wore western-style suits. Nketia (1963)

collapses wedding and other African musical performances into two broad categories. He contends that there are two types of musical events: those in which the combination of music and non-musical events is traditional (such as the bridal party walking and dancing) and those in which such combinations are spontaneous, such as those which arise over a pot of millet beer (as performing the “shaking of shoulders” dance during a wedding beer party). The success of a traditional wedding was measured against various factors among them the amount of beer consumed and the number of people in attendance. In 1930, however, the colonial Government passed the Native Liquor Ordinance which banned the making, selling or buying of traditional beer (KNA DC/EN3/4/1). This law was amended in 1937 under the Native Authority Ordinance to include drinking or possessing beer. However, many Babukusu vehemently opposed it because beer was an integral component of rituals in their society. It was used to entertain guests and in counselling candidates and no serious ritual would proceed without it. Beer was also known to instigate dancing in otherwise reserved individuals. The government later amended the intrusive law to accommodate the wishes of Babukusu. Anyone who wished to brew beer for whichever reason had to now obtain a license from the Government. This requirement although tedious was acceptable to the majority of Babukusu, observes Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012).

However, Babukusu continued brewing the “beer for wedding” and “beer of haggling” even without the necessary licenses from the Government. The condemnation of traditional beer drinking by some Christian Missions, particularly of the Protestant extraction, changed the prevalence and the intensity with which the beer parties associated with weddings among Babukusu were performed. The elaborate festivities of wedding and bridewealth negotiations in which the hosts brewed beer and invited friends, relations and musicians to dance and make merry were slowly deflated as Christianity spread. However, the Quakers chose to ironically allow their converts to drink native beer in private but not in parties. They also

tolerated them drinking bottled beer in bars, contends Rev. Charles Wakhisi (OI on 1st February, 2013).

It is instructive to note that Babukusu were traditionally never accustomed to drinking beer in private and the public consumption of beer in ceremonies promoted the communal performance of music and dance in the community. Catholics too tolerated the drinking of beer as well as polygamy and traditional dances (Bulimo 2013a:134). Beer and music represented the wheels on which most Bukusu ceremonies rode. It was also “the symbol of friendship, communion, one-ness and acceptability...” (Mbiti 2008:135). Other aspects of Bukusu culture that elicited strong criticism from missionaries were the paying of bridewealth and polygyny. Missionaries believed that payment of bridewealth made a marriage a ‘mere mercantile transaction’ and thus in 1907 they banned the practice among baptized Christians in Kenya (Strayer 1940:79). However, the payment of bridewealth continued even among Christianised Babukusu, observes Patrick Wanabule (OI on 4th April, 2013). Certainly polygyny ranked high on the missionaries’ list of native customs to be deprecated. In 1909, Protestant Missions in Kenya resolved that any church member taking a second or additional wife would be subjected to church discipline, affirms Strayer (ibid).

The practice of polygyny accorded Bukusu men the opportunity to marry as many wives as they wished. Consequently music and dance dominated weddings and bridewealth negotiation ceremonies of each proposed marriage. Discouraging polygyny therefore reduced the opportunities open to Babukusu to congregate, sing and dance traditional wedding songs. Each marriage presented two singing and dancing opportunities, that is, during the wedding party as people took the “beer of wedding” and again during bridewealth negotiation ceremony as the “beer of haggling” was being partaken. However, it must be acknowledged that not all subsequent marriages in a polygynous setting were consummated through

weddings. Despite the ban on bridewealth, Christians continued to give and receive it and some even approached individual missionaries about loans for the practice, argues Strayer. In 1911, the CMS initiated a policy for “mixed” marriages in which the parents of a ‘heathen’ girl had to agree to put their daughter under Christian instruction before receiving bridewealth payment from a Christian young man whom she planned to marry. And since a church wedding was out of the question and traditional marriage ceremonies were forbidden to Christians, the missionaries cleverly recommended a civil ceremony (CMS/1911/89 Minutes of a Mission Conference, 7-13 July, 1911). The adoption of civil marriages by some Babukusu, although on a low scale, further ate into the opportunities Babukusu had to sing marriage songs and indulge in traditional dances. African school bands singing European songs were invited to perform in weddings involving elite Bukusu couples. They performed music using European instruments such as the piano, trumpets, and the accordion. Some, posits Reverend Wakhisi, marched in the Western military style. According to Strumpf (2012:36) “[f]rom music aligned with military activity during and between the two World Wars, European musical influences greatly affected East Africa’s music traditions”. However, during inter-school African music competitions, choirs “reworked traditional (wedding, etc.) part-songs in the harmonic structure of Christian hymnody” through the “selection, rejection or transformation of musical elements and compositional principles” (Coplan 1980:113).

The 1950s ushered in the era of music recording among Babukusu after some elite families began owning gramophones. Recorded traditional Bukusu music was played in weddings using record players which were locally known as rekoreko, asserts Wesley Barasa⁴⁶ (OI on 11th April, 2014). Strumpf (2012:37) believes that the earliest music

⁴⁶ Wesley Barasa was the first Omubukusu to own and play an electric guitar which he bought in 1975. Before then Bukusu musicians used box guitars. He composed the “Chebukube esoko ya magendo” song which was popular in the 1970s.

recordings in East Africa were done on brown wax recording cylinders in 1901 in Uganda by Sir. Harry Johnston. Kilikinji okhwa Mumbwani and guitarists Peter Wekhomba and Masinde Nalobile were among the first musicians from the Bukusu society to record their music for purposes of entertainment in the late 1950s. Earlier, some Europeans organized Bukusu musicians into *ad hoc* “bands” for research reasons. For example, in 1950, Maunda Waliaula, a harpist together with his luengele player and a number of “shaking of shoulders” dancers were assembled by Hugh Tracey who recorded the group’s tracks, “Ligari” (train), “Wamurwe” (stubborn one) and “Nalung’unyo” (gossiping one).⁴⁷ In 1953, the colonial government established the African Broadcasting Service (ABS) which aired programmes in eight vernacular languages (Oriare 2010:21). Broadcasts in Lubukusu were made from Kisumu and recorded Bukusu music was later played on the ABS radio. The recording of music and airing of the same on radio, prompted Bukusu musicians to begin “passing greetings” to their family members and friends who were far away through their songs. Traditionally, only praises and not greetings were communicated through songs.

5.5 Death songs and dances

The precolonial Babukusu believed that death was caused mainly by witchcraft, murder and disregarding of the dictates of taboo. This reasoning spilled into the colonial era. Their believing in life after death also persisted. They believed in the existence of both malevolent and benevolent spirits. A good person becomes a benevolent spirit when he dies but a bad one, for example, a witch becomes a malevolent spirit. Music was composed in honour of the dead as a way of appeasing their spirits and asking for their blessings. If one was inculpated for murder, or caused another to die through witchcraft, it was believed that the spirit of the deceased would haunt him/her forever. Such individuals were never praised in song. Instead they were castigated. The belief in life after death convinced many Babukusu to become

⁴⁷ See www.folkways.si.edu/maunda-waliaula-and-bukusu

Christians since Christianity also preached about the good life in heaven after physical death, argues Father Christopher Wanyonyi (OI on 28th March, 2013).

In continuing with tradition, the death of a wealthy and influential elderly person in the colonial Bukusu society was regarded as a great loss to the community compared to that of a poor and young individual. Those who had acquired the “prestigious” Western education were also mourned in song and dance more than the ordinary uneducated village folk. However, unlike in the precolonial era, a woman’s death was not considered less significant when contrasted with that of a man. In the precapitalist era, observes Patrick Wanabule (OI on 4th April, 2013), Bukusu musicians did not encourage people to avoid death by seeking treatment from herbalists. However, in the colonial period, they urged the general populace through songs to visit hospitals for medical attention “because the whiteperson’s medicine was superior.” For example, a circumcision song popular in the 1930s titled lulumbe (sickness), urged Babukusu to embrace Western medicine (Wagner 1949:342). Therefore music became a tool through which Babukusu obtained information on the good things the Europeans had brought them.

According to William Wekesa (OI on 8th April, 2013), when an elderly man was on his death bed, and his family had given up on him recovering, a ceremony known as kamakumba (the bones), was performed. During this ritual, the sick man’s favourite bull was slaughtered and he was made to eat a piece of its meat upon which he would peacefully ‘sleep,’ euphemism for ‘die,’ thus ending his suffering. Traditionally, among Babukusu, a dead man’s widow took either, her husband’s spear, walking stick, shield, or beer siphon and wailed as she traversed her village. Her wails and the items in her possession communicated to everyone she came across the message that her husband was dead. She also embellished herself with a belt of cowrie-shells. Each belt had one or two cowbells fixed on it. These

cowbells communicated the occurrence of death because it was uncommon for cow-bell sounds to be accompanied by wails. They helped to differentiate wails of a person under attack and those announcing a death (Wagner 1949:453). The cowbells also provided rhythm to the dirges sung. This continued into the colonial days when widows danced in their dead husband's European clothes worn inside-out and carried his favourite utensils (Wagner 1949:497).

However, some Christians and the educated elite dismissed the donning of cowbells and wearing of clothes inside-out by widows as a primitive practice. As a result of this condemnation, the behaviour started waning in the 1950s, observes Simiyu Marombo (OI on 8th September, 2013). It was now believed that the wails of the widows and those of close family members were enough to alert neighbours who joined them in singing laments against the cruel hand of death. Young energetic men from the deceased's clan were sent to inform the dead person's relations who lived far away of his/her death. Those who were living in urban centres where telegrams or telephone calls were made to them, argues Marombo.

Most Bukusu mourning songs in the colonial and precolonial epochs were laments which were improvised songs of complaint performed in the Lubukusu language. Alembi (2002) investigated the performance of dirges among the Banyore and observes that many of the Banyore songs sung on occasions of death are typical and ephemeral. They are composed for use at the funeral of a specific individual and relate to him or her only. This is also true of the precolonial and colonial Bukusu dirges. Many of them had praise for the dead person as their main motif. The singer usually called on the deceased by his praise names and lauded his great deed(s) and ancestry. In some of the songs, there was resignation and acceptance of death as being inevitable.

Benevolence, in particular, is ineffaceable and is frequently lauded in Bukusu laments. Finnegan (1970:147) describes laments as elegiac songs or poetry whose musical and balletic elements are as important as the words. She studied funeral songs among the Limba of Sierra Leone and observes that a mourner, in the community, usually uses his/her normal singing voice with melodic contours resembling those of songs. However, there is a general tendency for dirge melodies to begin on a high note and move down to a low resting point at the close, observes Finnegan. Both the pre- and colonial Bukusu folk dirges subscribe to this description. The sob, in the dirge, which is often uttered on the syllable “ai” is repeatedly used at least four times. They also had similes. They, for example, likened the earth/soil with a bottomless pit that does not fill with humans buried in it. Among the Limba, funeral dirges are sung around the corpse or the house in which the corpse lies (Finnegan 1970:148). The same applied to the colonial and precolonial Bukusu community. Singing dirges in close proximity with the deceased portrayed emotional attachment the mourner had with the dead person, argues Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). However, some individuals, singing dirges, wandered off to the periphery of the deceased’s homestead demonstrating their disdain for death. Relatives arriving for the funeral, argues Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012), started wailing as they approached the homestead’s gate and some dashed to the house where the deceased lay in state while wailing and singing dirges inconsolably.

In both the colonial and precolonial periods, the singing of Bukusu funeral songs (as it is today) was dominated by women. “The dirges (were) sung by people of either sex but more frequently by women than by men (Wagner 1949:462). This tradition is not confined to Babukusu. It is also common in other African societies. For example, according to Finnegan (1970:148), dirges sang among the Yoruba of Nigeria and the Akan of Ghana are dominated by women as are the *zitengulo* funeral songs of Zambia (Finnegan 1970:148). The fact that

these songs often involve wailing, sobbing and weeping, contends Finnegan, makes them particularly suitable for women for, in Africa as elsewhere, such activities are typically female. Indeed this research determined that women among Babukusu engage more freely in wailing than men although the latter too take part in chanting laments as they pace up and down within the deceased's compound while holding walking sticks in their hands or with their hands akimbo. On the other hand, observes Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014), women wail, and sing praise songs in respect of the dead person with their hands raised to the top of their heads.

In the pre-European era, Babukusu sang dirges in Lubukusu. This changed during the colonial period. Wanjala (cited in Bulimo 2012b:xvi) observes that when Christian missionaries embarked on winning converts among the Luyia, they settled on the Luwanga, Lunyore and Lurakoli as languages of worship with the Holy Bible and Christian hymnals translated into these languages. As such, contends Father Christopher Wanyonyi (OI on 28th March, 2013), the singing of dirges in Luwanga among Babukusu became common during funerals involving Catholic adherents. The Quarkers, he argues, used Lurakoli while the other Protestant groups often sang dirges in Lunyore.

In the 1950s, the choral song, luwele (it is over), originally sang in Lunyore, was, for example, composed, transcribed and performed by mainly Protestants, argues Reverend Charles Wakhisi (OI on 1st February, 2013). He affirms that the song was repeated with minimal syntactic variations at most funerals among the eighteen Luyia ethnic groups. Missionaries transcribed languages that were hitherto only spoken thus reducing Africa's innumerable dialects to fewer written languages (Meredith 2006). The "it is over" song goes:

Soloist: <i>Luwele khulanga papa luwele bane</i>	It is over calling (you) dad, its over
Chorus: <i>Luwele ee x2</i>	It is over x 2
<i>Luwele khulanga papa luwele</i>	It is over calling (you) dad
<i>Luwele nyasaye akhulinde</i>	It is over God protect you

In this song, the dead person is depicted as having embarked on a long journey and therefore the mourners are wishing him “farewell” and God is requested to protect him/her even as he/she leaves the world of the living behind. The sorrow of parting is brought out in phrases such as “It is over calling you dad.” The diction is marked by the leit motif “Luwele” throughout the song. The style as a whole is often simple and the main units within a dirge (the stanzas) tend to be short, in keeping with the sorrowful circumstances of performance (Wagner 1949:162). The term “Nyasaye” in the dirge above, is used by the Luo and some of the Luyia sub-nations to mean “God.” However, the Bukusu word for God is “Wele.” The use, therefore, of the term “Nyasaye” instead of “Wele” by the colonial Bukusu mourners is a demonstration of the “involuntary” acceptance of words as opposed to the “unconscious” and natural cross-cultural diffusion of terms that was prevalent in the pre-European era. This situation stemmed from the fact that African church choir masters taught Babukusu and other Luyia sub-ethnic groups how to consciously sing the “it is over” and other non-lubukusu dirges. In the precolonial Bukusu society, on the day her husband died, the widow spotted her body with clay (Wagner 1949:484). Body decorations served to identify main performers in a ritual and in this case a widow was illuminated more as a key representative of the deceased’s family even as she sang and danced to dirges among other mourners. This tradition continued into the colonial period and was respected by mainly non-Christian families.

After the introduction of the fiddle in the Bukusu community in the late 1930s, it began featuring alongside the harp as the main musical instruments used to entertain mourners after the burial ceremony, argues Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012). From the late 1940s, however, Kilikinji okhwa Mumbwani started entertaining mourners with the exotic accordion, asserts Murutu. Kilikinji is reputed to be the first Omubukusu to play the instruments. Harpists and the accordion, harmonica and fiddle players invited to grace funeral

ceremonies sung dirges emphasizing the achievements and virtues of the dead person, posits Selina Nabangala (OI on 1st April, 2013). They sang in the Lubukusu language, as “each musician among Babukusu is required to have a mastery of the Lubukusu and proficiency to articulate the messages in a culturally acceptable way,” affirms Masasabi (2011:94). From the late 1950s, argues Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012), recorded music was played on phonograms to entertain mourners on the night of the burial.

Bukusu musicians and funeral orators in the precolonial and colonial Kenya had no copyrights over their songs or tunes. This is because music in traditional African societies was communally owned (Masasabi 2011:44). They could also not be described as professional musicians because “if we were to assume that professionalism means total devotion to the profession of music and the receipt of total economic income from music, there would be few individuals in any society who could be truly be called ‘professional,’ observes Merriam (1964:125). Bukusu musicians doubled as farmers, blacksmiths, medicinemen, rainmakers, etc., and did not therefore rely on music as a source of livelihood. After entertaining their audiences, musicians were traditionally rewarded in kind, for example, with meals, beer, chicken, eleusine, etc. But when the Indian Rupee (erupia) was declared the official currency in Kenya in 1905,⁴⁸ payments were now in the form of rupees as well. On 1st January 1922, the Shilling and Pennies replaced the Rupee. Coins in colonial Kenya were generally referred to using the Kiswahili word mapeni probably coined from the English term, Pence. And since many musicians were at that time rewarded numismatically, they came to be known as bapeni (those of the coin) among Babukusu, argues James Otung’uli (OI on 11th April, 2014).

Musicians in the precolonial era were simply identified with the instrument they played. For example, a harpist was referred to as omukhupietungu, i.e., a harp player. As a strategy to while away the night (after burial) in “comfort”, mourners performed the “shaking of

⁴⁸ See <https://www.centralbank.go.ke/index.php/history-of-kenyan-currency>

shoulders” dance as the omukhupietungu played on his instrument and sung songs in praise of the deceased, contends Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012). The elite, asserts Murutu, often danced in the waltz and slow rhumba styles as they reacted to recorded music played on the phonogram. Traditionally, burial was done after a day or two, depending on the status of the deceased in society and how far and wide his close relatives were spread across the globe, posits Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). However, from the late 1930s a corpse was buried not more than three days after death occurred. This was informed by the passing of the Native Authority Ordinance of 1937 by the colonial Government which required that “all dead bodies must be promptly buried by the relatives of the deceased person saving that if the relatives are not available, any person ordered by the chief to bury a body shall do so” (KNA DC/EN3/4/1). The rule successfully ended the occasional discarding of dead bodies in the bush. Among the traditional Babukusu, if a person had wished that he/she be not buried upon his/her death, the person’s corpse was merely carried into the bush, laid on the ground and covered with leaves (Wagner 1949:470).

In the colonial period, persons who died far away from home were transported home for burial. Corporations such as the East African Railways and Harbours (EAR&H) used to ferry bodies to the nearest railway station using special coaches. From the station the body was transported home usually in the afternoon by a vehicle and those escorting the cadaver sang dirges, argues Christopher Mupalia⁴⁹ (OI on 6th September, 2012). Drumming and clapping, he contends, accompanied the dirges. Upon sighting the hearse, the mourners waiting at home to receive the body burst into dirges and loud wails. In the precolonial days moving a body from the point of death was not a major concern as most people died at home. In the rare situations where one died away from home, one’s body was carried home in silence, by energetic individuals on a hide. No singing of dirges or wailing accompanied the movement

⁴⁹ Christopher Mupalia worked with the EAR& H and later Kenya Railways. He retired in 1998.

of a body from the death spot until it reached home, asserts Raphael Wanyonyi (OI on 27th March, 2013). The transferring of the body was usually done in the evening to minimize the chances of meeting many people on the way. An encounter with a party transporting a corpse was considered a bad omen. One could lose a family member, observes Wanyonyi.

The observance of traditional burial ceremonies⁵⁰ continued into the colonial period. However, in Christian burials, the deceased was dressed, not in hides but in new clothes and placed in a casket. A church to which he/she belonged sang choral dirges before and during burial (see Plate 19). In most cases the choir members wore uniforms. Many of the dirges were derived from Christian hymn books. Western musical instruments such as the accordion and the harmonica accompanied Anglican and Quaker burial ceremonies. The Salvation Army had brass bands which sang dirges although it also allowed its members the use of African drums, clapping, foot-stamping, and dancing (de Wolf 1977:70). The bands had instruments such as tambourines, cymbals and trumpets. Dancing in funerals denoted celebration of life over death. A priest leading the ceremony read the relevant verses from the Bible and he comforted the bereaved by saying that the deceased had only gone ahead and that they will all converge in heaven on judgement day.

Nyamwaka (2008:61) investigated burial rites among the Gusii and he states that traditionally the content of Kisii dirges entirely depended on such factors as the circumstances surrounding the death which included the cause of death, the age of the deceased and his relationship with the mourners. This is also true of the precolonial and colonial Bukusu dirges. Diseases or persons perceived to be the cause of death were condemned in song. If the dead person was still young, the cruel hand of death was cursed through laments for ending a tender, promising life. However, due to the respect Babukusu

⁵⁰ See details of the ceremonies on pp. 88-89.

had for the dead, they never castigated a dead person in public through dirges or otherwise even if the deceased was a social misfit.

Among the colonial-era Babukusu, if the deceased was a Christian, representatives from her/his church and relatives carried the casket towards the grave amid dirges from the church's choir. His widow and close family members often dressed in black attires led the procession (In European culture black is the symbol of sadness). Traditionally, the widow either wore her husband's goatskin or carried some of his personal paraphernalia, and sang dirges as she aimlessly transversed her homestead. A Christian widow did not run around the compound shrieking and carrying her husband's spear and shield as was the case in traditional burials because Christianity considered the behaviour as pagan and primitive.

Before the arrival of Europeans in Kitosh, Bukusu widows, after burying their husband and in the company of their women relatives and friends went and took a bath in a river. On their way back home they sung dirges, clapped and danced. This precolonial mourning practice was observed throughout the colonial period especially by non-Christian families. Bukusu widows, up to the 1920s, used to sing dirges at the graveside of their husbands inside houses. This was because men, until then, were often buried inside their houses to protect their bodies from marauding hyenas and other wild animals. Women were, however, interred outside their houses, argues Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012). He asserts that the colonial Government and missionaries were against this practice and any family that buried a relative in a house had its cattle confiscated. "In 1925, my paternal uncle named Nabayukha, was buried in his house at Ranje village. When the colonial chief and his policemen learned of it, they descended on the deceased's compound and made away with his cattle as a fine for defying a government directive," contends Paxton Misiko⁵¹ (OI on 20th April, 2014). In some cases, harpists played music at the graveside in order to "harden" it in a

⁵¹ Paxton Misiko is a cultural consultant and chairman of Basibacho clan, Sitikho branch.

rare practice known as khusinya silindwa (hardening the grave), posits Wesley Barasa (OI on 11th April 2014).

Babukusu in colonial Kenya still observed the khurusia lufu (literally removing of sickness) ritual⁵² normally held three days after burial and in which the hair of persons closely related to the deceased was shaved. Only a very small population of committed Christians avoided this ritual. The Catholic Church was not opposed to the ritual, argues Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014). However, many pagans and quasi-Christians went through it upon the death of their relatives because of the ritual's significance as a forum in which debtors and creditors of the deceased converged. It was also during the ritual that a symbolic father- husband figure was assigned the orphans and the widow to take care of the deceased person's family. The "stepping onto the arena" ritual⁵³ was also performed during the "removing of sickness" ceremony. The elders who presided over this ritual counselled the bereaved through elegiac poems, laments, and chants just like they did in the pre-European period. African poetry such as that delivered during the "stepping onto the arena" ritual contains features which make it easy and attractive to sing. These features are repetition, rhyme, alliteration and careful choice of words (Okpewho, cited in Alembi 2002:37).

In the face of invasive exogenous cultural influences, the chief concern of the ritual elders in the colonial Bukusu society was to prevent the community's culture from being gradually extinguished. They used a combination of stories and proverbs in song form to urge mourners to listen and heed their wise counsel. For example, they warned people through the story of kumurumba (*Milicia excelsa*) tree not to be like the dog who insisted on climbing the tree but ended up falling and injuring itself. The kumurumba tree is very slippery and no one is expected to be foolhardy as to attempt climbing it. The proverb, "nandakambila kakona

⁵² See description of the "removing of sickness" ritual on pp. 91-92.

⁵³ See description of the "stepping onto the arena" ritual on pp. 92-96.

khumuanda kwenjoli” (whoever refuses to listen to the advice of elders ends up dead on the tracks of wild animals) was commonly used by the funeral orators as they wound up their counselling session, argues Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March 2013). The interaction of different genres such as tales, songs and proverbs in many African oral performances “draws attention to the fact that the formulations being uttered have been uttered before...(and) they pre-exist the immediate context” (Barber, cited in Wasike 2013:106).

From the 1940s, as Babukusu sartorially continued embracing the European dress code, some funeral orators began wearing underneath the traditional ekutusi cloak, shirts and trousers (see Plate 5). Popular colonial era funeral orators among Babukusu were Njibwakale owa Namubuya and Pakari Wanami okhwa Munyifwa. The former was Omukwangwa by clan. He died in 1965 (Wanjala 1985:83). Wanami was born in Muchi Mungalo Fort to Bakhwami clan. Not all clans produced funeral orators. Bakwangwa, Bakitang’a, Basakha, Babuya, Babulo, Bakhwami and Bameme clans produced these ritual performers. Most of the orators inherited the art of elegiac poetry and hortation from their paternal side (ibid). These performers of poetic songs, he observes, were men of tremendous moral integrity. They did not engage in calumny rumour-mongering and were not expected to engage in adultery or witchcraft. They only ate white ants when served in a container. On the eve of invitation to perform, the funeral orator did not share a bed with his wife. In the morning while on his way to the funeral, he did not acknowledge greetings from anyone, contends Wanjala (ibid). Both Christian and pagan families congregated once again forty days after burial for the pre-European funerary lung’anyo or sisinini (shadow) ceremony. On the night of this ritual, Christian families sang hymns and prayers for the prosperity of dead person’s family said, observes Kennedy Nyongesa⁵⁴ (OI on 6th April, 2013). Non-Christians treated it

⁵⁴ Kennedy Nyongesa is a Captain in the Cheng’wali Salvation Army Church in Bungoma County.

as a commemoration day for the deceased. Musicians were invited to entertain the gathered family members and friends. The ceremony lasted one night.

During the mourning period of one or two years, non-Christian widows wore ropes of beads or plants around their forehead, neck, arms and ankles. Apart from betraying them as “the left one”, the beads and plant climbers served as accoutrements when the widows performed dances and sang dirges at the grave of their husband. Limoyi players and harpists, as was the case in the precolonial era, were invited to entertain people during the “washing of ash”⁵⁵ ceremony which was meant to cleanse widows of ritual impurities. The fiddle was also played during funeral related gatherings (Amunga 1991:135). The audience performed the “shaking of shoulders” dance as it took the “beer of washing ash”.

However, from the late 1940s, some musicians taking part in the “washing of ash” celebrations introduced the guitar, “chiyukas” (shakers), accordion and harmonica in the ceremonies. Consequently, new dance styles - waltz and slow rhumba, infiltrated the “washing of ash” festivities, observes James Otung’uli (OI on 11th April, 2014). Most Bukusu musicians who performed during the “washing of ash” ceremony, in particular harpists, fiddlers and chimbengele players wore leg rattles, performed in Lubukusu and never formed “bands”. However, the success of a musical performance so much depended on the personal abilities of the performer. “He must be very versatile in his use of language, drama, voice and the accompaniments at his disposal” argues Miruka (2011:111). Many Christian and educated widows were, however, not inherited through the “washing of ash” avenue. They instead singularly picked husbands of their choice and had their second marriage solemnized in church amid music and dance, argues Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2013). He contends that this was particularly the case with those employed and living in urban areas. The church sought the support of District Commissioners in ensuring the rights

⁵⁵ See details of the ritual on pp.97-98.

of Christian widows ‘with due regard to English Law’ (CMS/1911/89, Minutes of Mission Conference, 7-13 July 1911;1921/23, Binns to Manley, 7 February 1921; Bowden to all, 16th August, 1923). To Christians, the practice of widow inheritance suggested not only that women were moveable property but also represented a means by which a Christian woman and her children could pass into heathenism.

However, despite the persistent Missionary prodding, it was not until 1931 that the Government passed a Native Christian Marriage Ordinance which provided that African women reached the age of majority upon widowhood and were thus no longer subject to the authority of their husband’s family. The church’s and Government’s illegalizing of Bukusu traditional widow inheritance to a small extent, reduced the opportunities for the performance of folk music and dance in the community. Despite being officially allowed to remarry following the “washing of ash” ceremony, widows in both the colonial and precolonial Bukusu community continued wearing kimikoye, the symbols of mourning, contends Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). The kimikoye were two-finger-wide ribbons of bast or glass-beads which a widow tied round her head, neck, arms and ankles (Wagner 1949:497). The cutting of these ropes during the subsequent khukhala kimikoye (cutting of ropes), ceremony⁵⁶ in which music and dance featured, brought to an end the mourning period. The precolonial khuyuya (to migrate)⁵⁷ ceremony which featured the wobilo and chabuyabuya songs accompanied with a horn trumpet continued to be performed in the colonial period.

Conclusion

Bukusu music and dance in the colonial period continued performing the communication and entertainment functions as they did in the pre-European era. They were also symbolic

⁵⁶ See the description of the ceremony on pp. 95-96.

⁵⁷ See the description of the ceremony on p. 98.

representations of ideas and behaviours. They integrated persons into the society, helped individuals to exercise their bodies, enforced conformity to social norms and contributed to the continuity and stability of the culture of Babukusu. Babukusu in both the pre- and colonial periods used their day to day attires during dance performances. However, there were marked changes in these attires. The pre-European Babukusu wore body covers and headgears made from animal skins and plants. This practice continued into the early years of colonial rule when they began to wear bands of imported beads, blankets, sheets and later on shorts and trousers. These naturally became their dance costumes. The use of foreign verbal texts associated with other Luyia sub-ethnic groups in Bukusu songs can be traced to the precolonial era when Babukusu interacted with their neighbours through trade and intermarriages. This linguistic diffusion continued into the colonial period when words of Swahili origin were embraced by Bukusu music composers.

The cultural borrowing which occurred in the colonial era led to changes in the musical culture of Babukusu. For example, they borrowed the art of playing musical instruments such as the fiddle and waltz dance style from foreign cultures thus changing the performance of music and dance in the community. However, not all changes in instrumentation were as a result of cultural borrowing. The use of chikengele metals, for example, was a local innovation. The colonial Government passed laws which “slowed” down the performance of Bukusu music and dances. By banning some dances, hunting, cutting of trees and the preparation of traditional beer without the permission of the chief meant that Babukusu could not freely make musical instruments and gather for dances for fear of arrests. This led to change in raw materials used to make the harp, limoyi and fiddle.

The introduction of music recording technology in Kenya did impact Bukusu music. Before the advent of colonialism, Bukusu music was purely oral and was performed live.

However, the music recording technology enabled Babukusu to listen and danced to their music played on gramophones and phonograms. The Luyia radio broadcasts introduced in 1954 as a segment of the African Broadcasting Service (ABS) further enabled Bukusu music to be aired on a mass communication platform reaching audiences beyond Bukusuland. During the colonial era, some Bukusu music which traditionally was performed in unison, changed and acquired the major scales of the European culture. Bukusu music was now harmonized in Western style. This was mainly witnessed during music competitions involving schools. Traditionally, among Babukusu, any harmony was not calculated but was as a result of overlapping phrases and melodic instrumental accompaniment.

The style of performing traditional Bukusu dirges continued into the colonial era. They were mainly performed in Lubukusu. The use of laments and of repeated short sounds which depicted pain such as “*ai*” and “*ye ye ye*” continued to be performed in a musical form. Although men also wailed as they mourned, wailing was dominated by women as was the case in the pre-European Bukusu society. However, the introduction of Christianity and Western Education among Babukusu led to the singing of non-Bukusu dirges in the community. Such foreign dirges were often transcribed and were mainly sang in English, Luwanga, Lurakoli and Lunyore dialects. In both the precolonial and colonial Bukusu society, masculinity dominated all the rites of passage, i.e., birth, circumcision, marriage and death. It was men who forced open the door to the seclusion house in which parents to twins were confined to kick off the “opening of twinship” dances. Men were the soloists in circumcision songs. Women were not supposed to touch musical instruments. Bridemaids who performed wedding songs were instead given hoes to use as musical instruments. Funeral orators remained male as well as those for whom funeral oration was performed.

In the next chapter we discuss Bukusu music and dance in post-independence Kenya. We analyse how the policies of the Kenyatta, Moi and Kibaki governments impacted on the community's music and dance. We also show the changes and innovations brought into Bukusu musical culture as a result of revolution in media and industrial technology. Finally, the chapter will discuss the perpetuation of aspects of the colonial Bukusu music and dance traditions into the post- independence period.

CHAPTER SIX

POST-INDEPENDENCE BUKUSU MUSIC AND DANCE, 1963-2012

6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyzes the post-independence change and continuity in the musical culture of Babukusu while appreciating that Bukusu culture is practised beyond the administrative boundaries of Bungoma County. This has mainly been as a result of the “rural-urban continuum” or the interdependence of rural and urban areas. In town, argues Shorter (2001:34), traditional cultures are modified by mutual contact and by the demands of modernization. Apart from urbanization, the post-independence Bukusu community has greatly been influenced by global technological advances not only in communication media but also in creation, production and dissemination of its music. Computers and other forms of audio production equipment have become affordable thus enabling artists to explore new ways of producing music.

It was in the 1970s that the idea of using folk music and dance to promote development programmes became the subject of international discussion. Before then, they were seen as outdated, primitive systems of communication which still had surviving relics in most developing countries (Wilson, cited in Barasa 2010:8). The 1972 UNESCO meeting in London established that traditional music could effectively reach the grass-roots level population not readily accessible to the more technically advanced mass media (Barasa 2010:8). In relation to this argument, we shall discuss the dynamism in Bukusu music and dance which ultimately brings out their significance as communication tools.

The Government of President Jomo Kenyatta in 1972 set up a national body to coordinate cultural activities in the country. This was the Kenya National Council of Arts and Culture. This institution was mandated to enhance national pride through the arts and culture.

The President himself, an Anthropologist, enjoyed listening to traditional music. “Kenyatta had a retinue of traditional *Nyakinyua* women dancers as well as mass choirs to entertain him wherever he was addressing rallies or even at the State House” (Mutonya 2013:55). “Bukusu harpists and kamabeka dancers such as Falisi Wakhungu and myself often entertained the President at State House and in his Gatundu home in the 1970s,” asserts Yakobo Malaba (OI on 2nd May, 2012). Thus, the Forty-three ethnic communities in Kenya witnessed the revival of their cherished music (Nyamwaka 2008:163). In this chapter, the current trends in Bukusu neo-folk music and dance are analysed against the background of three elements. First, is the diffusion of various styles of music and dance from outside the Bukusu community by means of radio, television, internet, DVDs as well as live performances by foreign musicians. Second, is the availability of modern recording technology, Western instruments, and thirdly, popular music trends invented by young people which have syncretically incorporated the above two elements.

6.2 Birth songs and dances

Most Babukusu still regard the birth of a child as a significant occurrence. However, when a woman gives birth to one child, this does not elicit elaborate celebrations as when she gives birth to twins. Twin births are presumed to be symbols of goodwill from Wele Khakaba (God the provider). As much as twins are a source of joy and happiness to their parents and kindred today, they also cause a great deal of anxiety. This is because they are regarded as being ritually unclean especially by non-Christian families. Through music and dance, however, the twins and their parents are cleansed of the harmful twinship powers and formally integrated into the society.

When twins are born into a quasi-Christian or traditional family, they, together with their mother, are isolated in their parents’ bedroom for at most three days, argues Petora Naliaka (OI on 3rd April, 2013). Traditionally even the father joined them in seclusion but for a longer

period. Today, if the birth occurs in a hospital setting, the ritually impure twins and their mother are immediately quarantined upon their arrival home. As much as the father's mobility is not restricted, villagers who are aware of his wife's postnatal circumstances avoid him for fear of the mystic power he is believed to possess and which can cause any one coming into contact with him loss of skin. The culturally liberalized modern Bukusu society allows the father freedom of movement "in order to search for food for his convalescent wife and twins," argues Patrick Wanabule (OI on 4th April, 2013). After being in seclusion for about three days, the mother's relations and those of the father, just like it was done in the pre-European era, come to free them in the "to open the twinship" ceremony. They bring with them gifts. However, apart from the traditional gifts such as bulls, grains, groundnuts and beans, today the relatives come laden with bath basins, towels, and clothes for the children and their parents, observes Wanabule. A sheep is slaughtered near the seclusion house to protect those who are about to interact with the potentially harmful twins' parents.

The responsibility of breaking into the seclusion house to free the parents remains that of the neonates' paternal uncle. After kicking the door open, the executant dresses his brother in the sacrificed sheep's skin while one of the mother's relations ties a string of kamabombwe around her body. In the past, both parents would be naked. The twins' preponderant parents thus remain dressed as they are embellished with sheep skin and the kamabombwe creepers. They are then guided out of the seclusion house and received by a singing and dancing crowd positioned outside the house just like it was done during the colonial period. The singing and dancing during the "opening of twinship" ceremony lasted up to two days in the colonial era. However, today, this study established, it lasts for about one hour only.

Jairus Sikolia (OI on 24th December, 2012) contends that the intensity of movements in the "dance of twinship" has also reduced as a result of modernity and spread of Christianity.

The dance today is no longer as erotic, convivial and gregarious as one performed during the pre- and colonial periods, laments Sikolia. He illustrates this with a “dance of twins” he presided over in 1972. Although a pseudo-Christian, he was tasked with the responsibility of kicking open the door to his sister’s seclusion house and embellishing her with kamabombwe creepers as a way of cleansing her. After leading his sister out of the isolation house, he only did a few symbolic sexual oriented jigs and sat down. “The dancers-cum-singers were not many and as enthusiastic as those in colonial Kenya,” he argues. Sikolia’s observations reflect the performance of an “opening of twinship dance” performed in 1982 at Busiraka village. During the ceremony at Simiyu Marombo’s homestead, the dancing lasted for about an hour and was not explicitly erotic, posits Margaret Musamia (OI on 17th December 2012).

Traditionally, the “dance of twinship” was performed to the accompaniment of a small drum known as endongoli which was played by small boys and girls, affirms Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). Today, the endongoli is rarely in use. Instead any small drum, either double or single-headed is used although drummers are often children as was the case in the pre- and colonial periods. The performance of the “dance of twinship” has resisted the incorporation of improvised drums made from plastic water containers. The ancestors, explains Wepukhulu, would be very annoyed with the dancers if foreign drums were to replace the endongoli. He argues that a misfortune could befall them. However, the military band influence on Bukusu drumming which began in the colonial period continues to date. Drums are strapped over the shoulder so that they hang at the abdomen and are struck on both sides with a stick and an open palm. Alternatively, one surface is played but using two sticks (see Plate 12). Traditionally, Babukusu made drums with provisions for only one surface to be played and small ones were held under the armpit, argues Anicet Wafula (OI on 1st April, 2013).

The “opening of twinship” songs are in a call and response form. This style of singing has persisted since the precolonial epoch because it reflects the importance of community cooperation and togetherness in society. It demonstrates the values of community and social co-operation above individual interests. Bukusu birth songs, we found out, are group and not individual performances. The lead singer in birth songs as was the case in the colonial period, is often a woman “because fertility, seen through the prism of the number of children a woman gives birth to, is within the feminine domain,” posits Patrick Wanabule (OI on 4th April, 2013). Among the traditional Babukusu, if a woman did not give birth often, it was blamed on her even if the husband was the cause.

The performers in the “opening of twinship” ceremony dance in a circular motion moving their waists in a sexually tacit manner. This reflects the performance of the same dance in the colonial and precolonial periods. Babukusu, posits Stephen Manyasi (OI on 30th December, 2012), prefer dancing in circles because this ensures the protection of the main performers in case there is a stampede. As such the twins’ parents who in this case are the main dancers are usually encircled. The dancers in the “opening of twinship” ceremonies understand and therefore relate their performances to the theme of sex as expressed verbally through song texts and demonstrated physically through their own body movements. Nketia (1975:11-13) echoes this observation. He states that:

In African societies, a person is said to understand a piece of music when he is able to relate or respond to it in certain culturally defined ways... Meaning is therefore related to the musical experience itself which consists of both what is derived from the music itself and what is occasioned by it in the musical situation... This meaning may be communicated in several ways: through internal observable behavior; through creative expressions of verbal texts, the nexus between music and dance movement and between music and context of use.

Indeed Babukusu understand the meanings of the oral texts in birth songs and this explains why they move the waist more when performing the “dance of twinship”. Most of the verbal

texts of the contemporary “opening of twinship” songs are improvised spontaneously as the dancing is underway. This has always been the case since the pre-European age. Very few texts are predetermined. Elliot (1995:195) believes that “composing and performing (of African music) are not mutually exclusive but interdependent.” This position is supported by Nzewi (1997:67) who argues that Africans practise improvisation as well as performance-composition. He explains that in a performance-composition, a performer-composer re-creates a piece spontaneously in order to fulfill the demands of an extra-musical intention or a non-musical context. We established that, the observations made by Elliot and Nzewi on African music in general, applies to the birth songs performed among Babukusu. For example, that in the song “engeye” (see p.118-119) sang to free twins and their parents from seclusion among Babukusu, only the texts *engeye ee ngeye, engeye salikhunyuma* (tail ee tail, the tail is behind) are predetermined. The soloist therefore enjoys the freedom of composing texts which commend on contemporary happenings in society and which condemn on-going illicit sexual liaisons in the community.

The recurring motifs and themes as was in the pre-and colonial Bukusu society, are about sexual promiscuity and sex in marriage. The postpartum song, “engeye”, with its roots in the precolonial era, is still sung today. The notable variation is the contemporary sexual subjects the song captures, for example, HIV/AIDS. The European names of the twins’ parents and sex offenders in the community are also incorporated in the song, a contrast to the pre- and early colonial age when Babukusu had not adopted foreign names. However, the ceremony of “opening the twinship” this study found out, remains one of the culturally sanctioned occasions for performance of sexually explicit songs, dances and the trading of obscene, onomatopoeiaic and verbal jokes amongst performers and the audience.

Since time immemorial, the “opening of twinship” songs have remained short and verbal-texts are repetitive, affirms Selina Nabangala (OI on 1st April, 2013). Repetition serves to elongate songs and to ensure that the audience is in receipt of the theme the song is disseminating. Women today continue to enrich the performances with ululations. Among Babukusu, observes Nabangala, ululations usually come “when music is at a crescendo and enjoyment at its sweetest.” However, there is no prescribed dancing format when formally celebrating the birth of twins, argues Anicet Wafula (OI on 1st April, 2013). The performers can opt to dance in a cyclic manner or break into couples who then pretend to be engaged in sexual intercourse. This dance style predates colonialism. The coupling rule is not gender sensitive and persons of the same or different sex dance together. The “dance costumes”, however, have evolved from skin cloaks (in the pre-and part of colonial period) to clothes (from mid-colonial era) because dressing codes become fashionable for a while and pass out of use, but the principle of organic form is “the same now as it was in the earliest days of prehistory” (Martin 1965:60). This observation by Martin reflects the resilience of the “twinship dance”. The dance, from time immemorial, focuses on waist movements simulating sexual intercourse.

With the coming of independence, many Babukusu are engaged in formal employment, business or farming and can therefore afford to purchase western-type clothes and shoes. For example, we observed that most of the contemporary performers of the “dance of twinship” wear shoes unlike those in the pre-and early colonial period. However, there have never been dance costumes specifically meant for the “opening of twinship” ceremony. Performers dance in their ‘normal’ day-to-day clothings. As the dancers-cum-singers in the company of the twins’ parents perform outside, the twins remain in the seclusion house and no one dares enter it until the cleansing ceremony is dispensed with. This precolonial fear of the mystical harmful twinship powers the twins are believed to have, still scares people today.

Traditionally, each dancer was sprinkled with a protective herb mixed with millet flour and water. However, this practice began fading in the 1950s as people became less interested in coming into contact with the “impure” twins, argues Raphael Wanyonyi (OI on 27th March, 2013). Unlike in the colonial period when the government outrightly banned the “dance of twinship” through legislation, the post-independence governments have not outlawed the ritual. However, efforts towards post-natal cultural neoconservatism by some families have continuously been opposed by the Church. Indeed this study established that all the mainstream churches in Bungoma County, i.e., the Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Salvation Army, Friends Church and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Africa (PEFA) preach against the observance of the “dance of twinship” ritual. This has led to the decline of the practice.

Many devoted Christians, just like they did in the colonial period, do not take part in the “dance of twinship” which to them is execrable and heathen, asserts Father Christopher Wanyonyi (OI on 28th March, 2013). Instead when a church member gives birth whether to twins or otherwise, her Christian colleagues pay her a visit after a few days in order to “close” her. Men do not accompany them. The women advise her not to sleep with her husband or attend church sessions until they “open” her, observes Pastor Abraham Mukoyani (OI on 12th June, 2013). Most Bukusu households, this research established, are Christianized. As such when a member of the family gives birth, her church holds the “child opening” ceremony based on the teachings of the Bible. The ceremony is held thirty three days after the birth of a male child and sixty six for a female child and is attended by men too. During the “closing” and “opening” ceremonies, church members sing praise hymns and dance to the Lord for the gift of the child or children. Relevant excerpts from the Bible are then read in Kiswahili or in English and translated into Lubukusu. The Bible was eventually translated into Lubukusu in 2010 thus enabling Bukusu Christian converts to read scriptures

in their own mother tongue, observes Father Christopher Wanyonyi (OI on 28th March, 2013). The hymns commonly sung are, however, derived from a Christian hymn book written in Kiswahili. One such song is “Furaha,” (happiness) which goes thus:

Furaha furaha (soloist) Happiness happiness
Furaha x 4 kwa Bwana Yesu (chorus) Happiness x4 to Jesus⁵⁸

As they sing, the performers clap, jump up, stamp the ground and ululate in happiness. The singing may be accompanied by European instruments such as the guitar and piano, as well as African drums and handheld shakers popularly known as kayamba. This is a continuation of musical performances which began in the late 1930s when a significant number of Babukusu had embraced Christianity, argues Rev. Charles Wakhisi (OI on 1st February, 2013). After the “opening” ceremony, the child and mother are now free to join other Christians in church service.

6.3 Circumcision songs and dances

Christian missionaries and converts continued with their onslaught on the Bukusu traditional method of circumcision after the country gained independence in 1963. However, this condemnation was not as strong in the 1960s as was the case in the colonial era because the leadership of the church in Kenya hitherto dominated by Europeans started getting Africanized. The African church leaders were in some instances ambivalent and did not expressly condemn the traditional circumcision of boys, argues Rev. Charles Wakhisi (OI on 1st February, 2013). However, from 2000 some evangelical churches began to strongly oppose the traditional circumcision rite. For example, the Inter-Christian Fellowship’s Evangelical Mission (ICFEM) based in Kimilili Sub-county is estimated to have taken 28,000 boys between 2002 and 2008 to hospital for circumcision (*The Standard*, 2nd August 2008, p. 21). ICFEM’s campaign has negatively impacted on the performance of Bukusu circumcision

⁵⁸ Song sung by Beatrice Nanjala for the researcher at Busiraka village of Bungoma County on 25th June, 2013.

songs and dances as there is no singing and dancing during the hospital-based circumcision. Others opposed to the rite argue that it is very expensive. “Today the traditional circumcision ceremony may not cost less than Sh.60,000,” argues Solomon Nabie.⁵⁹ However, despite this opposition, 70% of Babukusu still circumcise their sons the traditional way, observes Isaac Misiko.⁶⁰ But Florence Nabwala⁶¹ (OI on 14th October, 2014), contends that the number of candidates being circumcised traditionally has dropped by 50%. For example, in 2014, she estimates that about 4000 boys underwent circumcision traditionally while 2000 were circumcised in hospitals. It is obvious from these figures that the ritual has been negatively impacted by Christianity and ‘modernization’ to the extent that it is on the decline. This has been the trend from the 1980s. Wanyama (2009:13) blames western education for the near-death of the ritual. He observes that traditionally, the circumcision ritual served to preserve social stability by easing the transition of cohorts of individuals into new status and prestigious roles. This role has since been taken over by formal education.

Since 1942, circumcision songs and dances performed under their appropriate cultural contexts have continued to be held between late July and August of every even year with the “coming out” ceremony celebrated in December, asserts Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014). This is because Bukusuland has remained devoid of wars and epidemics of a scale that would have interfered with the calendar of the circumcision ritual. Unlike in the colonial period when in some cases Babukusu circumcised boys on Sundays as a result of restrictions imposed on them by their European landlords, independence from colonialism, posits Wandibba, allowed them to revert to the circumcision traditions of not performing circumcision songs and dances on Saturday nights. This, we found out, remains the norm to

⁵⁹ As quoted in the Standard of 2nd August, 2008, p. 21. Solomon Nabie is the Director of the Inter-Christian Fellowship’s Evangelical Mission (ICFEM)

⁶⁰ Dr. Isaac Misiko, chairman Bukusu Association of Traditional Circumcisers quoted in *The Standard*, 2nd August 2008, pp.21-22.

⁶¹ Florence Nabwala Lukosi was until her death in May 2015, the Director of Culture in Bungoma County.

date. Boys who are past the circumcision age averaging fifteen years were constantly ridiculed by teenage girls through song in the 1960s and 1970s just as was the case in the pre- and colonial Bukusu society. However, beginning in the 1980s, they were castigated using simple words such as kuri (the coward) because schooling and increased social responsibilities have resulted in minimized opportunities for girls to meet and compose songs mocking mature but uncircumcised boys, observes Yakobo Malaba (OI on 2nd May, 2012). In the past they could meet at water points where they engaged in gossip on cowards who did not want to face the knife, argues Malaba.

After acquiring the chinyimba musical instruments and iron wristlets, a candidate today tells his father of his intention to get circumcised. The father usually makes a spirited obsecration to stop the son from getting circumcised if indeed he is not ready to host the large crowd expected to grace his son's circumcision ceremony. Some fathers conspire with their sons or the latter make an independent decision to "fall in water," i.e., they accompany other candidates to the river where they also plunge into the water and are smeared with mud before they are escorted home to be circumcised. This way parents avoid the expenses that come with circumcising sons formally. "Falling in water" was a rare phenomenon in the pre- and colonial period as the Bukusu economy was vibrant then, argues William Wekesa (OI on 8th April, 2013). A candidate who "falls in water" in the morning and is circumcised the same morning denies the Bukusu community the opportunity to sing and perform dances for him as he would have skipped various phases of the circumcision ritual.

Today the whistle alongside the chinyimba bells, are the main instruments which accompany circumcision songs among Babukusu. The whistle was introduced as part of the Bukusu circumcision music ensemble in the 1960s, observes Protus Mukenya (OI on 2nd August, 2014). Mukenya argues that ordinary whistles chifirimbi, (singular efirimbi) were

blown by initiates particularly during the “calling” phase of the circumcision ritual. On the other hand, circumcisers, he posits, used a sports whistle known as sichiriba (plural bichiriba). The whistle has greatly impacted the performance and practice of the circumcision ritual in the Bukusu community. Simiyu Marombo (OI on 8th September, 2013) posits that it is often heard far and wide, thus attracting singers-cum-dancers to a candidate’s procession as he criss-crosses villages inviting friends and relatives to witness his transition to manhood. The resultant large crowds make the dancing and singing more vibrant. The whistles are purchased from shops or from individuals. Further innovation came in the form of attaching sisal fiber on the chinyimba bells. According to John Mupalia (OI on 24th January, 2014), the first Bukusu circumcision candidate to aestheticise the chinyimba bells by fixing on them sisal fibers belonged to the Bamaina age-group of 1968 (Bamaina siarenga/silabule). He affirms that the immediate preceding age-group, Bamaina Kere, never used sisal fibers to enhance the beauty of the musical instruments. The sisal fibers swung in different directions as guided by an initiate thus enriching his dance performance.

Innovations that are perceived as having greater relative advantage, compatibility, trialability, observability and less complexity are adopted more rapidly than other innovations (Rogers 1995:412). Although Rogers makes a general observation, whistles and sisal fibers must have had the qualities he identified as aids to the adoption of innovations. This is because their adoption for use during circumcision ceremonies spread very fast among Babukusu. According to Protus Mkenya (OI on 4th April, 2013) the fastening of sisal fibers on chinyimba bells by initiates originated from a centralized source (an individual) before diffusing to other users. However, Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012) argues that this could not have been possible. He believes that the use of sisal fibers and whistles during the circumcision ritual originated from numerous sources and diffused horizontally in the Bukusu society. However, we argue that given the rapid adoption and widespread use of

whistles and sisal fibers on the chinyimba bells during circumcision ceremonies, it is safe to conclude that the innovations must have been from multiple sources across Bukusuland.

However, the handles of the chinyimba bells to date remain bundles of chifufu twigs fastened together as done in the precolonial Bukusu society. Prior to the 1970s, pieces of old clothes were used to tighten the twigs but from the early 1970s candidates began replacing the rags with strips of rubber obtained from bicycle tubes (see Plate 7). The new innovation ensured that the chifufu twigs were formidable because rubber is more elastic than cloth. However, initiates have continued to use rags to hold iron wristlets in place (see Plate 21). Some innovative circumcision candidates began, in the 1980s, to dye the sisal fibers attached on the chinyimba bells with paint derived from wild seeds or bought from shops in order to enhance the instruments' beauty. There is no restriction on the type of paint or colour used so long as it makes the chinyimba bells nifty.

A significant structural change was made on the chinyimba bells in the late 1970s. Initiation candidates, argues Simiyu Marombo (OI on 8th September, 2013) started removing from the instruments, the discommodious metallic gongs known as kimikhupilo. These gongs, fixed inside the chinyimba's hollow belly, painfully pinched the candidate's skin when not properly struck against iron wristlets. They were meant to challenge the resolution of a candidate to face the even more painful circumciser's knife, posits Marombo. Despite the absence of kimikhupilo in them, this study established that the chinyimba bells have continued to attract music performers to the candidate as they did in the colonial era. The instruments, together with whistles, fill in the vacuum during interludes. Circumcision candidates whistle and play the chinyimba bells even when the other performers have stopped singing. This resonates with the observation by Hyslop (2000:25) that African songs use traditional musical instruments either as an accompaniment or as an interlude between verses

or both. Rehearsal sessions for initiates performed in the late colonial period have continued to date. After getting his father's nod to get circumcised, a candidate joins others in the evening in open grounds for a practice session in which they compete in dancing and playing of the chinyimba bells. These practice sessions are usually held between the months of June and July when schools are on thus attracting the ire of the village elders. Up to the 1980s, the candidates were taught choreographed dance styles during the rehearsal period by circumcised men. This is seldom done nowadays. A candidate is today encouraged to "invent" his own individualistic choreographic dance motif. The pre-season, "curtain-raising" songs and dances, we found out, have failed to attract the interest of many adults who view them as childish. The dances are therefore performed by mainly youthful girls and boys.

The colonial- age adornment by some candidates of the ekutwa headgear made from the Colobus monkey skin before they embarked on the "to call" phase continues to date. The ekutwa emphasizes the head movement whenever a candidate engages in a dance. Some initiates also wrap themselves with imported glass- bead belts across their chests as was the case in the colonial period (see Plate 3). However, the use of ekutwa as a dance costume is rare because of the continued ban on the hunting of wildlife and the near absence of Colobus monkeys in Bungoma County which is attributed to human encroachment on the monkey's habitat. We found out that since very few women today have the time, interest and expertise to put together belts of beads (kimikomeri), this has led to the diminishing numbers of candidates using them as dance costumes.

The modern-day initiate wears a pair of shorts and a few wear shirts, T-shirts or vests. Others wear fancy hats and other embellishments (see Plates 3 and 21). The practice of candidates performing dances in vests and hats, argues Humphrey Wangila⁶² (OI on 13th May, 2013) began in the 1990s. However, cases where candidates put on shoes and long trousers

⁶² Humphrey Wangila is a teacher at Nalondo secondary school in Bungoma County.

are extremely rare. According to Wangila, Babukusu believe these “luxurious” items may give the candidate an exaggerated valuation of himself and delusions of grandeur. Even a candidate accustomed to wearing shoes is supposed to endure dancing bare feet in preparation for the pain ahead. In a notable departure from the circumcision songs sang prior to 1980, some songs performed in the post-1980 period are devoid of any thematic significance. According to Digolo (1999:16), some performers of African music only perform for the sake of the music and not to convey any sensible and culturally shared messages to the audience. This is true of some circumcision songs sang among Babukusu. We found, for example, that a song such as “Matandiko,” a Swahili term denoting “bedding,” has no communicative value although it was widely sung in the 1980s through to the 1990s.

The song goes thus:

Soloist: <i>Oyeee oye matandiko</i>	Oyeee oye bedding
Chorus: <i>Oyeee oye matandiko</i>	Oyeee oye bedding
Soloist: <i>Khwesa pole pole</i>	Pull (dance) slowly
Chorus: <i>Oyeee matandiko</i>	Oyeee bedding

The influence of Kiswahili on Bukusu music which began in the colonial period is evident in the above song. The term “pole pole” is actually Swahili for “slowly.” Other songs are outright obscenities. James Otung’uli (OI on 11th April, 2014) gives an example of the post-2000 lusia luanya embula (the string ejects glue) song (see Simiyu 2011:73). The texts are euphemism for “the penis ejaculates sperm.” Up to the 1970s such obnoxious songs were unheard of, posits Otung’uli. Despite the fact that the elderly abhor them and consider them obloquy (chindabarua), the youth fancy them and continue perpetuating the same. However, some songs have continued to condemn vices in society. This study determined that such songs are aimed at deterring bad behaviours among Babukusu. For example, the song “Babuya” castigates a member of the Babuya clan for killing a child by the name Protus. Excerpts from the song in Simiyu (2011:40-41) goes thus:

Soloist: <i>Babuya ekholo embi khubasani</i>	Babuya is a bad clan men
<i>Khubiya kukokho</i>	We blame the hen
<i>Khwabiya ne njusi</i>	We also blame the mongoose
Chorus: <i>Babuya ekholo embi ooh</i>	Babuya is a bad clan ooh
Soloist: <i>Babuya ekholo embi khubasani</i>	Babuya is a bad clan men
<i>Bera omwana Protasi</i>	They killed the child Protasi (Protus)
Chorus: <i>Babuya ekholo embi ooh</i>	Babuya is a bad clan ooh

As much as there is continuity in the performance of virtuous songs, “while some themes always recur, others change in every circumcision year depending on the prevalent socio-cultural, economic (and political) situations” argues Simiyu (2011:42). For example, songs on HIV/AIDS scourge such as *silimu* (slim) were very common in the 1980s and 1990s when the disease was a thematic health issue. Those on multipartyism, like “FORD”,⁶³ dominated the 1990s when the government bowed to pressure to accept a multiparty democracy. The song “FORD” was used to popularize the then main opposition political party. Music can, therefore, be a “platform for debate and action against the elite’s ideology” (Chirambo, cited in Mutonya 2013:27). However, as Jewsiewicki (1997:440) rightly observes,

“song as a genre takes a more systematic interest in social questions and great existential problems than in political struggles. Its political impact is most acute when a metaphor focusing on social justice or social harmony meets a political situation.”

Indeed most circumcision songs among Babukusu address themselves more to social themes than to political questions.

Before the beginning of the 21st century, crowds escorting a circumcision candidate from one homestead to another during the “calling” phase danced in the respected slow jogging-like style. However, after 2000, the mainly youthful crowd started introducing the Congolese ndombolo dance style in the Bukusu circumcision performances. The dance gained popularity among the youth who adopted it after watching Congolese musicians performing the dance on videos. Some individual dancers break from the rest of the escort party and dash to the

⁶³ FORD, i.e., Forum for the Restoration of Democracy was the political party of choice among Babukusu when the country went multiparty in 1992. The community’s luminary in the party was the late Masinde Muliro.

front where they perform the ndombolo dance and other acrobatic adagios. This waist-focused dance is usually frowned upon by the elderly for its inappropriate sexual nature, argues Simiyu Marombo (OI on 8th September, 2013). Middleton (1965) established that among the Lugbara of Uganda, as is the case with Babukusu, “new dances, fashionable with the young, are resented by the older people on the grounds that the dances are bad...”. However, what has been carried forward from the colonial days is the carrying of sticks and leafy twigs by some performers of circumcision songs and dances.

When the dancers who are also choristers arrive in a home, they are received with ululations from the hosts. The group’s dancing movement, as it did in the colonial era, changes from linear to circular. The candidate’s dance motions are, however, confined to a circumference of about a metre. He may bend forward, backward or jump as he plays the chinyimba bells. His escorts dance in either an anti-clockwise or clockwise motion encircling the candidate. The hosts still reward the dancers-cum-singers with farm produce and money although the amount of money has significantly increased from an average of ten cents in the 1960s per individual to about fifty shillings in the post-2000 period, contends Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012). Close relatives or coevals of the candidate’s father may even give him a goat or sheep.

There has been an increase in the use of motorcycles as a means of transport in the rural parts of Bungoma County in the post-2000 period. Most riders of these commercial motorcycles popularly known as “boda bodas” have mounted music systems on their machines which are meant to entertain their customers. During the 2014 circumcision season, observes Peter Mulati (OI on 14th October, 2014) some cyclists were used to ferry candidates to various destinations during the “calling” phase of the ritual. As they did this, they played recorded circumcision songs on their music systems while their passengers (candidates) played the chinyimba bells to the beats of the music. While this ingenuity can be applauded

for enabling an initiate to move from one point to another effortlessly, it has, firstly, reduced the intensity of social intercourse that is usually prevalent among Babukusu during the circumcision period when performers escorting a candidate interact with friends and relatives they visit. Secondly, playing recorded music does not encourage the growth of artistic talent in soloists who often derive content for songs from what they see or hear while escorting candidates from one homestead to the other.

From the precolonial period to date, the implied meanings of some verbal texts in Bukusu circumcision songs have retained a direct connection with speech-tone and melodic contour. The Bukusu language has tonal levels which portray different meanings of the same word (Simiyu 2011:94). For example, the word *khubiya* in the “Babuya” song (see page 193) has three syllables, **kh-u-bi-ya**. If sung in high-low-mid tonal levels the term means “cleaning someone after he/she is through with using the toilet.” But when sang in mid-high-mid tonal ranges, it means “to blame.” However, the performance of circumcision songs has continued to be in the precolonial form of call and response. The soloist makes calls and the crowd responds in unison. As Nzewi (1991:109) discovered with African songs in general, Bukusu circumcision songs, from the precolonial era, have been of three main call and response forms, i.e., those with equi-spaced chorus responses, solo statements with short chorus completion and variations of these.

Traditionally, women and uncircumcised men were never allowed to be soloists in circumcision songs. However, from the late 1990s, girls and uncircumcised young men started acting as soloists during the “calling” phase of the circumcision ritual. The researcher witnessed this happening in August 2014 in Busiraka village. This behaviour, argues Simiyu Marombo (OI on 8th September, 2013), has been influenced by a loose cultural tapestry and slackened interest in the entire circumcision ritual by young men who are supposed to be

soloists. Most of the young educated men consider the circumcision practice retrogressive, archaic and primitive.

About two days to the actual circumcision day, the candidate today, as was done in the pre- and colonial Bukusu society, is taken through the “to pour upon” ritual.⁶⁴ However, some changes have been introduced in the manner the ritual is performed. In the precolonial era and up to the early 1960s, the candidate carried an empty pot on his shoulder to the river escorted by a circumcised relative to fetch water. The introduction of plastic and metallic water containers by the Europeans and their subsequent adoption by Babukusu in the 1960s meant that the candidate now had the option of using the lighter imported vessels instead of the heavier and fragile pot. During the “to pour upon” ritual, the candidate’s father, in the pre-independence period, smeared him with a mixture of yeast flour and water and wrapped belts of beads across his chest. However, this is today optional. Those who still smear the powdered yeast on candidates believe that it makes the initiates confident, steady and psychologically focused (Wanyama 2009:87). It also subdues bukhebi (the involuntary trembling of the body which is a manifestation of a spirit of circumcision in the candidate).

Makwa (2012:79) while discussing the circumcision ritual (imbalu) among Bakisu of Uganda, contends that the powdered yeast facilitates the maturation process of the candidate (as it does with beer), thereby preparing him for adulthood. Although Makwa’s finding was on Bakisu, it may as well apply to Babukusu as the two communities share a lot of cultural commonness. This research established that in addition, smearing a candidate with powdered yeast makes him stand out as a dancer and instrumentalist. It also turns the initiate into a target of words of encouragement from the public. As it was done in the colonial Bukusu society, the sioyayo song is sung to conclude the “to pour upon” ritual. This song has maintained its texts, tone and performance since the pre-European era. When the sioyayo

⁶⁴ See description of the “to pour upon” ritual on pp.53-56.

song is sung, the candidate, as he did in the precolonial era, plays the chinyimba bells while standing erect. Not many women participate in the singing of the song except when it is sung as the candidate is heading home from the river. This near exclusion of women, though voluntary, predates colonialism. The texts of the sioyayo song are considered too masculine for their full indulgence. A day after the “to pour upon” ritual, the candidate, as is tradition, goes to his maternal uncle’s place for luliki (meat from a bull which includes the testicles) amid song and dance. According to Stephen Manyasi (OI on 30th December, 2012), the bull’s testicles were made to hang on the candidate’s neck to signify that he was now being prepared to become a man who would sire children (see plate 7).

From the 1990s, argues Manyasi, some parents have been enhancing the dance costumes of their sons by wrapping them in sheets of clothes before they leave for their uncles’ home. This is despite the fact that culture demands that an initiate should dance bare-chested or at least wear bead belts across the chest. Because of the hard economic times being experienced in the post-1990 Bukusu community, many a candidate does not have a bull slaughtered for him. Instead uncles often give out live animals for the recipients to rear. Such animals are sometimes draped in sheets of cloth because they are considered “fancied gifts”, contends John Mupalia (OI on 24th January, 2014). However, a penurious uncle who cannot afford even a goat may tie the *Cynodon dactylon* grass around his nephew’s neck but mollify him by promising to get him an animal later.

From his uncle’s homestead, the candidate is accompanied home amid songs and dances by ecstatic escorts. However, this study found out that the crowds are not as large as they used to be in the pre-2000 period as a result of loss of interest in the circumcision ritual (see Plate 7). This may also be attributed to the fact that most schools would not have closed by the time candidates begin visiting their uncles for luliki in late July and early August. As such students who are the main dancers to circumcision songs would still be held up in schools.

The performers dance and move at a slow pace since the ponderous candidate (laden with the luliki meat) can not move fast. Henceforth he never uses his whistle “because he has entered a critical phase which dictates that he trains his mind on his impending battle with the knife. The whistling would get into his ears and disorient him,” contends Patrick Wanabule (OI on 4th April, 2013).

A candidate, whose home is far from his uncle’s place, today may be transported home together with his escorts in hired vehicles. He may be made to play the chinyimba bells while atop a pick-up truck with the rest of the passengers singing and whistling. The initiate is welcomed home by a singing and dancing crowd. The pre- and colonial paramusic features such as whistling, yelling and ululating have continued to be randomly performed by those escorting and receiving the initiate to express their joy and enhance the aesthetic-artistic feel in the performance of the music (Wanyama 2009:108). This is usually the case when the candidate’s uncle had either slaughtered for him a bull or given him the animal. However, there is subdued dancing and singing if only a goat is offered to him or worse if the *Cynodon dactylon* grass is tied around his neck in place of an animal, contends Ferdinand Masinde⁶⁵ (OI on 8th April, 2013). The initiate plays the chinyimba bells as the crowd dances either in anti- or clockwise manner for about twenty minutes. After the dancing and singing, the luliki is removed from the candidate’s neck by a male relative and he is allowed to rest. The requirement that the chinyimba musical instruments are not placed on the ground for fear that chukunwe ants will bite them and render them unplayable remains. He therefore places them on the granary roof or that of his father’s house.

As darkness sets in, a bull, cow or goat, depending on the economic status of the family, is slaughtered and chyme from the animal is smeared on his upper and lower body in a similar version to what happened traditionally. A piece of the animal’s rumen is then put around the

⁶⁵ Ferdinand Masinde is a teacher of Literature at Marobo secondary school in Bungoma County.

initiate's neck. He is also warned against cowardice. Soon after the sioyayo song is sung before the people gathered in the homestead break into dance and song as the candidate plays the chinyimba bells. Several vocal embellishments such as shouts, whistling, humming, talks and laughter accompany the singing and dancing. This also happened in the precolonial and colonial Bukusu community. According to Isaac Ngichabe⁶⁶ (OI on 11th April, 2014) from the late 1990s, some youths began playing the fiddle which provides rhythm to accompanying circumcision songs. "The harp (and fiddle) which traditionally never featured in circumcision festivals, today does," argues Masasabi (2011:16). The fiddle has retained its colonial-era structure. However, some youngmen have found it easier and cheaper to use empty tins to make the fiddle's resonator although this compromises tone production (Simiyu 2011:29).

The night performance is also embellished by spontaneous ululations as was the case in the colonial period. As is traditional, the initiate is allowed a two-hour rest which is normally between 1am and 3am. During this time, the researcher noted, other initiates who came to give him moral support before their turn came continued to play the chinyimba bells and dance as some few singers-cum-dancers gave them company. However, the use of the precolonial-era endwitwi drum by certain clans is no longer common during night performances. When this drum is played and it fails to produce any sound, it is believed that the candidate will not feel a lot of after-circumcision (chisalila) pain (Simiyu 2011:29). The musical instruments mainly used are the chinyimba bells, whistles and aerophones (chipombo) improvised from plastic pipes (see Plate 2). From 2008 some dancers-cum-singers have been using yuvuzelas especially during night performances. Yuvuzelas have their origin in South Africa and are commonly used by sports fans.

⁶⁶ Isaac Ngichabe is a music collector and enthusiast. He lives in Busiraka village of Bungoma County.

Performing circumcision dances at night in circles is a precolonial behaviour which is still observed today. Senoga-Zake (2000:42) posits that “dancers move in a ring as if they are rowing after which they change and hold each others’ waist and make a forward movement. At times they join hands in twos, threes or even fours, and again dance moving forward.” This formation, we found out is commonly referred to as khutila likari (literally, to hold a train). Most of the contemporary soloists are also composers of new songs just like their forerunners in the pre-and colonial epochs. Apart from composing songs that encourage the initiate, they also compose songs on current topical issues, good neighbourliness and political matters. Wanyama (2009:87) observes that the solo and response form that the performers use gives the soloist freedom to extemporize and come up with *ad hoc* messages.

During the colonial and precolonial periods, there were no circumcision music “bands.” But from the late 1980s obstreperous “bands” comprising mainly of adolescent youths emerged. Knowing that they could easily win favours if organized into “bands”, the youths move from one homestead to another at night singing and dancing to circumcision songs while in search of free beer, food, dance and a chance for a fling at flirtation. This marked the beginning of preposterous disharmony in the performance of circumcision songs among Babukusu, observes Simiyu Machio (OI on 14th May, 2013). The oppugnant youth perform independently of the main group of singers and dancers and often dance counter to the “home” team as if in competition with them. The singing of the two rival groups is neither polychoral (answering each other) nor antiphonal (singing in alteration and then together).

Contrary to tradition, some candidates in August 2014 congregated at the Masinde Muliro stadium near Bungoma town for the night singing and dancing. This was in aping the Bamasaba of Uganda who gather initiates at a cultural site called Mutoto for the performances. The Bukusu version was organized and facilitated by the office of the Director of Culture in Bungoma County, observes Florence Nabwala (OI on 14th October, 2014).

Songs sung mainly at dawn include okhabona buasia wekana (it has now dawned, don't pull out). This song was composed in the 1970s, argues Stephen Manyasi (OI on 30th December, 2012). The architect(s) of the song intended it to be used to encourage the candidate to face the knife with courage. The words "okhabona buasia wekana" release the nervous tension in the candidate thus consciously emboldening him as his fate with the circumciser's knife draws nearer, argues Manyasi.

After the rise of the morning star (yasulwe), and when, it is believed, the ancestral spirits begin retiring to the spirit world, a candidate, playing the chinyimba bells, is guided to the river with a singing and dancing crowd in tow. The song often sang as the initiate is escorted to the river is the pre-independence "present it [penis] for shaping". The crowd engages, just as was the case in both the pre- and colonial period, in a slow linear dance. However, occasionally there is frenzied whistling by the performers. A few metres to the river, the singing and dancing stop. The initiate removes his cloths and is "attired" with mud which among other purposes serves to identify him as the centre of focus during the subsequent musical activities. The style of khulonga has not changed since the precolonial era.⁶⁷ Reminiscent of the precolonial and colonial periods, after the candidate has been smeared with mud, he is led home surrounded by a singing crowd waving sticks and clubs (see Plate 13).

The chinyimba bells accompany all the dances and songs excepting those performed when the candidate is coming back home from the river for the actual operation. This, however, is a recent development as up to the early 1970s, initiates coming from the river played the instruments, until they were a few metres shy of the circumcision spot (mutiang'i), affirms Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2013). However, some still do. This change in performance, we found out, was passed from one age-group to another through social

⁶⁷ See description of "smearing with mud" on pp. 59-60.

learning. The Basawa group of 1988 observed and learnt the behavior from Bachuma who had started it in the 1970s. The subsequent age-groups have since adopted it. However, none of our informants was able to unravel the reason behind this “tradition”. It could be that some candidates instinctively abandoned the chinyimba bells at the river. Their spontaneous actions may have eventually become fashionable and popular.

As is tradition, only one song, sioyayo, is sung throughout the journey from the river to a couple of metres shy of the spot where the initiate stands as he is circumcised (mutiang’i). The sioyayo song is significant at this critical moment of the circumcision ritual because its verbal texts built strong emotions in the candidate thus emboldening him to face the knife. However, there are minor variations in the rendition of the sioyayo song. For example, an excerpt from Makila (1978:174-175) goes “**W**angwe maalule **w**akonile,” i.e., “the leopard is lying in wait” whereas Simiyu (2011:80-81) puts the same line thus; “ **m**angwe maalule **kh**akonile.” However, the ultimate meaning of the two versions remains the same, i.e., “ the leopard is lying in wait” although in the latter the leopard is depicted as being smaller in size but formidable. Such changes in African folk songs are partly attributed to “individual idiosyncratic flairs of different performers and their conception and interpretation of a specific performance” (Agu 1999).

The performance of circumcision songs has continued to elicit various actions and a range of moods as it did in the pre-independence period. For example, due to their fast tempos and the meanings embedded in the lyrics of the songs, items performed while going to invite the initiate’s relatives stimulate running, dancing and a happy mood. On the other hand, music performed on the circumcision day when escorting the initiate from the river, sioyayo, is solemn and the moderate walking pace of the candidate and his escorts suggests that the final hour of reckoning has arrived (Wanyama 2009:109). Indeed songs of “happiness” are

temporarily suspended at dawn and only resume after the initiate has successfully undergone surgery.

However, the fear that a witch may cause the candidate to cry during the actual operation still persists. For this reason, the initiate and his escorts circumspectly avoid approaching the circumcision spot from the main gate to his father's compound. Instead a new opening is made in the fence for them to pass through as a witch may have planted harmful charms in the main gate, posits Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). The candidate's designated or actual father receives him at the newly created "gate" and guides him to the circumcision spot usually in the yard in front of his father's house. If the initiate opted to play the chinyimba bells on his way home from the river, they are usually snatched from him by a close relative before his father leads him away to the circumcision spot.

During the post-independence period, changes were introduced in relation to musical instruments that were used to proclaim completion of a circumcision act. Traditionally a circumciser indicated to all and sundry that he was done by lifting up his knife the moment upon which one of the candidate's paternal aunts ululated. The crowd then triumphantly broke into a circular dance as it sang the "we have killed the enemy" song (see Plate 20). However, from early 1970s, circumcisers began using the sports whistles "bichiriba" (singular sichiriba), to indicate that they were through with the surgery. Before the 1960s, women never witnessed the actual circumcision but joined in the singing and dancing that is performed immediately after the surgery, contends Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014). The candidate is then showered with gifts, especially cash money, unlike in the pre- and colonial period when livestock was offered as reward. In the colonial Bukusu society, the neophyte was covered in a blanket and made to sit on a bench-like kiti moto. Today, he may alternatively be covered in a leso or any sheet of cloth (see Plate 20). The singing and

dancing, stops immediately the newly circumcised “man” is helped from the kiti moto and starts making his way towards the seclusion house.

However, some Christianized but semi-traditional parents invite friends and relatives to their home on the eve of their son’s circumcision day through word of mouth, announcements in church or via telephone calls. During the night they sing Christian hymns accompanied with drumming. Wanyama (2009:13) observes that Christianity has led to widespread use of Christian music that has interfered with the performance format and role of Bukusu traditional circumcision music. “In some extreme cases,” he argues, “there has been total replacement of the traditional circumcision music with Christian hymns and gospel music.” Of course one would not naturally expect traditional circumcision songs to be sang in a Christian context. Early in the morning, a nurse is summoned to circumcise the candidate. In an attempt to have their sons accepted into the social stratum of the Bukusu community, some fathers invite nurses to administer anaesthesia before a traditional surgeon circumcises the initiate. Wanyama (2009:63) notes that “since the Bukusu Christian holds dual identity, he may go ahead and circumcise his son traditionally and sing Christian songs for him.”

As they recuperate, some neophytes still smear their bodies with lulongo clay to remove dirt as it was done traditionally. However, many prefer wrapping their penile shafts in polythene papers to prevent contact between the wound and water as they proceed to bath. However, unlike in the pre- and colonial epochs when they rubbed candelabra sap into their hair as a way of cleaning it, today the neophytes either simply shave their hair or wash it using water and soap. They play flutes made from the Napier grass and blow air into folded palms (bifwototo) to produce musical sounds while whiling away time. The pre-independence-era flutes and bifwototo (singular sifwototo) still serve as means of inviting others to gather for their journey to elulongo (site where they mine lulongo [white mud] with which they smear their bodies). As is tradition, the instruments are also used to assemble the

neophytes for the khukhupa enanaki exercise which entails pricking the tip of the penis using ants or thorns from the *Leonotis nepetifolia* or “mbegu rahisi” plant to release the accumulated fluids. The sifwototo can produce at least four notes by opening the bottom upwards gradually at a well-calculated spacing. The more the space the higher the note produced (Wahome 1985:57).

However, the neophytes have maintained the precolonial behaviour of not dancing to bifwototo or flute music. This is because the music is simply for communication and self-amusement. The flute has retained its precolonial structural characteristics. It still has a notched mouth hole with four finger holes. The precolonial behaviour in which young uncircumcised boys emulate the neophytes by playing chindulienge flutes fashioned from a reed of a similar name persists to date although the practice is not as widespread as it was in the period preceding the 1990s. This is because the chindulienge reeds are becoming extinct as a result of their natural niches being turned into farms and grazing fields. Apart from chindulienge, youngsters, as in the colonial days, guilelessly play “chinyimba” musical instruments made from dry maize stalks and use “whistles” moulded from clay. As they play their version of the “chinyimba,” they dance in styles similar to those of circumcision candidates. Traditionally, no one else was allowed to play the flute except a neophyte and his male minder, asserts Anicet Wafula (OI on 1st April, 2013). However, from the 1980s, he observes, students competing in inter-school and college music festivals started playing these instruments outside the designated cultural contexts. When people play music in non-traditional contexts, they do so without any emotional attachment to it.

Traditionally, neophytes used to mock uncircumcised boys who were thought to be mature enough to be circumcised in a song known as “when I see one who feared the knife.” This song was discontinued in the early 1980s when the age of boys getting circumcised started dropping from an average of sixteen to thirteen years and as such there were few “old”

uncircumcised males to be taunted in song, argues Patrick Mang'oli (OI on 20th April, 2013). The “hatching” ritual⁶⁸ which marks the end of the seclusion period for the neophytes is as it was in the colonial period held in the month of December when it is expected that the neophytes would have closed school. Traditionally, the night before the ceremony, the neophytes slept in a banana plantation near their home. However, today some spend the night in abandoned buildings and even schools, observes Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012). But what has been religiously observed is the lighting of a touch by a neophyte using dry reeds and running with the same towards the place where he would while away the night while shouting the name of his circumciser. However, the traditionally preferred *Hyparrhenia hirta* reed has become rare nowadays. Its use as thatching grass has declined and people do not therefore keep it on their farms. In its absence, the researcher observed some neophytes using other types of grass. In continuing with tradition, early in the morning, the neophytes move to the meadow near their home where they engage in play. Beginning in the colonial period, many have been whiling away time playing lifundo (football made of paper). When the sun is high up, they bath in a nearby river using soap brought to them by young boys or girls who also deliver new clothes to them. After they dress up in the new clothes, they are escorted to each other's home by the young boys and girls singing the “in a new food plate” song (see p.67).

There are no major changes in the texts, tune and performance of this precolonial-era song. However, some singers today have replaced the words “mundubi embia” (in a new food plate) with “mungubo embia” (in a new cloth). This could be attributed to the fact that the performers confuse the term “mundubi” (in a food plate) with “mungubo” (in a cloth). This is probably because the neophyte is actually in new clothes and the event is remotely linked to a new plate. Odaga (1991:113) notes that there are circumcision songs which are sung “to

⁶⁸ See description of the “hatching” ritual on pp. 65-68.

praise those who have bravely gone through the initiation as a whole- not just the operation...”. An example of such songs among Babukusu is the “in a new food plate”.

From the meadows, the neophytes congregate in one home where they are taken through a recontextualized counseling session with emphasis being put on education and morality. Thereafter, each neophyte, without any musical accompaniment, visits his relatives, friends and neighbours for gifts in recognition of his “hatching” in a practice known as khubachukha. The “hatching” ceremony is the equivalent of *menjo* or *gothiga* among the Gikuyu of Kenya (Kenyatta 1965:146). However, initiates in the traditional Gikuyu community, unlike among Babukusu, danced to songs sung by gathered crowds and painted themselves with red ochre mixed with oil before putting on new clothes. In the 1970s, some Bukusu circumcision songs started featuring in the Kenya Music Festivals (KMFs) in which educational institutions compete, observes Anicet Wafula (OI on 1st April, 2013). Traditionally, these songs had no time limit and performers only stopped singing and dancing when they got tired. However, the KMFs restrict performance of some classes to three minutes. This, affirms Senoga-Zake (2000:197), has made music teachers pick short melodies and put them together to make a whole thus contributing to loss of authenticity in the folk music. Performers at these festivals spot themselves with different shades of clay. Traditionally, neither the kamabeka dancers nor circumcision candidates did this.

In 2011 some students were observed playing the fiddle and harp as accompaniments to circumcision songs during the Bungoma County KMF competitions contrary to the norm. They even danced kamabeka (shaking of shoulders) whilst singing circumcision songs! Traditionally, the “shaking of shoulders” dance was performed in reaction to, luengele and harp music but pupils from Makhele primary school performed the dance with drums and chikengele as its instrumental accompaniments (see Plate 10). Circumcised students of Chebosi Secondary School used whistles and sticks in the place of chinyimba bells while

singing and dancing to the circumcision song “mulongo” during the 2013 KMF. Traditionally, a circumcised person was not supposed to play any instrument as an imitation of chinyimba bells. Babukusu today, as opposed to the colonial age, engage in music competitions at various levels because such competitions “play a big role in the goal of community formation and solidification, bringing and holding individuals, clans, voluntary associations, ethnicities and nation-states together in both traditional and creative new ways” (Barz 2000). The winners are awarded certificates and given gifts. Traditionally, there were no organised music competitions. Dancers simply aimed at amusing themselves and/or outperforming each other.

Circumcision songs such as “mulongo” and “arrest the Italian” are today also performed purely for entertainment. The performance process is influenced by contextual exigencies. For example, during rugby and football matches especially when the opposing team is deemed to be non-Luyia, circumcision songs such as Mulongo and Amba Omutalia “arrest the Italian” (see p.138) are commonly sung by fans as they prepare to “circumcise” (defeat) their opponents. The researcher witnessed students of the Kenya Technical Teachers College (KTTC) singing the revered sioyayo song during the 2013 KMF finals with cooking sticks as accompaniments! The students used ekhombi (horn trumpet) as an accompaniment to the circumcision song yet the ekhombi is traditionally used in the performance of funeral songs only. Often, the harp ensembles performing in KMF improvise the traditional drum, efumbo from used tins of different sizes which they cover with a cowhide (Wanyama 2008:219). The Kenya Music Festivals which began in the colonial era have been accused of facilitating faster degeneration of Kenyan folk music and dance. The adjudicators often prompt adjustments to authentic practices for the sake of winning competitions. They advocate deliberate incorporation of Western styles of performance into traditional African songs (Senoga- Zake 2000:19). The songs also have timed durations. Digolo (1999:18) argues that

this time limit eventually has an effect on the speed, rhythm and even mood of the genres. During the KMF, some non- Lubukusu speakers sing in Lubukusu. This, however, is a neoteric phenomenon, argues Anicet Wafula (OI on 1st April, 2013). Interestingly, circumcision songs are sung to the accompaniment of traditional Bukusu musical instruments such as the harp, flute, drum and fiddle. Performers from outside the Bukusu community wear clothes fashioned to resemble the traditional biyula sisal waist wrappers.

However, unlike in the pre-1930s traditional Bukusu society when the dancing costumes were ordinary day-to-day attires, today there are costumes specifically tailored for dancing. Such costumes have pieces of flappy cloth materials sewn on the shoulders to exaggerate the shoulder movements when the dancer performs the “shaking of shoulders” dance. Others wear kamaleso flowing from the shoulders like the traditional cloak (likutu). The non-Babukusu performers are able to play Bukusu traditional instruments such as the harp and fiddle since the playing of such instruments is now formally being taught in music training institutions, unlike in the colonial period, posits Patrick Mang’oli (OI on 20th April, 2013). For example, the Kenya Conservatoire of Music (KCM) established in the colonial era and which hitherto taught only European musical cultures has today embraced the teaching of traditional African instruments to Africans. On the KCM, Gacheru (2014:24) observes that “...(O)ne of the most exciting aspects of the school is that it has just expanded its teaching to include the oboe, French horn and bassoon, as well as several indigenous Kenyan instruments.” From 2000, argues Wanyonyi Walubafu⁶⁹ (OI on 6th April, 2013), Bukusu circumcision music has been commercialized. For example, the entire circumcision ritual has been recorded on video for sale by Wanjala Okumu under the title “sikhebo (circumcision) 2006”. Wanyonyi observes that persons doing this are out to make quick money as the videos can easily be sold to persons carrying out research on Bukusu culture.

⁶⁹ Wanyonyi Walubafu is a teacher of Literature at Friends School Kamusinga.

Ottenberg (1965:34) discovered that among the Afikpo-Ibo of Nigera, topical songs are composed and sung on many occasions and that new words are usually attached to old tunes that are used time and again in different contexts. Her discovery reflects the current situation among Babukusu. Most Bukusu musicians are using old circumcision tunes to capture contemporary themes. For example, in 2012, Namatete Band used the tunes of the colonial-era circumcision song “matere” to perform a political neo-folk song of a similar name. The song bemoans the death of Michael Wamalwa Kijana.⁷⁰ The traditional performance contexts of Bukusu music which included beer parties, marriage, circumcision, and funeral ceremonies have today given way to modern contexts which have arisen as a result of changes in social organization which began during the colonial era. The first of these contexts is the political life of Babukusu. Some political songs have subsequently found their way into circumcision ceremonies. For example, the song ‘FORD’ was composed in support of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy party, a political outfit.

Political campaigns and national holidays have accorded musicians opportunities to showcase their prowess in composition and creative extemporization. Bukusu music has therefore been appropriated to fulfill political functions of reporting on current affairs, exerting political pressure, spreading propaganda and reflecting and moulding public opinion. It is a critical site for political discourse and political mobilization for social change (Nasong’o 2009:70). Musicians such as David Barasa and Wanjala Okumu were even hired to work for politicians during the 2013 general election campaigns. They composed songs in praise of certain politicians. For example, David Barasa accompanied Musalia Mudavadi during the campaigns singing songs in his praise while Wanjala Okumu sang songs in praise of Moses Wetangula, the Bungoma County senator. The pre-independence use of bilao (praise statements) and wise sayings in Bukusu songs meant to praise persons of continues to

⁷⁰ Michael Kijana Wamalwa, the then Vice- President of Kenya, died in office on 23rd August, 2003.

date. Praise statements are also intended to amuse and summarize themes. Thematic development (through bilao and wise sayings) is based on spontaneity, extemporization and creativity of the artist (Wanyama 2009). For example, Wanjala Okumu in a 2013 song titled Engwe (Leopard) , summarizes his advice to Moses Wetangula who has been eying the presidency to be patient in a saying “mukenda mbola kola ebunyolo”, which means “ one who walks slowly but steadily gets far.” Music recording technology has enabled Bukusu musicians to incorporate pre-recorded speeches of political leaders into the praise or tribute tracks they compose. This began with Wasike wa Musungu in the 1990s when he incorporated the late Michael Kijana Wamalwa’s speech in his music.

The 21st century Bukusu circumcision music has continued to publicize and market new products, a concept initiated in the colonial period when, for example, a new species of sweet potatoes known as toilo were advertised in song. In the 1960s the Harambee slogan was also popularized through circumcision songs. Today, the song “FORD” which is in praise of a political party of a similar name is performed during circumcision ceremonies. The marrying of different linguistic structures mainly in urban settings has hybridized into a language known as sheng. This is linguistically a free mixture of Kiswahili, vernacular and English where the lexical and grammatical units of the languages are used by the principal “whichever comes to mind first” (Rinkanya 2010:42). Sheng, argues Rinkanya, is traditionally the language of the youth and especially youth belonging to lower uneducated groups of Kenyan society. Bukusu musicians aged over forty seldom use it. The use of sheng is a strategy employed by migrant musicians to thrive in urban environments, argues Coplan (1980). Coplan believes that urbanization influences the movement and therefore transmutation and alteration of the oral material (language). However, we found that the utilization of sheng in music has been embraced by rural-based musicians too.

Content analysis of recorded music among rural-based Bukusu musicians by the researcher revealed that musicians who use sheng include Wilbert Wanyama, Namatete Band, Wanjala Okumu, and Wanjala Mandari. Sheng has also found its way into circumcision songs. For example, the popular circumcision song “mbele khulaini khane omwana akwa munda” (literally I was on the line and the child fell into the womb) has the sheng word khulaini. The prefix “**khu**” in Lubukusu means “**on**” and “**laini**” is coined from the English word “line.”

6.4 Marriage songs and dances

Marriage remains an important institution among Babukusu just as it was in the pre-and colonial era. As Mbiti (1969:133) describes it, to an African, marriage is the focus of existence. It is regarded as the point where all members of a given community meet, the departed, the living and those yet born. However, the practice of some Babukusu failing to marry because of enlisting in either Catholic priesthood or joining the sisterhood which started with the introduction of Christianity in Bungoma County has persisted to date. But some individuals choose out of their own volition to remain single. Both scenarios infringe on the performance of Bukusu traditional wedding songs and dances since the opportunity to do so is lost whenever one fails to marry customarily or otherwise. Babukusu still practise polygyny. However, due to the influence of Christianity and the need to have small ‘manageable’ families, many people are opting for monogamous marriages. Polygyny is also considered to be uncongenial to modern women. A few marriages among Babukusu are consummated by way of wedding. Most are through ‘come we stay’ or elopement. Some opt for civil marriage. From the late 1960s, traditional weddings among Babukusu became rare as people converted to Christianity and got ‘civilized’ through Western education, argues Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012). By 1990, asserts Mupalia, the full episode of the traditional Bukusu marriage had become almost non-existent. Thus, the singing of

sardonic traditional wedding songs such as seya by bridesmaids has waned (see pp.79). Singing and dancing is mostly restricted to church weddings. In some cases musical performances are done after civil marriages when the couples join friends and relatives to celebrate their marriage at ceremonies popularly known as ‘receptions.’ This was not there in the colonial era.

The only segment of Bukusu traditional marriage that is still fully appreciated today is the payment of bridewealth. The paying of bridewealth is an indemnity to the bride’s family for their expense in bringing her up, contends Raphael Wanyonyi (OI on 27th March, 2013). It is also considered as compensation for losing a productive family member as well as a legal document signifying that marriage has taken place and that the husband (and wife) has conjugal rights, argues Shorter (2001:90). However, the payment of bridewealth is not being done as systematically as in the pre- and colonial periods. Some couples nowadays elope and even get children without any bridewealth being paid. They pay it later “when their economic status improves”, observes Humphrey Wangila (OI on 13th May, 2013). During ceremonies in which bridewealth in the form of cattle and money is being negotiated and paid, some non-Christian families brew “beer of haggling” as demanded by tradition.

Musicians, argues Wangila, are as was the case in the pre- and colonial eras, invited to entertain people during such gatherings using the harp, fiddle and chimbengele. Falisi Wakhungu, Sifuna Foti, and Nyongesa Wanami are examples of musicians who performed music in weddings using these instruments in the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, argues James Otung’uli Kisoyi (OI on 11th April, 2014), Sifuna and Wanami played the fiddle in such a way as to produce rhythms appropriate for the waltz dance. The fiddles had strings made from sisal fibre although from the 1970s wire strings started becoming popular. The tuning of the fiddles was traditionally done using wooden pegs but from the 1980s, posits Otung’uli, fiddlers began using nails curved at the tip. In the pre-independence era, a harpist used to

“play alone and sing in unison with his instrument; but (today) such players have found it more entertaining to play in groups of two or even three and also play different strings as an accompaniment instead of playing in unison with the voices”, argues Senoga-Zake (2000:148). Orchestras comprising of European equipment such as guitars, accordions, trumpets, saxophones, loudspeakers, “chiyukas” (shakers), amplifiers and modern drums are also invited to grace wedding ceremonies.

The accordion, which was first played among Babukusu in the 1940s, remained popular up to the 1970s. For example, Suleiman Kutukhulu played the accordion in weddings in the 1960s and 1970s. The “chiyukas” which were improvised from tins and small metallic balls or stones put in them accompanied mainly guitar music. According to Protus Mukenya (OI on 4th April, 2013), among the musicians who have been playing music in weddings using the guitar from the 1960s to date are James Otung’uli, Kisache wa Mwasame and Wafula Hamisi. Others include Simiyu Matolito who performed from the 1950s to the 1970s, Wataka Marauni (1960s to 1970s) and Patrick Mwasame (1960s to 1980s).

Musicians among Babukusu use khufumia/khulaa (praising), chisimo (proverbs), kiminayi (riddles) and chingacho (comic language) as devices that embellish the message that they want to communicate (Wafula 2012:72). These precolonial stylistic approaches help the musicians to capture the attention of the audience and sustain its interest in the music. Through the use of proverbs and riddles in songs, musicians entertain, inform and educate the general populace. Through them Babukusu are informed about their origin, history, culture and the significance of taking their children to school. They are also warned of the consequences of sexual promiscuity, thieving, laziness and other vices.

The structural appearance and symbolism of the harp has significantly changed. Masasabi (2011:44) notes that in an attempt to emulate modern bands, Bukusu musicians have modified the harp. Before the advent of colonialism, the harp had seven strings but today we

have varieties with up to twelve strings. However, most of the harpists interviewed prefer using the traditional seven-stringed harp “for it produces authentic Bukusu sounds.” Apart from the efforts to change the number of strings on harps, attempts were also made to adopt a new type of string for the harp. In the 1960s, a few harpists began experimenting with nylon strings in place of the traditional ones known as chisia nyama, argues William Wekesa (OI on 8th April, 2013). However, this study determined that the former have not been found to be as effective and durable as the latter and are not therefore widely used.

The siye, a wooden board which together with striking sticks comprised luengele, an accompaniment to the harp, is commonly used by musicians invited to perform in weddings. It was traditionally made from a kumuefubulu log split into two. However, in the 1970s, musicians began improvising luengele by using stools, kiti moto (a small bench-like seat) and even coffee tables in the place of siye, observes Raphael Wanyonyi (OI on 27th March, 2013). The luengele, from time immemorial, has never been played by women. However, contrary to the dictates of Bukusu musical culture, women in the community, argues Masasabi (2011), nowadays play the harp, once a symbol of masculinity. However, this study established that the playing of the harp by women is restricted to music competitions in learning institutions. Bukusu women do not play the harp to entertain audiences during public ceremonies for fear of being castigated.

From the late 1970s, observes Patrick Wanabule (OI on 4th April, 2013), some musicians performing in weddings and other social functions started painting their harps and fiddles in different colours “to make them look attractive.” This has continued to date. Lawrence Mwanja of Kanduyi Boys Band, for example, has painted his harp in multicolours (see Plate 18). Harps and fiddles traditionally had the natural wood surface finish. A new harp design with a rectangular-shaped resonator was introduced among Babukusu in the 1960s, posits

Wanabule. Sifuna Foti was among the first harpists to use it. However, the traditional one, which is more popular, is oval shaped.

During performances the harp is today played alongside Western musical instruments such as the guitar and piano thus bringing forth a new sound that is packaged for the modern music industry (Masasabi 2011:13). Milani Jazz Band under Simiyu Makhanu, for example, blends the sound of the harp with that of the guitar and leg rattles to bring out a unique “contemporary” type of music fancied by the youth. However, in continuing with what began in the colonial period, most families today dance to recorded music in weddings involving their members. This finding is echoed by Mindoti (2006) who studied Luyia marriage music. He argues that the Western musical culture adopted by some Luyia musicians does not allow the soloist the freedom to compose words as was done traditionally because “some of the music is pre-recorded or is written down and performers have to therefore use the text as it is.”

Change has also been realized in the manner in which the music among Babukusu is recorded. From the 1960s through to the late 1980s, Bukusu music was mainly recorded on the vinyl disc (erekoti) and played using gramophones or record players (binanda), argues Wesley Barasa (OI on 11th April, 2014). The vinyl disc was replaced with the cassette tape popularly known as “compact” which is still fighting irrelevance in the 1990s. Bukusu musicians who recorded their music in the 1960s did so mainly at AP Chandarana studio in Kericho, affirms Barasa. In the 1970s Sifuna Foti, Jackson Makanda, Joseph Tunguta, Wambaya Matanda and Falisi Wakhungu among others recorded their music at Tondola and Chanjalikha Music Studios in Bungoma town, Tanna Records Organization in Kitale and in Nairobi, at Andrew Crawford, Phillips and Limmax Studios.

From the turn of the twenty-first century, Bukusu music has been greatly influenced by global technological advancements. Many musicians from the community are exploiting the

digital platform which has enabled them to record music on devices such as compact discs (CDs) and digital versatile discs (DVDs). A CD can hold up to 75 minutes of high-fidelity recorded sound while a DVD holds seven times more (Hofstetter 1997:25). Bukusu musicians recording their music digitally include Wanyonyi Kakai, Wanjala Okumu, Wanjala Mandari and Kasembeli Watila. Wedding songs such as “our child’s leg calf” have also been captured on tape and video. When music in weddings is played with an ensemble involving the harp and luengele, the performers engage in the traditional “shaking of shoulders” dance just like they did in the colonial and precolonial Bukusu society, affirms Anicet Wafula (OI on 1st April, 2013).

However, in the 1960s some musicians such as Sifuna Foti and Nyongesa Wanami manipulated the guitar and fiddle to produce a unique rhythm to which people responded with waltz movements. Senoga-Zake (2000:33) observes that in Luyia (social) ceremonies, dancers exhibit the best of the art for purposes of getting gifts. Among Babukusu, dancers perceived to have performed well are today rewarded with cash, material gifts such as pieces of kamaleso cloth, trophies, money or are awarded certificates. Using these as rewards began in the colonial age. The kumuchenje dance, a variant of “shaking of shoulders” in which women and men synchronize their movements as they react to the harp lyrics, has become non-existent as a social dance in the post-independence Bukusu society. It is, however, performed by participants in the annual Kenya Music Festivals competitions. The bitenga dance which is performed whilst the dancer is standing still and vigorously shaking his/her shoulders, is popular with music bands and students during music competitions, posits Anicet Wafula (OI on 1st April, 2013). In the late 1960s, contends James Otung’uli (OI on 11th April, 2014), a new dance style known as matengeya was “invented” among Babukusu. When guitars were played in weddings by musicians such as Masinde Nalobile, observes Otung’uli, people responded with this solo dance. This assertion is corroborated by Paxton

Misiko (OI on 20th April, 2014). Matengeya, observes Misiko, was a solo dance with sinuous movements of the belly, hips and feet. This dance style, however, lasted for about a decade only after it was, together with waltz, overshadowed by rhumba and other Congolese dances, argues Misiko.

From the 1980s to date, most dancers in receptions held following civil weddings usually react to guitar music by shaking their waists in ndombolo style. The term ndombolo, given to a Congolese dance genre, is derived from a French word secouer, which means ‘to shake.’⁷¹ This dance was introduced into the Bukusu community through the television, videos and live performances by Congolese musicians. Today, for example, K24, a television channel with nationwide coverage, airs specifically Congolese rhumba music on a programme called “Rhumba Bakulutu” on Friday evenings. Ndombolo as a dance style has “meshed” very well with the youth. However, it has given rise to a conflict that is not resolvable in terms of the existing values of the Bukusu society. The elderly consider it obscene. Since Bukusu traditions have no cure for such “radical” foreign dances, the dances have specially continued to disturb and strain the conscience of those who dislike them.

Lipala, another new dance style, diffused into the Bukusu society in the 1980s, contends Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012). It is a common dance in both civil and Christian weddings. The lipala movements are slow with the performer moving his/her legs forth and back alternately. The hands touch the forehead and back in an alternating manner. Murutu affirms that Babukusu learned how to perform the dance from Babedakho and Bamarama Luyia sub-nations. However, Josphat Wanambuku⁷² (OI on 11th April, 2014) argues that the dance was adopted from the Bamuoni of Eastern Uganda. It is probable that the dance actually originated from among Babesukha and Babedakho because the pioneering song texts to accompany it, i.e., khusiebe lipala (let us dance lipala) are linguistic extracts from these

⁷¹ See <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/soukous>

⁷² Josphat Wanambuku is a medical doctor and a cultural expert.

sub-ethnic groups and not Bamuoni. Infact, most songs associated with the lipala dance are today tintured with words from Babedakho and Bamarama. The dance can be accompanied by guitar, fiddle, harp or drum. The drum's pitch (and timbre) contrast is often obtained by striking different points or by altering its membrane tension. Among Babukusu music bands that play and dance to lipala beats include Namatete Kimuka and Webuye Jua Kali.

A remarkable change in Bukusu dance costumes occurred in the 1970s when most band members playing music during weddings began wearing uniforms. "Traditional" dancers may wear sisal waist wrappers with shorts serving as undergarments with the former erroneously referred to as "traditional dance attires" (see Plate 11). Sisal waist wrappers were traditionally ordinary day-to-day "clothings"! They were never dyed in different colours as they appear today. Simiyu Wandibba (OI on 23rd January, 2014), argues that the use of dyed sisal wrappers as dance costumes by Babukusu was borrowed from the Luyia of Busia County. Some "shaking of shoulders" dancers today wrap their bodies in kamaleso although a few wear the traditional skin cloak and Colobus monkey skin headgear. David Barasa of Webuye Jua Kali Band, Wanjala Okumu of Kutalang'i Jazz Band and Kasembeli Watila of Kitang'a Jazz Band are examples of musicians who often wear Colubus monkey hats while playing and dancing to their music.

Traditionally, Colubus monkey hats were never worn by conventional musicians. The wearing of these hats was restricted to circumcisors and the performers of the dirgeful singorio-like dance and of the elegiac poetry during the "stepping onto the arena" ritual. Today, as opposed to the precolonial and early days of colonialism, dancers at weddings normally perform while facing dignitaries. The instrumentalists and singers sit next to them. We found out that when the music reaches a crescendo, the performers are joined by some members of the audience. This observation is echoed by Digolo (1999) who posits that

initially, African music consisted of a high degree of collective participation but nowadays music is performed for an audience who normally adopt a passive role.

Western musical instruments- the harmonica and accordion - which dominated wedding musical performances among Babukusu in the 1940s and 1950s, were overtaken by the guitar in the 1960s. With the relegation of the harmonica and accordion, indulgence in “ekorasi ye lulumbuchu” or waltz dance also declined and was subsequently replaced with the slow Congolese rumba-like dance which blended well with benga music. There have been changes in the type of music played at weddings. In the colonial era, some weddings witnessed music being played by a brass band marching in military style. In traditional weddings, music accompanied by the harp, luengele and drum was common. However, from the late 1960s, benga music has dominated most weddings among Babukusu.

The roots of benga instrumentation are the Luo nyatiti (eight stringed lyre) and orutu (one stringed lyre) argues Peter Akwabi⁷³ (OI on 15th January, 2012). The lead guitar, bass guitar and the rhythm guitar together with a drum set and a cowbell form the core of any benga ensemble. However, Gazemba (2013:24) posits that originally benga featured only two guitars; rhythm and solo. The two-guitar style benga, he observes, was only played by Luo and Luyia musicians. Guitar playing diffused into Western Kenya from Luo Nyanza in the 1950s. The playing of the guitar initially had flourished in Congo where it was plucked like the local thump piano known as likembe or sanza (Juma 2013:6). Among Babukusu, benga's trademark distinctions are thus a fast-paced rhythm beats and a bouncy finger-plucking guitar technique. A benga song always has a climax or crescendo where the tempo picks speed. Benga first emerged in the early 1960s. John Ogara is considered the patriarch of benga, contends Akwabi. According to Mutonya (2013:9) the 1970s saw benga beats offer stiff competition to rumba dominance in Kenya.

⁷³Peter Akwabi, a renowned teacher of music and Luyia musician, composed his first track “kifo cha Mukabi” in 1963.

The late sixties saw the introduction of the electric guitar onto the Kenyan music scene. This, argues Akwabi, gave rise to the next generation of benga musicians and bands such as Victoria Kings, Collela Mazee, D.O. Misiani and George Ramogi. However, musicians among Babukusu such as Joseph Tunguta, Wafula Hamisi and Wanjala Wambukha continued using box guitars while playing live music in weddings well into the late 1970s when they embraced electric guitars, asserts Reuben Khaemba (OI on 3rd April, 2013). Among pioneer box guitarists in the Bukusu society were Masinde Nalobile from Makhele, Peter Wekhomba, Laisa Omuliuli, William Maka and Robert Chelobani from Malakisi. They played the guitar in the 1950s, observes Wesley Barasa (OI on 11th April, 2014).

The use of drum-sets among Babukusu is a post-independence occurrence. Tabu Ley⁷⁴ pioneered the introduction of the drum-set to the stable of Congolese rhumba band in the 1960s (Juma 2013:6). By mid-seventies, most Congolese artists were performing in Kenya. Their music was characterized by first-paced cavacha rhythms played on the hit-hat or snare drum (Gitonga 2010:37). This practice was introduced into Bukusu music in the 1970s when musicians such as Wesley Barasa and Kisache wa Mwasame adopted it, observes Wanjala Okumu⁷⁵ (TI on 6th April, 2013). Influenced by Luo and Congolese music bands such as Victoria Kings, Collela Mazee and *Tout Puissant Orchestre Kinshasa* (TPOK), observes Wafula Hamisi, many Bukusu musicians began forming their own bands which played live music in weddings in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, Wasike wa Musungu's Malakisi Jazz Band and Peter Wanundu's Mbirira Stars formed in the 1970s have remained popular to date. Some innovative local musicians performing in weddings and other events today improvise drums from plastic water containers (see Plate 16). They also use Fanta soda bottles as musical instruments the way their predecessors in the colonial days did. However,

⁷⁴Tabu Ley who died in November 2013 was a leading Congolese rhumba musician.

⁷⁵Wanjala Okumu is a popular post-2000 musician among Babukusu.

the style of playing of the colonial-era ekengele, has remained the same and the instrument has also retained its original structure (see Plate 10).

The content of most Bukusu wedding songs today is as it was in the precolonial age. The epithalamiums are usually sung in praise of the bride and her parents. For example, the songs “our child’s leg calf” (see p.77) and “seya” (see p.79) which were sung in the pre-literate Bukusu society are still sung today. However, while the pre- and colonial Bukusu weddings were attended mainly by Babukusu, the songs sang were in Lubukusu. However, many men in the society have increasingly been marrying spouses from other ethnic groups. This has tempered with the linguistic homogeneity that prevailed in the pre-1963 Bukusu traditional weddings. Kiswahili songs in praise of God are also sung alongside those done in Lubukusu. As such, it is not uncommon to witness Babukusu dancing to some live or recorded non-Bukusu songs during weddings. These are mainly songs from the bride’s community, argues Pennina Kerre (OI on 23rd May, 2013).

Bukusu musicians are often forced to use Lubukusu, English and Kiswahili words within the same sentence or discourse for Lubukusu and non-Lubukusu speakers to understand what they are saying. However, the foreign language diffusion into the Bukusu music which began in the pre-European age has continued to date. The language influence of communities neighbouring Babukusu is apparent in some popular Christian songs sung in weddings among Babukusu. In a wedding the researcher attended in November 2013 at Chebukwa village, the song Yesu etaa yanje (Jesus my lamp), was repeatedly sung. The term “Yanje” (mine) is used by Batachoni, Bakabalasi and Bawanga sub-ethnic groups bordering Babukusu (see Map 3). The Bukusu equivalent word is “Yange.” This research established that the only pre-colonial-era song incorporated in Christian and civil weddings is the “my child’s leg calf.” The others, such as “seya” “njolilo”, “we are strangers” (see page 155) and “the yabunje rodent has eaten

all the eleusine” are not performed in church or civil weddings. This could be attributed to the antagonistic nature of the texts in the songs. The playing of the precolonial-era luengele as an accompaniment to the harp music in weddings has continued to date. However, the number of harp and luengele players wearing leg jingles has drastically been reducing since 1963. This study found out that this is due to the fact that very few youths are willing to undergo apprenticeship as blacksmiths. The number of established blacksmiths is also dwindling as a result of natural attrition.

The gendering of the harp’s strings right from the precolonial period has remained unchanged. It has both “female” and “male” strings. Half of the strings on the left handside are referred to as “female” while the rest are “male” (Wafula 2012:101). To Babukusu, the left side of the body is “female” and the right side is “male” hence the reference to the strings as “male” and “female.” If a harp has seven strings, the four strings on the right side are “male” and the remaining three are “female”, affirms Wafula. The “male” strings usually call the song and the “female” ones respond. A good harpist strikes a balance between the two. Singing and dancing to wedding songs today take place mostly over the weekend. This is because most weddings are celebrated on weekends when people are free from other engagements unlike in the pre- and colonial period when the availability of food determined when weddings were to be held, argues Simiyu Machio (OI on 14th May, 2013).

Today it is not uncommon for two or more musicians to jointly entertain people during weddings and other ceremonies. This trend began in the 1970s when musicians even collaborated in recording their music, argues James Otung’uli (OI on 11th April, 2014). “For instance, in the 1980s Wasike wa Musungu and I jointly sang and recorded many songs including the popular “lia ne babasio” (eat with your colleagues) track,” asserts Otung’uli. In the 1990s the former teamed up with Nyongesa wa Muganda and Wafula Hamisi. In the 21st

century, musicians Wanjala Okumu, Kasembeli Watila and Wanjala Mandari have together been recording and producing some of their music. Most Bukusu artists who performed during weddings and other occasions and whose careers took shape in the colonial era never had Christian names and if they did, they preferred not to be identified with the “foreign” names, argues Wafula Hamisi (OI on 13th May, 2012). For example, Kilikinji Okhwa Mumbwani, Masinde Nalobile and Laisa Omuliuli were not known by their Christian names.

From the 1960s to 1990s musicians such as Wanjala Wambukha, Kisache wa Mwasame, Sifuna Foti, Matanda wa Wanjala and Wasike wa Musungu did not use Christian names. Wasike, for example, was baptized Benedict in the Anglican Church in the 1930s but never used the name, observes James Otung’uli (OI on 11th April, 2014). This trend has continued into the 21st century with youthful musicians such as Wanjala Okumu, Wanyonyi Kakai, Wanjala Mandari and Kasembeli Watila using their indigenous names “so as to fully identify with Babukusu”, posits Wanjala Okumu (TI on 6th April, 2013). However, there are a few exceptions. Jackson Wangwelo Kisika (1960s to 1990s), James Otung’uli of Myanga Jazz Band (1970s to date) and David Barasa (2005 to date) are examples of musicians who retained/ have retained their Christian names. James Otung’uli (OI on 11th April, 2014) explains that as a devoted Christian, he could not drop his Biblical name.

From 2000, argues David Barasa (OI on 8th May, 2013)⁷⁶, Bukusu music, including wedding songs performed in the company of guitars, drums, “chiyukas” and the keyboard is often staged in urban centres for musicians’ economic survival. Through social learning, Bukusu artists have adopted this behaviour from foreign musicians mainly from Jamaica, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo who have been staging live concerts in towns within Kenya. “We take music to where rich clients are,” contends David Barasa.

⁷⁶David Barasa is the head of the popular Webuye Jua Kali Band and Member of the Bungoma County Assembly.

“My band, ‘Webuye Jua Kali’, frequently performs during ‘Luyia night’ concerts at the Carnivore Restaurant in Nairobi “for us to make ends meet”, asserts Barasa. Globally, while the sales of recorded music have dropped substantially since 2000, the market for concert tickets (such as those at the Carnivore Restaurant) has increased (Odidi 2013:10). Producing a music video costs up to Sh. 300,000 and musicians get no return on investment as a result of piracy (Njagi 2014:16). As such many artists have resorted to live music. Examples of Bukusu musicians who have been staging live shows include, Wanjala Mandari, Kasembeli Watila, Wanyonyi Kakai, David Barasa and Wanjala Okumu.

Traditionally, circumcision songs were never performed during wedding ceremonies and were accompanied by the chinyimba bells. However, from the 2000s they are played or performed live in weddings accompanied with guitars, harps, fiddles, drums and the keyboard, argues David Barasa (OI on 8th May, 2013). For example, Pius Wafula and David Barasa recorded the songs Mulongo and Amba Omutalia, respectively, using guitars, harps, drums and the piano. These musicians are often invited to perform live in weddings. Schooling has created another musical context. When students pass national examinations or graduate from institutions of higher learning, their friends and relatives rejoice by ululating and singing traditional songs such as mwana wa mbeli (first born child) as they perform the dance of “shaking of shoulders.”

Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013) argues that most Bukusu musicians in the pre-European and colonial periods had no formal training in music. This trend has continued into the 21st century. And as Mbabazi (2012:170) discovered with their Ugandan counterparts, most contemporary Bukusu musicians have no systematic training in any field of music. However, their in-born ability to create music is unlike in the past, enhanced by the availability of digital technological devices which enable easier manipulation of musical

sound. In a music studio, for example, the producer may manipulate sound tracks provided by the music software to create an accompaniment. The producer listens to a song and gives the necessary advice and together with the musician they agree on the style which the musician wants. The sampling technology, Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) and Logic Pro and the keyboard have literally replaced instrumentalists. This is because such devices can provide melody, harmony and even drumbeats. Rev. Charles Wakhisi (OI on 1st February, 2013) posits that this technology is too artificial and unreal. He believes it is unnatural, alienating and in a way detrimental to art. The technology, argues Rev. Wakhisi, minimizes the authenticity of Bukusu music and goes against the artistic spirit of creativity and expressiveness. However, this study agrees with Frith (1986:265) who believes that technology is part and parcel of music-making since it enhances creation and production of music by providing sounds that would otherwise not be easily accessible.

It is not uncommon for Bukusu musicians performing in weddings and other forums to belt out lyrics based on reggae and other international musical genres. Globalization has caused them to domesticate international genres like hip-hop and reggae in a process called indigenization or localization. The hybridity of Bukusu music, asserts Edward Kaiga (OI on 20th April, 2013), has made it difficult to find any authentic, folk music in the community. While researching on traditional music in Uganda, Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2006:48) discovered that the music syncretises indigenous languages, poetic styles and musical styles with foreign musical styles especially instrumentation and hymnal styles and to some extent the language. This observation resonates well with the post-2000 Bukusu music. The rendition “moni na moni” (eye and eye) performed by two brothers, Peter Wanundu and Stephen Khaemba of Mbirira Stars Jazz Band, is in a reggae version. In 2008 Mwambu⁷⁷ sang and uploaded a reggae track titled “Ekhabi” (luck) onto the internet. His orchestra uses

⁷⁷ See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIEFo8jD9_g

an ensemble comprising a harp, guitar, drums, saxophone and a piano. Apart from the external world's influence on Bukusu music, the precolonial-era intra-ethnic contacts have had equal effects in shaping the community's music and dance culture. These intra-ethnic influences include contact with neighbouring communities, long distance travel and immigration, trade, intermarriages and diffusion of cultures through the mass media. For example, aspects of Bakanda (Ganda) and Bakisu (Gishu) musical culture have diffused into the Bukusu society through physical contacts across the Ugandan border as well as the radio, television, internet, tapes, DVDs and CDs. However, the Bakisu influence on Bukusu music is a recent occurrence and is mainly attributed to the media, posits Stephen Manyasi (OI on 30th December, 2012).

It is only after 2000, argues Manyasi, that Gisu and Baganda music started reaching almost every household in Bungoma County by means of the radio. This followed the establishment of local radio stations such as Surwe FM, Radio Mambo, Mulembe FM, West FM, Nyota FM and Ingo FM. For example, West FM plays Luyia, Gisu and Ganda neo-folk music in a popular programme known as 'Litungu' (harp) which airs every night from 9pm to 12am, observes Timothy Makokha⁷⁸ (OI on 7th May, 2013). KBC television in a programme known as Kikwetu also features, apart from Bukusu music, Ganda and Gishu music. The language of Bakisu, Lukisu or Lumasaaba, is well understood by Babukusu and as such music by Bakisu musicians such as Tom Weboya, Michael Musaalo and Iddi Masaaba is appreciated by many Babukusu. This has made some popular musicians among Babukusu to easily adopt Lukisu rhythms. For example, Wanjala Okumu's VCD released in 2013 titled Ekileko (literary looking down upon) is mimetic of Gishu beats. He also blends Lumasaaba and Lubukusu words and the dancers in the video perform the mwaga dance of Bakisu. Content analysis of Namatete Kimuka and Kitang'a Bands' videos by the researcher revealed

⁷⁸ Timothy Makokha is a radio producer working with West FM radio station in Bungoma town.

that these bands often play Ganda tunes with performers responding with bakisimba, nankasa or muwogola Ganda dance combinations which involve flawless ‘round’ movement of the waist. The dance motifs are often dictated by the song, not necessarily the lyrics but rather the tempo, observes Assimwe (2008:28). Namatete Kimuka Band has also produced music with bongo beats. The bongo repertoire is originally from Tanzania.

There is continuity in the colonial-age behaviour in which “dignitaries” are reluctant to engage freely in dance activities. This, argues Anicet Wafula (OI on 1st April, 2013), is as a result of the growth of intellect and rationalism and their inhibitory effects upon free motor response. He believes that among the present-day Babukusu, there is a slackening of the habit of venting out emotional overcharges through direct dance action. As such many adults and the educated are unlike in the last century reluctant to join the youth in openly performing traditional dances. This is because there is an increased sense of decorum and formality which brings about the suppression of the impulse to break into a dance. During weddings and other social dances ‘dignitaries’ seldom dance freely.

Traditional and neo-folk dancers in the 20th century Bukusu community were not professionals but persons whose inner emotional excitement was aroused by the inviting performance of a musician. Martin (1965:132) equates such excitement to build-up steam which is allowed to escape through dance. However, this study found out that musical bands among Babukusu today, unlike in the pre-2000 period, hire dancers to perform during weddings and other social functions. These professional dancers are also used when shooting videos. Such dancers may not necessarily be of Bukusu extract and often do not have any emotional attachment to the music. What is desirable is their ability to move their trunks and extremities in tandem with the Bukusu lyrics. The motivation behind hiring dancers is to attract audiences and to meet the demand for ‘polished, modern video productions’, asserts

Wanjala Okumu (OI on 6th April, 2013). The skimpily dressed dancers are youthful and therefore appealing to youthful customers who are the majority of neo-folk music consumers. Most of their performances involve gyrating their waists often in an obscene manner, observes Florence Nabwala (OI on 14th October, 2014). Musicians who enlist the services of such dancers include Wanjala Mandari, Wanyonyi Kakai, Kasembeli Watila, Wanyonyi we Khatundi and Wanjala Okumu.

Prior to 2000, Bukusu musicians entertaining people during weddings and other social gatherings never wore Western style suits and hats as uniforms, contends Wesley Barasa (OI on 11th April, 2014). However, the 21st century saw some band members and dancers start wearing them. For example, members of Webuye Jua Kali Band and Namatete Band have a variety of uniforms including Western style suits and hats which they wear while performing. They also use flywhisks as part of their dance costumes yet traditionally this was a preserve of elders. The wearing of uniforms, argues Patrick Mang’oli (OI on 20th April, 2013), is as a result of influence from Congolese musicians such as Kofi Olomide. “They watch videos of Olomide and other Congolese musicians and their dancers and ape their performances,” asserts Mang’oli. Radio, television and video are media that have greatly impacted Bukusu music and dance. Radio, however, lacks the visual component and is therefore a less powerful medium when contrasted with the television and videos, asserts Mary Masinde⁷⁹ (OI on 7th June, 2012).

Some Bukusu wedding songs, especially those held in open gardens, are today often captured on video and replayed on television. Every Sunday at 6pm to 7pm, for example, Citizen Television broadcasts performance of weddings and wedding songs in a programme called “Wedding Show.” This show often features Bukusu neo-folk music and dances.

⁷⁹ Mary Masinde is a television producer with the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation in Nairobi.

However, apart from the television and CD players, observes Nyukuri Khayota⁸⁰ (TI on 3rd February, 2014) recorded Bukusu neo-folk music is today watched and listened to on the iPod, mobile phones, tablets, portable DVD and MP3 players. And as Giddens (2006) correctly points out, the level of material culture sophistication reached in a given society influences, although by no means completely determines, other aspects of cultural development such as musical evolution. Bukusu music was up to about 2000 played using radiocassette players and gadgets such as the “walkman.” It was stored on tapes, floppy diskets and computers but subsequently it has found storage on flashdiscs and memory cards which have enhanced capacities. And despite the fact that the first mobile phone was invented in 1973 by Martin Cooper, it was not until the post-2000 era that (Bukusu) music has been accessible on mobile phones, ipads and tablets (Kariuki 2014:2). Today, transcribed Bukusu neo-folk songs can be accessed in the electronic format.

6.5 Death songs and dances

Despite the entrenchment of Christianity, Western education and culture among Babukusu, some people in the community still believe that death is caused by witchcraft and failure to observe taboos. However, many today understand that death can also occur due to old age and disease. Christianity teaches that there is life after death and this philosophy resonates with the traditional belief among Babukusu that when one dies one joins the world of spirits. Some dirges recognize this belief. The economic status of an individual as it did in the precolonial and colonial ages, still defines the loss the Bukusu community feels when an individual dies. When the Vice- President of Kenya, the late Michael Wamalwa Kijana died on 23rd August, 2003, for example, Babukusu felt a collective sense of loss and the death of their ‘son’ shook the entire community. Dirges were sung in church in Nairobi and at his upcountry home in Kitale. Similarly, when a prominent person died in the pre- and colonial

⁸⁰ Nyukuri Khayota is a radio presenter with Surwe FM radio station which broadcasts in Lubukusu.

Bukusu society, he was mourned more than when a peasant died. Many songs would be composed in his honour and his funeral was more elaborate than that of a poor person. In the postcolonial Bukusu society as was in the past, “as soon as a person dies,” argue Mugambi and Kirima (1976:102), his closest relatives burst out wailing. However, this is only true of women, youth and children. When an elderly man dies during day-time, he is not bewailed immediately. As is tradition, his family waits until evening to start wailing and singing dirges. Funeral laments have continued to be sung by both men and women as in the pre-independence Bukusu community. Children who are mature enough to understand the meaning of death also join in the wailing. However, it is the female voices that normally dominate.

In the present-day Bukusu society, there is no mourning that can be described as purely traditional or Christian. Some mourners wail in the traditional manner which involves crying out *Ai ai ai* while pacing up and down the dead person’s compound. Others, after traversing the deceased’s homestead wailing, gather in one house where they sing Christian exequies. Mugambi and Kirima (1976:102) attempt to distinguish between wails performed for a dead man and those for a dead woman. They contend that among Babukusu, “for a dead man the cry is ‘*Ye-ye-ye-! Ye-ye-ye!*’ For a woman, they argue, “the cry is ‘*Woi-woi-woi!*’ *Woi-woi-woi!*”” However, this research established that there is no prescribed and gendered manner in which the dead in the Bukusu community are bewailed. In fact the two forms of cry, *ye* and *woi*, are often combined!

As much as there is continuity in relation to the manner in which the occurrence of death is announced (through wails, sang laments and via the colonial-era media, that is, radio, telephone or the obituary section of daily newspapers), today people also use e-mails, Short Messaging System (SMS) and the internet to communicate death messages. This is,

according to Khisa Sikolia (OI on 1st April, 2013), a practice that began in the 1990s. Bukusu dirges remain in the form of laments just like they were in the pre-and colonial era. The Christian-based song “its over” (see p.166) which was sung in the colonial period is still performed today. It is sung to the accompaniment of drums, claps and percussion instruments. Apart from the drumming, clapping and singing of dirges which go on in some houses within the deceased’s compound, there is no any other “live” musical activity. Recorded Christian music is often played to console the bereaved. The contents of most sung funeral laments, as in the pre-independence period, still imply that a dead person goes “home” which means that life on earth is like a pilgrimage, the real “home” is the hereafter, since one does not depart from there. Death is described in some laments as cruel. Mbiti (2008:153), while discussing Bukusu dirges, affirms that death simply “cuts down” people. Mourners among Babukusu indeed often lament in song that the deceased kakhalikhe busa, that is, he/she was “just cut”. This happens especially when they are mourning a sudden and “mysterious” death.

The first action taken when death is confirmed is to close the deceased’s eyes and mouth “as his time to see with physical eyes, eat and communicate with bodily mouth has come to an end,” posits Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012). This is, however, only done if the deceased’s mouth is gaping. His/her jaws are put together using bandages. Traditionally, straps of leather (bikhoba) or banana bark (kamakhola) were used. It is rare for Bukusu dirges to be heard in public graveyards since Babukusu seldom bury their dead in cemeteries. Even if one dies miles away from home, every effort is made to transport the body to one’s ancestral home for burial in order to ‘appease one’s spirit’ which would otherwise have caused untold suffering to one’s relations ‘for being abandoned in a foreign land’, observes Selina Nabangala (OI on 1st April, 2013). Even long after burial the wishes of the deceased must be respected lest his/her spirit punish the living, contends Nabangala.

While riding in or atop a hearse, both men and women, just like they did in the colonial era, sing dirges in Lubukusu or Kiswahili. A common Kiswahili dirge sung is “utawacha mali yako”, i.e., “you will (upon death, leave behind all your earthly wealth.” This song urges people to cultivate good social relationships and not to allow material wealth to segregate them from other members of society. However, the vibrancy of singing and dancing at a funeral is determined, as it was in the pre-European period, by the cause of death. For example, if the deceased hanged himself/herself, he/she is buried at night with no singing or dancing, “for he wished death upon himself,” posits Stephen Manyasi (OI on 30th December, 2012). No funeral wakes or rites are held in their honour and they are usually removed from the house to the grave through the back door (kwandiangu) or through a hole dug in the back wall (Bulimo 2013b:497). As done among the Banyankore/ Bahooro of Uganda, the tree upon which the deceased hanged himself/herself is uprooted to the last root and burnt to ashes (Tumusiime 2011:63). Others whose bodies are moved for burial through the back door are spinsters, bachelors and barren women. It is believed their spirits are likely to leave behind a curse of childlessness.

Another “unusual” death is that of an initiate in the seclusion house (mwikombe). Such a death is treated as a serious misfortune which remains in people’s memory for a long time. When an initiate dies under such circumstances, no dirges are sung for him. He is secretly buried at night in his father’s compound by his fellow initiates (Bulimo 2013b:500) usually on a rubbish mound (khwirumbi). However, such deaths are extremely rare. In the pre-independence Bukusu society, relatives and neighbours of a deceased person did not engage in farming or manual work before burial. This was meant to give them time to join other mourners in singing dirges and to console the bereaved, observes Selina Nabangala (OI on 1st April, 2013). However, in the contemporary Bukusu society, manual work is usually

suspended on the burial day. Only close relatives of the deceased may abstain from farming until after burial.

Today, a dead Omubukusu does not have to be a Christian to be buried in a Christian tradition. If the wife or husband to the deceased is a Christian, church members will visit a day or two after death is reported, to condole with the bereaved family even if the dead person was not a Christian 'for the sake of their member.' They console the bereaved by way of worship, praises, thanksgiving, singing and dancing the way it was done in the colonial period. They sing and dance to the Lord for the gift of life which has now been returned to God, the author of life, affirms Father Christopher Wanyonyi (OI on 28th March, 2013). Music was integral to both Christian and non-Christian burials in the colonial Bukusu society. This is still the case among the contemporary Babukusu. It is provided for vigil, funeral liturgy and processions, observes Father Wanyonyi.

Among the present-day Babukusu, a body often lies in state for at least a day for public viewing before burial. This period, as was the case in the colonial era, may be extended for prominent individuals. In such cases, the body is preserved in a mortuary and later taken to an open area such as a football ground for public viewing. Some women mourners upon viewing the body become so overcome by grief that they demonstrate their anger against death by wailing and rolling on the ground. In the pre- and early colonial period when women were dressed in sisal waist wrappers and sheets of cloth across their shoulders, the rolling on the ground never happened as they could easily have exposed their nakedness, argues Simon Wepukhulu (OI on 27th March, 2013). Some men will arrive armed with clubs and walking sticks with which they symbolically threaten death physically (Alembi 2002:106). But women who are not armed and are therefore helpless, opt to show their frustration and anger by rolling on the ground, contends Alembi.

The significance of singing, wailing and chanting by mourners has remained the same as in the colonial and precolonial periods. These three activities serve both psychological and social functions. Socially, mourners, through the singing of dirges, express solidarity with the bereaved family. Psychologically, it provides emotional support to the bereaved family who must know that they are not alone in grief. At the individual level, observes Alembi (ibid), the singing, wailing and chanting help to release tension and pent up emotions which if suppressed could lead to health risks. Although Alembi focused his study on the Banyore, a sub-ethnic group of the Luyia community, his findings relate to the importance of dirges among Babukusu. Nenola-Kallio (cited in Alembi 2002:54) affirms that through dirges, death is adjusted to life. It is recovered from and a meaning for it is found. A mourner in the Bukusu community demonstrates her/his sympathy for the deceased through the texts of sung laments. This study found that chants performed in Bukusu funerals are usually monophonic melodies sung or recited. However, their meanings are not as clear as those of laments.

Among Babukusu, individual mourners usually sing laments in Lubukusu. This extemporaneous character of laments among Babukusu predates colonialism. Continuity is also observed in the ways some dirges are sung among Babukusu. From the precolonial era, Babukusu have been singing dirges in two ways. This also occurs among the Akan of Ghana. The first style adopts a wailing voice in which the words of the dirge are “spoken” and the contours of the melody reflect the speech contours of the performer, sometimes accompanied by a few tuneful fragments (Nketia, cited in Finnegan 1970:163-164). There are special musical conventions for the treatment of interjections and this type of delivery also gives scope for the use of the sob, which is often uttered on the syllable *hi* and rapidly repeated several times. In the second style, a fairly normal singing voice is used, with melodic contours resembling those of songs. Although there are usually traditional tunes associated with dirges, the mourner may make up his/her own tune.

However, in the colonial period, Christian Missionaries introduced a third way of singing dirges among Babukusu, i.e., using transcribed songs with predetermined verbal-texts and tunes which were both “trans-gender” and “trans-age”. Such dirges could, therefore, be sung during funerals of women, men and children. An example is the “it is over” dirge. Traditionally, a dirge was specific. It captured circumstances surrounding the death, age of the deceased, his/her name and the significance of the death.

A church service today, as it was in the colonial period, may be contacted a day or two before burial. The service which is dominated with singing and dancing, focuses on celebrating the life of the deceased while emphasizing the Christian (and Bukusu) belief in everlasting life and that death is simply a means to transitioning to it, argues Reverend Charles Wakhisi (OI on 1st February, 2013). In fact, Babukusu refer to death as “sleep” through which one transits to the spirit world. For example, while delivering the news of her husband’s death to her relatives, Margaret Musamia informed them that “omusakhulu kakhakona,” i.e., “the old man has slept” (OI on 17th December, 2012). The deeper meaning of this euphemism, argues Alembe (2002:154) is that death does not annihilate but rather is a form of sleep and soon the deceased will wake up into a new life. As such composers of dirges among Babukusu, have from the precolonial period, been creating content hinged on the premise that death is the beginning of a permanent ontological departure of an individual from mankind to spirithood.

In demonstrating foreign language accommodation and application during funerals, Babukusu, particularly Protestants, still sing the colonial-era Luwanga dirge ‘musalaba ingasi’ (the cross is a ladder [to heaven]). This song proclaims that God created each person for eternal life and that his son Jesus Christ, following his death on the cross and resurrection, broke the bondage of sin and death that surrounded humanity. Thus, by adhering to God’s

teachings, the living are told, they will meet their beloved deceased persons in heaven through Christ, the ladder. Families strive to bury their dead in a ‘dignified’ way. A rich family may conduct an elaborate burial with long speeches from invited dignitaries who are mainly politicians and prolonged performances from music choirs.

In a semblance of the colonial-epoch arrangement, on the burial day, prelude and postlude choral dirges are sung, the eulogy said and scriptures read. The only difference with the colonial performances is the increased number of mourners/singers in the contemporary Bukusu community. The scripture read may relate to the life of the deceased or is aimed at bringing comfort to his/her family. In some cases, the hymns to be sung are printed and distributed among the mourners before the funeral service commences. This is done to encourage the participation of the mourners in singing the hymns. The transcription of dirges for “ordinary” mourners never happened in the colonial age as “most Babukusu were still illiterate,” contends Reverend Charles Wakhisi (OI on 1st February, 2013).

The hymns, though mostly sung in Lubukusu, exhibit European influence. This has its genesis in the colonial era. Kubik (1981) asserts that “many East African musical forms which are regarded as traditional show influence of diatonic scale, imported with church and school music, as well as that of three- and four- voice part-writing of nineteenth century hymns and church songs.” Indeed this study established that most choirs singing in Bukusu funerals do so perform scripted music broken down in scales with different sections assigned diverse voices. In areas which are linguistically dominated by Babukusu, Catholic Masses are usually sung in Luwanga followed by a type of Gregorian chant in Lubukusu. The singing, while rousing and accompanied by drumming, is “truly recollected and solemn” (Ogola and Roche 2008:21).

During the colonial era, observes Ssempijja (2012:136), Africans were not given a free hand to compose sacred music. But today they do compose songs. By promoting local composers, argues Ssempijja, the local church asserts control and authority over its territory. For this reason, during funerals, each church among Babukusu has a choir which presents dirges accompanied by various instruments including those with African origins, e.g., the kayamba (see Plate 19). On the burial day, as it was done in the colonial days, postlude hymns and scriptures are read and prayers said at the graveside. A choir leads the funeral procession with somber hymns. Behind the pallbearers is the immediate family marching in a dual formation, men on the right and women on the left according to the levels of seniority (Bulimo 2013b:494). Those familiar with the dirges the choir is singing usually sing along. Flowers and a cross may be placed on the covered grave as the singing is being concluded. Other items placed on the grave are the implements used to dig it and a bowl to collect monetary offerings from mourners who arrive late. Such late comers may also pray and sing short dirges at the graveside, observes Reverend Charles Wakhisi (OI on 1st February, 2013).

The precolonial tradition of playing music on the day a deceased person is buried among Babukusu continues to date. Some families invite musicians who perform live music while others play recorded music. Bulimo (2013b:472) while discussing Bukusu funeral rites posits that at night musicians provide entertainment with guitars, drums, bottles, rattles and assorted instruments. This type of entertainment, he argues, is essential in a funeral as it helps to divert attention from deep sorrow occasioned by death and is part of the healing process. However, Bulimo fails to mention that harpists, fiddlers, chimbengele players and chikengele instrumentalists often feature among the orchestras providing entertainment at funerals in the Bukusu community.

Some musicians have, from the 2000s, introduced into the Bukusu musical culture an uncharacteristically small harp with a very small resonator for pitch variation, posits Joash Murutu (OI on 5th August, 2012). This is meant to bring the harp on par with the guitar in terms of sound. According to Wafula (2012:89) the pitching of the harp is determined by the size of the resonator, thickness of the strings and the length of the arms. The smaller the resonator, the higher the pitch and the bigger the resonator the lower the pitch, argues Wafula. Short arms (with the resultant short strings) on a harp, asserts Wafula, are responsible for high pitch and the pitch grows lower with the lengthening of the arms. Thick strings produce low sound while thin ones produce high pitches. Kasembeli Watila is an example of musicians using harps with very small arms and resonators.

The “removing of sickness” obsequies⁸¹ which predate colonialism and which among other rites entail bereaved families being consoled through the “stepping onto the arena”⁸² ritual is still performed three days after burial. The latter remains a concinnity. The funeral orators who lead in this ritual use elegiac poetry and the singing of unaccompanied hortatory songs to counsel the bereaved and those in attendance as did their predecessors in the precolonial period. Their chants remain highly diversified, employ a verbal mode that is in-between speech and song, but which is closer to song than speech. The aleatory chanting has also maintained its precolonial characteristics of free rhythm, quick tempo and qualitative meterisation, argues Yona Nabichikhi (OI on 8th September, 2012). However, the content of the oratorio has, to a larger extent changed. Mukhwana (1996:24) argues that the messages and themes of the orations today are blended with modernity to suit the present society. The youth, he contends, are advised to use the pen and the book as their weapons compared to the bow and arrow as was the case in the past. These teachings are often in the form of songs

⁸¹ See description of the “removing of sickness” ritual on pp. 91-92.

⁸² See description of the “stepping onto the arena” ceremony on pp. 92-96.

which are used to “serve as anecdotes and analogies that give pedagogical lessons related to contemporary social circumstances” posits Wasike (2013:111).

According to Finnegan (1970:83) one of the functions of oral poetry in Africa is to record history. Indeed the “stepping onto the arena” oratorical texts among Babukusu often capture the history of the community. Until the 1980s, the “stepping onto the arena” chants were performed live and were never recorded. However, some elders charged with conducting this ceremony began recording their wise counsel on CDs and cassettes in the 1990s. Today, videos of the ritual can be viewed on You-Tube. The late John Ngonelo Wanyonyi Manguliechi’s teachings and those of Mumali Situlungu, for example, can be watched on You-tube or listened to from a cassette or CD player. This has been motivated by hunger for monetary gains.

Advancement in technology has seen changes in the selling and marketing of recorded dirges and other genres of Bukusu music. Musicians in the Bukusu community, until 2000, predominantly sold their music through music outlets/stores in the urban centres in Bukusuland and beyond. However, most of them have now embraced digital technology and are selling their music not only through shops, but also on the on-line platform with the help of the Music Copyright Society of Kenya, observes Wanjala Okumu (OI on 6th April, 2013). Apart from the on-line platform, music is also sold digitally through the use of scratch cards. This has made it easy for the government to earn revenue by taxing musicians. In the pre- and colonial Kenya, Bukusu musicians were rewarded in kind and in cash. They were not taxed. However, today, the government takes 26% in taxes per download and the artist is paid between 10% and 12% in royalties, posits Odidi (2013:10). Before 2000, funeral orators and other Bukusu musicians marketed themselves mainly through live performances and their recorded music. However, thanks to the digital revolution, musicians are now able to market

themselves directly to the consumers through toll-free services such as online video sharing network, You-Tube or social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Their music can be accessed through Kenya's largest mobile network provider, Safaricom, which offers MP3 music tracks and ringtone downloads on its Safaricom Live portal.

The audience of the funeral orator was traditionally segregated with women, men and children sitting separately. However, today this sitting arrangement is often violated (see Plate 9) although orators remain male and the ritual is performed for men only as was the case in the pre-independence period. During the colonial age, the lung'anyo ceremony in which relatives and friends of the deceased reconvene in his/her home forty days after burial, Christian and secular music was sung throughout the night to condole and entertain the bereaved as a way of showing oneness with them. The same happens today and when they gather for the "smearing of the grave" ritual which is observed at least two years after burial. Some families still invite musicians who play live music during the lung'anyo and the "smearing of the grave" ceremonies. Some youths often organize parallel celebrations where they listen and dance to recorded music as a means of whiling away the night. "This so-called matanga dance," contends Omusolo (2013:16), "is a repackaging of the widely-loathed and banned 'local dance' of the 1980s and 1990s". He argues that the youth have turned the event into a dating and clubbing occasion resulting in unwanted pregnancies and fatherhood. In continuing with what began in the colonial age, some Babukusu celebrate anniversaries to mark the day their relatives died. For example, the late Vice-President Michael Wamalwa's family celebrated the eleventh anniversary since his death on 23rd August, 2014, with a memorial service heavily punctuated with Christian music in his residence in Kitale.

Before the 1970s, the musicians performing in funeral rituals and other functions sang mainly in Lubukusu. However, from the 1970s, musicians such as Wesley Barasa, Wasike wa

Musungu, Peter Wanundu and Stephen Khaemba began singing in Lubukusu and occasionally Kiswahili, affirms Christopher Mupalia (OI on 6th September, 2012). Some of the musicians have interacted with life in urban settings and are therefore fluent in Kiswahili. Those who have received at least Primary level education are able to communicate in English. The knowledge of these languages has resulted in Bukusu musicians using them in the same lines, a concept known as neologism. Tanuri (cited in Masasabi 2011:147) describes the term ‘neologism’ as the use of words with roots in English and other African languages. “Bukusu musicians,” observes Masasabi (2011:147) “mix languages due to lack of equivalent words in the Bukusu language.”

However, an onomasiological inquiry into music recorded in Lubukusu by the researcher reveals that Masasabi’s position is not entirely accurate. For example, David Barasa’s Jua Kali Band sings about “his” mother who is a prostitute in a track titled “Mama mzazi.” These words are repeatedly sang in both Kiswahili and Lubukusu lines. This is despite the fact that there is an equivalent of “Mama mzazi” in Lubukusu which is “Mayi omwibuli.” In the contemporary Bukusu society, dance, as it was in the pre-and colonial epoch, remains gendered and symbolic. Women and men’s body movements often differ when certain dances are performed. Male dances such as the singorio-like funeral performance and a circumcision candidate’s dance involve greater vigour, jumping and leaping into the air and utilizes more space as compared with the trans-gender “shaking of shoulders” and lipala (moving legs forth and back) dances. In lipala and “shaking of shoulders”, both female and male movements are horizontal and similar. Apart from the “khukhupa kamabeka”⁸³ variety of the “shaking of shoulders” dance, lipala and kamabeka can generally be considered as “soft” dances since they do not require the use of a lot of energy.

⁸³ See description of the dance on p.69.

Funeral songs, unlike in the precolonial and colonial Bukusu society, have found expression in sports. The commonly sung dirge in games involving Luyia teams is the luwele (it is over) song. In the dirge, the name of the losing team becomes the name of the deceased individual. The researcher has on several occasions heard fans of the Abaluyia Football Club (AFC) Leopards singing the dirge “it is over” when their team defeats their opponents and in particular their archrivals, Gor Mahia (K’Ogalo) football club. The song texts usually repeated are “Luwele khulanga K’Ogalo, luwele” (It is over calling K’Ogalo, it is over.” This means Gor Mahia as a team is “dead,” their team, AFC Leopards, has killed it. Among Babukusu, music, as was the case in the precolonial and colonial periods, has continued to embrace speech so intimately that the two remain inseparable. The use of speech as verbal formulas gives continuity to musical form (Wachsmann 1970). Guitarists, harpists, fiddlers and funeral orators have all continued to use the precolonial artistic style of blending music and speech. However, for their music to appeal to the wider Luyia community, some Bukusu musicians have opted to blend Bukusu oral texts with those borrowed from other Luyia dialects. For example, in a 2014 rendition titled “The leopard has arrived”, Kasembeli Watila uses the term “Ingwe” (Leopard) which is associated with most Luyia sub-groups rather than “engwe” as used in his Lubukusu.

The ultimate ritual performed for persons who died far away from home known as khulotia⁸⁴ which involves chanting, singing and dancing is still performed today albeit with some modifications. In instances where a person dies in a hospital overseas, for example, his close family members travel there to bring his spirit home. The spirit of Michael Wamalwa, the late Vice-President who died in London’s Royal Free Hospital, was fetched from there on August 14th 2015, twelve years after his burial by, among others, his brother Eugene Wamalwa. Some items which are symbolic of his spirit were carried from the hospital and

⁸⁴ See details of the ritual on pp.100-101

brought to his graveside. Traditional celebrations then followed at the graveside (Bwayo, 2015:20).

Conclusion

It is apparent that Christianity, urbanization, technology and political developments in post-independence Kenya have greatly impacted the performance of Bukusu birth, circumcision, marriage and death songs and dances. The traditional birth songs and dances are, however, waning. Christianity refers to them as ungodly and some educated Babukusu dismiss them as obscene and archaic. This has led to their decline. The birth of a child is in most cases, instead celebrated in a Christian manner and in some cases there may be no communal celebration at all. Church leaders have also continued to oppose the traditional circumcision of boys in Bungoma County. They instead urge parents to take their children to hospital for the rite where it is done hygienically and painlessly. This thinking is supported by a majority of the “modern,” urbane and educated populations in the Bukusu community. They argue that the traditional ritual is expensive, backward and exposes the candidates to HIV and AIDS and other infections. However, there are those who still support the practice with ‘contemporary adaptations.’

There has been significant innovation in relation to musical instruments of Babukusu. For example, pipe trumpets, tin shakers for “chiyukas” and plastic water containers for drums are in use today. Quasi-Christian families sing Christian hymns on the eve of their son’s circumcision but invite a traditional circumciser to initiate him in the morning. The castigation of the traditional Bukusu circumcision by the church and ‘progressive’ Babukusu has significantly undermined the performance of traditional circumcision songs and dances. Death rituals are largely Christianized among Babukusu. Many of the dirges although sang in Lubukusu, have a Biblical extraction. Some are sung in a choral manner. The manner in which music among Babukusu is disseminated has changed over the years. In the 1960s and

1970s, the vinyl was in use. However, in the 1980s through the 1990s the cassette or tape dominated as a tool in the recording of Bukusu music. From 2000, CDs, VCDs, DVDs, memory cards are in use. As such the current trends in Bukusu neo-folk music should be understood against the backdrop of three elements. These are, first, the dissemination of various styles of music from other parts of the world by means of radio, television, internet and modern recording technology, secondly, the availability of western instruments especially the guitar and keyboard and, thirdly, popular music trends invented by the young people which have syncretically incorporated the above two elements.

The traditional performance contexts of the harp and fiddle music which included beer parties, marriage, and funeral ceremonies have today given way to modern contexts which have arisen as a result of changes in social organization that occurred during the colonial era. The first of these is the political life of Babukusu. With independence in Kenya came the need to elect representatives to various political offices. During political campaigns musicians are invited to entertain the public and sing songs praising politicians. Some of the renditions sung in these occasions were traditionally performed when celebrating rites of passage. Bukusu music has today spread to urban areas where it is performed in concerts. It is no longer confined to rural areas as it was the case in the pre-independence period.

In the next chapter, we summarize and conclude the findings of this study. We also make recommendations to be considered by the government, scholars, policy makers and researchers.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a summary of the research findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

7.2 Summary of research findings

This research revealed that Bukusu songs have from the precolonial period, remained highly repetitive. Short musical patterns which are either rhythmic or harmonic are repeated continually throughout a composition. Repetition is common in Bukusu songs because it elongates music and helps the listener understand the message in the song texts better.

This study found that Bukusu music and dance in the precolonial period was a source of documentation about the political, economic and social life of Babukusu. Bukusu music and dance have continued to play these functions to date.

The research established that some precolonial musical instruments such as limoyi, a bow-like fiddle, are no longer in use. They were rendered irrelevant with the coming of modern European instruments such as the accordion and harmonica. Some traditional dances, for example, singorio too were abandoned after they ran out of favour. However, the traditional kamabeka dance remains the flagship dance of the Bukusu community.

This study found out that some traditional Bukusu embellishments associated with dance performances were discontinued in the colonial period after they ran out of fashion or as a result of colonial legislation. These include the use of seed-derived beads (butundi), iron spikes and pig teeth donned by circumcision candidates. The butundi were replaced with imported glass beads and instead of them being worn at the loin, they were worn across the chest following Babukusu's adoption of western clothes.

This study noted that there has been sustained diffusion of foreign musical traditions into the Bukusu society from the pre-European era. Some have since become part of Bukusu culture, e.g., the siilili said to have been borrowed from the Luo and the efumbo drum from Basamia. Some dances were also borrowed. Singorio was for instance learned from the Maasai while waltz was borrowed from the Europeans.

The introduction of Christianity and colonialism into the Bukusu society in the 20th century significantly altered the performance of Bukusu songs and dances. Missionaries fought against the performance of songs and dances they perceived as primitive and ungodly leading to the decline of particularly the “dance of twinship”. The type of education offered by Christian missionaries and the colonial government created elitists who viewed their own music and dance as backward and heathen and therefore did not wish to be associated with it. Participation in “twinship” and circumcision dances which are perceived as pagan and retrogressive has remained poor to date.

This study found that the colonial government’s engagement in the Second World War in which some Babukusu were recruited as carrier corps led to the introduction of new songs, foreign musical instruments and dances among Babukusu. The returning soldiers came with the accordion, harmonica and the guitar and they popularized the Waltz dance style in the community. They also modified the siilili giving it a second string.

This research revealed that during the postcolonial period, some Bukusu musicians have been syncretizing the traditional Bukusu with foreign musical traditions particularly European, Ganda, Gishu, Jamaican and Congolese traditions. For example, the harp is played alongside the guitar. The kamabeka dance is often fused with the Congolese ndombolo dance. However, we determined that some aspects of the precolonial Bukusu dance mannerisms persist to date. The precolonial Bukusu kamabeka dance, for example, and the harp remain

central in the successful performance of any neo-folk Bukusu music. The oral texts of important precolonial songs such as sioyayo and “we have killed an enemy” have remained the same from the precolonial period. These songs have remained the same because of their communicative value and historicity.

There are some forms of music that have, however, outlived their usefulness and have thus been abandoned or are on their deathbeds. For example, the circumcision song “Matere” and “Harambee” are no longer sung in their cultural contexts. We also established that there has been a continuous strong link between Bukusu folk and neo-folk music. Contemporary Bukusu music and dance derive their inspiration from traditional models but employ new techniques and materials. Most circumcision dance movements, for example, remain circular when performed in homes and linear when done on the paths despite the introduction of the Congolese ndombolo dance style in the initiation ritual. Musical accompaniments have equally demonstrated their ruggedness and adjustability to changes in the modern world of musicultural productions. For example, the basic structure of the traditional harp has not changed although it has mutated into varieties of up to twelve strings. Originally, it had seven strings. Bukusu music and dance have been appropriated into new socio-cultural matrices. They are performed in night clubs, churches and sports arenas in urban settings and often outside their cultural matrices. For example, circumcision songs are performed in beer parties, weddings, at airports (while welcoming a victorious team) and/or during sports competitions. Today’s musician, unlike the colonial and precolonial one, has partially translocated Bukusu music and dance into the multi-lingual urban environments due to the fact that towns are economically attractive and socially constructive. In such settings, he sings in sheng but as a non-professional, he remains focused on his rural homeland where he farms or runs small businesses. He only remains in town temporarily.

This research noted that Bukusu folk dance movements from the precolonial epoch have remained repetitive. Usually, dancers move forward, backward, left, right, roll on the ground, leap in the air or move in a circular motion. The most important dancers are protected from unintentional collisions and are therefore normally at the centre. However, the Congolese ndombolo and the Jamaican reggae dance that some dancers in the community have adopted use both repetitive movements and variations. Movements performed at the beginning of the blended dances are often developed, enlarged, interwoven and modified as the dancing progresses unlike Bukusu traditional dances which are repetitive.

The emergent socio-economic and political developments in Kenya have also significantly led to change in the content of Bukusu music and dance. For example, political songs have found their way into circumcision and wedding ceremonies and are often used as campaign media in political rallies.

7.3 CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to examine change and continuity in Bukusu music and dance culture from 1900 to 2012. From its findings, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions: That Bukusu music and dance culture has from the precolonial era been a product of the society's traditions and its interaction with other societies. It is a dynamic, and not static phenomenon, hence the Bukusu saying buli eselukho na mwenya kwayo, i.e., each generation has its own music. The kamabeka dance has remained the community's flagship from the precolonial age. It is an art that symbolizes the Bukusu society. For this reason, the variants of the kamabeka dance have not changed since the precolonial period.

The Bukusu community has greatly been influenced by global technological advances not only in communication media but also in creation, production and dissemination of its music. In the precolonial era, for example, the community's music was oral and was performed live.

But during the colonial epoch, the recording and transcription of the music which began and has continued to date. Computers and other forms of audio production equipment have progressively become affordable thus enabling Bukusu artists to explore the new wave of production techniques and styles. The traditional Bukusu musical landscape has been transformed with the introduction of foreign musical instruments. Beginning in the 1930s instruments such as the fiddle, guitar, piano, the harmonica and accordion have been incorporated into most of Bukusu orchestras. The introduction of foreign instruments among Babukusu led to diverse rhythms which in turn resulted in the performance of new dance styles in the community such as ndombolo, matengeya and waltz. However, the tempo and rhythmic arrangements of the sounds of industrial European instruments have, in some cases, been domesticated by some Bukusu musicians to suit the performance of the kamabeka dance.

Music text transcription, which began in the colonial period, has substantially changed the manner in which Bukusu music is performed. It has allowed musicians to compose, arrange and perform Bukusu music within Western structural parameters. For example, during the annual schools and colleges' music competitions, transcribed wedding and circumcision songs are performed to European harmony, tempo, rhythm and consonance standards but outside their cultural matrix. Bukusu music and dance have remained functional just as they were in the pre-European age. They have continued to play significant roles in both enculturation and inculturation. Through them the community's beliefs, history, traditions and virtues are relayed to the younger generations although most songs remain monothematic as they were in the precolonial epoch. With the attainment of independence in 1963 and the subsequent alteration in the Bukusu political environment, musicians from the society have been recording popular political music and singing songs praising politicians during political gatherings. Some wedding and circumcision songs have been appropriated to suit such

functions. The social kamabeka dance is also often performed to entertain politicians and crowds during national holidays in Nairobi and Bungoma Counties.

However, some songs and dances performed among Babukusu from the 1980s we found out, have been devoid of any meaningful and useful symbolic or explicit messages. A lot of innovations have continued to occur in as far as Bukusu music and dances are concerned. In the colonial period, for example, sisal fibers were fastened onto the chinyimba bells and whistles used for the first time during the performance of circumcision dances. During the post-independence era, water pipes and containers have been converted into aerophones and drums respectively, a miniature harp derived from the standard one among other innovations. Centonization (composing music using pre-existing material) has also been practiced since the pre-colonial era with innovative musicians using pre-existing rhythmic foundations to compose “new” songs. For example, Namatete Band in 2012 used the rhythm of the “Matere” song first sang in the colonial period to compose a modern version of the song with new content. The airing of Bukusu music on radio which began in the 1950s expanded in the 21st century when FM radio stations such as Nyota FM, Ingo FM, Mulembe FM, West FM, Surwe FM, and Radio Mambo which broadcast in Lubukusu were established. The introduction of both the electronic and print media in Kenya brought Bukusu oral texts and performances to new audiences within the country as well as beyond. Music and dance genres which previously were performed within the confines of the Bukusu community have been exposed through the internet, radio, television and other forms of media to the entire world.

Music and dance among Babukusu have, from the precolonial period, continued to be highly gendered. The playing of the harp, guitar, fiddle, flute and the singing of revered traditional songs such as the sioyayo, for example, is dominated by men. Women do not play

any leading role in the “stepping onto the arena” funeral rite. They traditionally were relegated to using hoes as musical instruments during weddings. However, they were allowed to participate in almost all the musical activities of Babukusu but mainly as dancers and singers. But from the 1970s, female students have been playing the harp during music competitions involving learning institutions but not for general entertainment. Some musical instruments are also gendered. There are female and male leg rattles. The harp has male and female strings.

The study showed that as a result of globalization and technological advancement, Bukusu music became commercialized in the post-independence period. The music is today sang in a mixture of Lubukusu, English and Kiswahili and recorded in studios. It is then sold for monetary gain. However, this study established that colonialism, Christianity, modern technology, globalization and the postcolonial socio-economic and political developments simply accelerated the pace of change but have all failed to annihilate the entire musical traditions of Babukusu. The change has been radical but not total.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A scholarly research should be undertaken to establish the significance of neo-folk music and the need to integrate it in the music curriculum particularly of pre-primary and primary school. This is because traditional music and dance are not well articulated in the school music curriculum yet they are major media through which a community safeguards, enhances and transmits its cultural heritage.

This study was limited to birth, circumcision, wedding and death songs and dances. A historical study of other genres of music and dance not captured in this research should be undertaken. This will result in a more comprehensive analysis of the musical culture of the Bukusu community. A comparative study of Bukusu musical traditions and those of her

neighbours should be carried out to determine similarities and differences in song texts, instrumentation and dance performances and the implications of the outcome.

Aesthetics in Bukusu verbal arts such as praises (bilao), grunts, laments and ululations should be studied in detail in order to document their musical forms and expression. A study on compositional techniques of Bukusu traditional circumcision and wedding songs should be undertaken with the intention of establishing how such techniques can be enhanced and used in other genres such as modern choral music. Finally, research should be undertaken to determine the influence of studio recording technology on the performance of Bukusu circumcision and wedding songs.

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APPENDICES

A1 Research Instrument

Question Guideline for the study population

Name of respondent	
Age	
Sex	
Place of interview	
Designation	
Date of interview	

1 Early History of Babukusu

- a) i) Trace the origin and migration of Babukusu into their present homeland
- ii) In the pre- and post-colonial era, how have Babukusu been relating socially, economically and politically with their neighbours the Batachoni, Bakhayo, Batura, Banyala, Bawanga, Batesio, Basaboti, Bakabalasi and Bakisu?

- b) Describe the social, political and economic organization of Babukusu in the pre-colonial era

2. To identify the nature of Bukusu music and dance from 1900 to 2007

- i) Identify the types of music and dances performed among Babukusu from 1900 to 1920, 1920 to 1963, 1963 to 1980, 1980 to 1990, 1990 to 2000, 2000 to 2012
- ii) Explain the origins of the various Bukusu dances and songs
- iii) Were there any taboos associated with music and dance? If yes, explain
- iv) Identify Bukusu traditional music instruments and costumes. Give their functions.
- v) Name popular Bukusu musicians who entertained people between 1900 and 1963, 1963 and 1978, 1978 and 2003, 2003 and 2012
- vi) Briefly comment on the performance and presentation of Bukusu music between
 - a) 1900 and 1930, 1960 and 1970, 1970 and 1980, 1980 and 1990, 1990 and 2000, 2000 and 2012
 - b) Identify the types of traditional Bukusu dances among Babukusu in the above periods

3. To establish the impact of electronic mass media on Bukusu music

- i) In what ways has the internet, radio , television and mobile phone impacted Bukusu music?
- ii) How often do you listen to Bukusu music on radio, internet and mobile phone?
- ii) What music recording technology was there between 1900 and 1960,1961 and 1970, 1971 and 1980, 1981and 1990, 1991 and 2000, 2001 and 2012?
- iii) How have these new technologies impacted on Bukusu music and dance?
- iv) In what ways has the mobile phone impacted on Bukusu music and dance?
- iv) In what ways has the internet impacted the Bukusu music and dance?

4. To identify the functions of Bukusu songs and dances

- i) What were the functions of Bukusu songs and dances between 1900 and 1920, 1920 and 1963, 1963 and 1978, 1978 and 2003, 2003 and 2012?
- ii) Have you benefited from Bukusu music and dance? If yes, how?
- iii) Are there any taboos or restrictions relating to the performance of Bukusu songs and dances? If yes, identify and explain them

5. To analyze the presentation and utility of Bukusu folk music and dances between 1900 and 2012

- i) How were Bukusu music and dances presented to the audience
 - a) Before 1900?
 - b) During the colonial period?

c) Between 1963 and 2012?

i) Do you own a radio? If yes, how often do you listen to Bukusu music programmes?

ii) Do you own a TV set? If yes, how often do you watch Bukusu music programmes?

6. To establish the impact of political and media freedom on Bukusu music

i) Comment on media freedom in Kenya during Colonial era [1900 to 1963], Kenyatta`s regime [1963 to 1978], Moi`s regime [1978 to 2002], Kibaki`s reign [2003 to 2012]

ii) How has the radio and television stations been utilizing Bukusu music between 1927 and 1962, 1963 and 1978, 1978 and 2003, 2003 and 2012?

iii) Identify the radio and television programmes which feature Bukusu music

iv) Which ones do you tune in most? Give reasons for your answer

v) How does your favourite TV and radio station utilize Bukusu traditional songs?

vi) a) Apart from the radio and TV, is there any other groups or persons who utilize Bukusu songs and dances?

b) If yes, name them

c) How do they make use of Bukusu music and dance?

d) Is the use of Bukusu music by television, radio and internet increasing or declining?

e) Please explain your answer

vii) a) Are Bukusu songs and dances expressed only in rural areas?

b) If your answer is no, explain why performance of Bukusu songs and dances is also observed in urban areas

7. Tracing the changes in Bukusu music from 1900 to 2012

i) Which was the first Christian church to be established in Bungoma County? When was it build?

ii) Which was the first school to be built in Bungoma County? When was it build?

iii) What was the impact of the introduction of Christianity in Bungoma on Bukusu music and dance?

iv) What was the impact of the introduction of Western education on Bukusu music and dance?

v) Name the traditional Bukusu music instruments and explain their usage

vi) Have any changes occurred in the Bukusu music and dance between 1900 and 2012 in terms of Content, dancing style, costume, instruments, language? If yes, describe the changes and give reasons for them.

vii) How did colonialism affect Bukusu music and dance?

viii) Did the first and second world wars influence Bukusu music and dance in any way? If yes, explain

x) Are there any genres of Bukusu folk songs and dances that have completely been abandoned?

xi) If yes, name them and give reasons for their disappearance

xii) a) Identify the elements of Bukusu folk music and dance that have not changed since the pre-colonial era.

b) Why do you think they haven't changed?

xiii) a) Name musicians among Babukusu who blend(ed) foreign and traditional dance styles and instruments

b) Why do you think they opted to blend Bukusu traditional instruments with foreign ones?

c) How has the use of western musical instruments impacted Bukusu music and dance?

8. Investigating government's role in causing change in and/or preserving Bukusu folk music and dances between 1963 and 2012

i) How did government policies (socio-economic, cultural and political) impacted Bukusu music and dance between 1963 and 1978, 1979 and 2002, 2003 and 2012?

ii) What roles have the following played in promoting and preserving Bukusu folk music between 1963 and 2012:

a) The Bomas of Kenya?

b) The Permanent Presidential Music Commission?

c) The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage?

d) The Communications Commission of Kenya?

e) The Ministry of Education?

ii) Were there any efforts by the colonial government to preserve Bukusu music and dances?

iii) If yes, explain how

iv) Apart from the government, name any other organizations involved in the preservation of folk music and dance in Kenya

v) Are there government policies that have interfered with the performance of indigenous music and dance in Kenya?

A2 Bukusu Clans

1.Baala	2.Baafu	3.Babichachi	4.Babuulo
5.Babuya	6.Babichu	7. Bakimweyi	8.Balwonja
9.Bayemba	10.Batukwiika	11.Bamuki	12.Balunda
13.Balako	14.Basefu	15.Baliuli	16.Batiilu(Bamutilu)
17.Batecho	18.Banamg'unda	19. Baemba	20.Basime
21.Bakibeti	22.Baumba	23.Barefu	24.Bakhoma
25.Baengele	26.Basombi	27. Bamusomi	28.Bayundo
29.Bakokho	30.Baliisa	31.Bamukoya	32.Basakali
33.Bata	34.Batakhwe	35.Bamwaya(Bamweya)	36.Bakimiyu
37.Basituyi	38.Bakangala	39.Baechalo	40.Bakhojo
41.Babaasaba	42.Bakisebe	43.Babaamanga	44.Bamasike
45.Bakamutebi	46.Bakamukongi	47.Basimaolia	48.Bachemwile
49.Basibende	50.Bakiyabi	51.Babuutu	52.Bakhone
53.Bamakhuli	54.Bawambwa	55.Balukulu	56.Bawasio
57. Bakuunga	58.Bakolati	59.Batasama	60.Basekese
61.Basamba	62.Balyango	63.Baundu	64.Bawaswa
65.Bamaeso	66.Babambo	67.Babaambocha	68.Bayaka
69.Bawele	70.Bafuumi	71.Bamufuni	72.Bakhiisa
73.Batindui	74.Bayaya	75.Batemulani	76.Bamakhanga
77.Basyenya	78.Banywaka	79.Bakobelo	80.Babenge
81.Baraki	82.Baluchwata	83.Bamoyayo	84.Bakongolo
85.Bakuta	86.Bamunaa	87.Banyangali	88.Bakhwaami

89. Bawandiambi 90. Bawabuya 91. Balende 92. Bakwangwachi
93. Baabiya 94. Barakaru 95. Bawayila 96. Bachoe
97. Bakisiayi 98. Bakhayaki 99. Basamu(Basamo) 100. Baluu
101. Basaniaka 102. Bakhekhe 103. Bachango 104. Bakinisu
105. Balanda 106. Bamacharia(Bacharia) 107. Basioya 108. Basikula
109. Bakikayi 110. Bang'oma 111. Bamulika 112. Basichongoli
113. Bakobolo 114. Bakhanywinywi 115. Bailifuma 116. Basimisi
117. Bayitu 118. Bausi 119. Bamalicha 120. Bako
121. Bachibino 122. Balumela 123. Bamakina 124. Bamaakita
125. Bamisoo 126. Bakalasi 127. Bakhali 128. Batanyi
129. Bakhelenge 130. Bamuyonga 131. Bamaandaji 132. Bachemayi
133. Bakipemuli 134. Bachesoli 135. Bakibwabi 136. Batobo
137. Bamulundi 138. Balindo 139. Basakwa 140. Bameme
141. Bakhurarwa 142. Bafulo 143. Bamulolwana 144. Batinga
145. Bang'ale 146. Bananjofu 147. Basibacho 148. Banasaka
149. Baburire 150. Bafumbula 151. Bamakambo 152. Bakusi
153. Basang'alo 154. Bayima 155. Bamuruba 156. Baliango
157. Bakembe 158. Basiondo 159. Bamululu 160. Basiloli
161. Baswuhu 162. Babwoba 163. Bakafisi 164. Baleya
165. Bakhufwe 166. Bakwaya 167. Bachemuluku 168. Bakhongo
169. Bamulundu 170. Bamalaba 171. Baboya 172. Bachambayi
173. Bakwangwa 174. Bakitang'a 175. Bakoyi 176. Baluleti
177. Bamukong'i 178. Banabombi 179. Baseenya 180. Basirikwa
181. Basonge 182. Bakhuma 183. Basaya 184. Bakewa

A3 List of informants

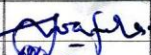



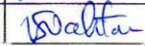



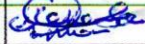
Name	Age	Sex	Date of interview	Place of interview
John Manguliechi	72	Male	7/4/93	Temba temba
Dr. Pius Kakai	51	Male	12/10/2011	Nairobi
Dominic Wetangula	85	Male	30/12/11	Sang'alo
Peter Akwabi	70	Male	15/1/12	Nairobi
Florence Nabwala	60	Female	14/4/2012	Bungoma town
Kasembeli Watila	40	Male	16/4/2012	Nairobi
Yakobo Malaba	94	Male	2/5/12	Marobo village
Wafula Hamisi	65	Male	13/5/2012	Mayanja Kibuke
Mary Masinde	46	Female	7/6/2012	Nairobi
Joash Murutu	89	Male	5/8/12	Kituni village
Nyongesa Sinino	50	Male	6/9/12	Busiraka village
Christopher Mupalia	70	Male	6/9/2012	Busiraka village
Yona Nabichikhi	86	Male	8/9/12	Busiraka village
Margaret Musamia	60	Female	17/12/12	Busiraka village
Jairus Khisa	65	Male	24/12/12	Kasosi village
Patrick Wangamati	77	Male	30/12/12	Bungoma Cultural Centre

Stephen Manyasi	75	Male	30/12/12	Bungoma Cultural Centre
Rev. Charles Wakhisi	83	Male	1/2/13	Kituni village
Simon Wepukhulu Mukonambi	96	Male	27/3/13	Ndengelwa village
Rose Wanyonyi	65	Female	27/3/13	Ndengelwa village
Raphael Wanyonyi	82	Male	27/3/13	Ndengelwa village
Father Christopher Wanyonyi	55	Male	28/3/13	Bungoma town
Selina Nabangala	82	Female	1/4/13	Mabanga village
Anicet Wafula	65	Male	1/4/13	Ndengelwa village
Khisa Sikolia	95	Male	1/4/13	Kasosi village
Petora Naliaka	72	Female	3/4/13	Busiraka village
Reuben Khaemba	70	Male	3/4/13	Bungoma town
Patrick Wanabule	99	Male	4/4/13	Kituni village
Protus Mukenya	65	Male	4/4/13	Busiraka village
Wanyonyi Walubafu	40	Male	6/4/13	Kamusinga sch.
Wanjala Okumu	35	Male	6/4/13	Kasosi village
Kennedy Nyongesa	54	Male	6/4/13	Cheng'wali
William Wekesa	60	Male	8/4/13	Nalutiri village
Joseph Matifari	37	Male	15/4/13	Bungoma high school
Patrick Mang'oli	58	Male	20/4/13	Nalutiri village
Benson Sichuru	34	Male	20/4/13	Mabanga village
Patrick Walubengo	42	Male	20/4/13	Mabanga Primary School
Edward Kaiga	40	Male	20/4/13	Chesamisi high school
Japheth Musa	38	Male	23/4/13	Kanduyi village
Timothy Makokha	37	Male	7/5/13	Bungoma town
David Barasa	38	Male	8/5/13	Kimilili town
Nalulingo Cultural group			10/5/13	Chwele town
Humphrey Wangila	38	Male	13/5/13	Nalondo high school
Simiyu Machio	37	Male	14/5/13	Nalondo high school
Andrew Makhapila	50	Male	14/5/13	Bokoli high school

Ferdinand Masinde	37	Male	14/5/13	Marobo high school
Penina Kerre	38	Female	23/5/13	Cheng'wali primary school
Beatrice Kerre	40	Female	23/5/13	Sikata primary school
Elias Randiga	44	Male	6/6/13	Nairobi
Abraham Mukoyani	55	Male	12/6/13	Nairobi
Simiyu Marombo	75	Male	8/9/13	Busiraka village
Beatrice Nanjala	62	Female	4/1/14	Busiraka village
Prof. Simiyu Wandibba	69	Male	23/1/14	Nairobi
John Mupalia	68	Male	24/1/14	Mukhe village
Nyukuri Khayota	36	Male	3/2/14	Nairobi
James Otung'uli	70	Male	11/4/14	Khelela village
Isaac Ngichabe	32	Male	11/4/14	Busiraka village
Josephat Wanambuku	58	Male	11/4/14	Sirisia market
Wesley Barasa	67	Male	11/4/14	Kulisiru village
Paxton Misiko	65	Male	20/4/14	Sitikho village
Peter Mulati	57	Male	14/10/14	Nairobi

A4 Consent form for use of photographs

By appending our signatures below, we the underlisted unequivocally and unconditionally give consent to Maurice Wekesa Barasa to use our photographs and/or those of our children as the case may be for the singular purpose of the said photographs forming part of his research work titled “Cultural Continuity and Change: A Study on Music and Dance Among the Bukusu of Bungoma County of Western Kenya, circa 1900-2012.”

Name	ID Card Number	Signature	Date
Anicet Wafula	0127592		1 st April 2013
Dismas Kusimba	27169190		6 th January 2014
Lydia Timona	21783806		12 th June 2014
Mesache Watitwa	1259138		2 nd August 2012
Stephen Waswa	8415062		2 nd August 2012
Patrick Mang'oli	6624096		2 nd August 2014
Peter Ndirangu	25367951		3 rd July 2012
Timothy Makokha	24262293		27 th May 2012
Vincent Wanjala	0130692		2 nd August 2012

A5 Research Authorization letter



**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

Telephone: +254-20-2213471,
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Fax: +254-20-318245, 318249
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Uhuru Highway
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref: No.

Date:

29th January, 2015

**NACOSTI/P/14/3849/4350
(Replacement)**

Maurice Wekesa Barasa
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research "*Cultural change and continuity: A historical reflection on music and dance among the Bukusu of Western Kenya, 1900 to 2007,*" I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Bungoma County** for a period ending **30th November, 2016.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Bungoma County** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit **two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf** of the research report/thesis to our office.


**DR. S. K. LANGAT, OGW
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO**

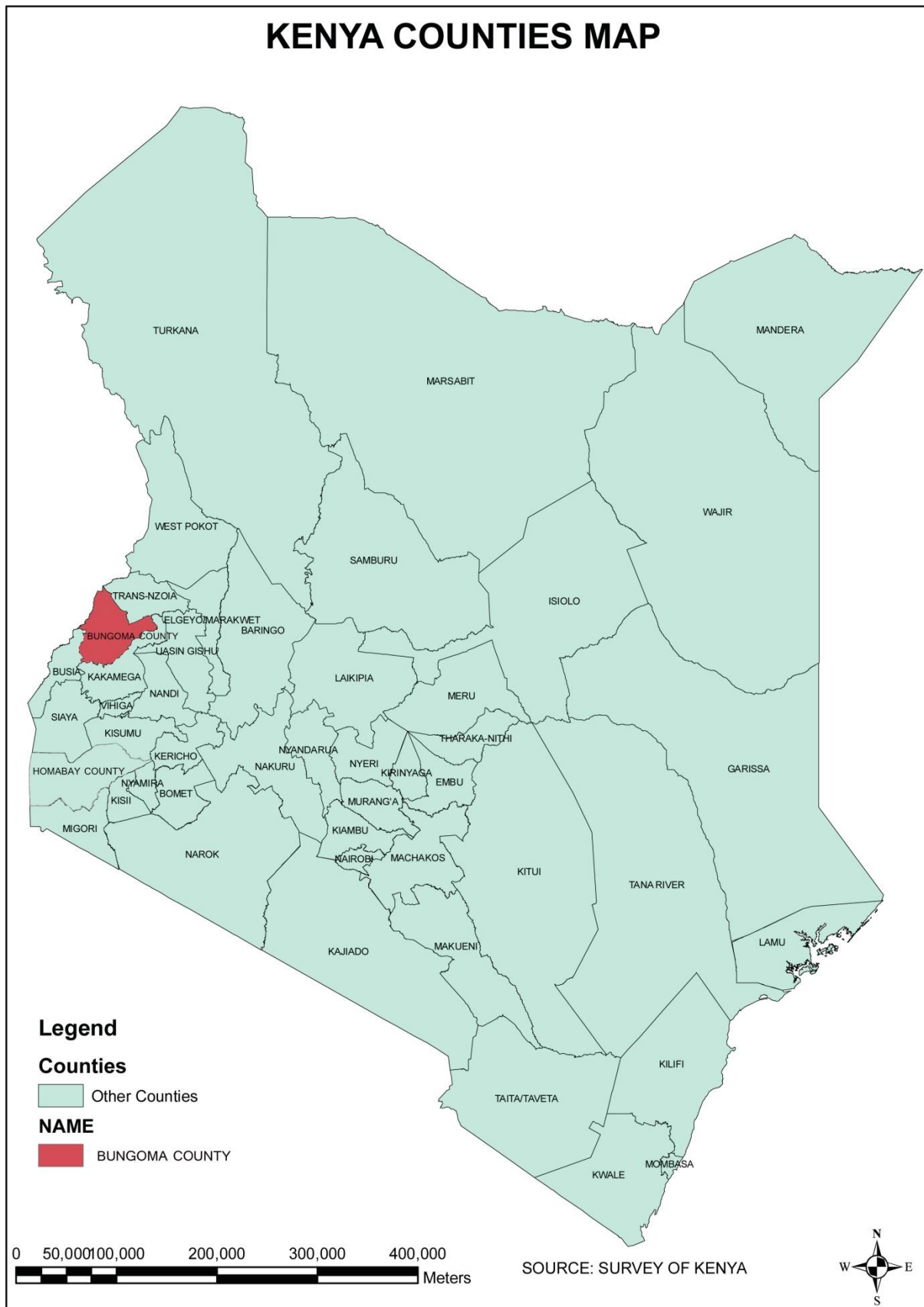
Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Bungoma County.

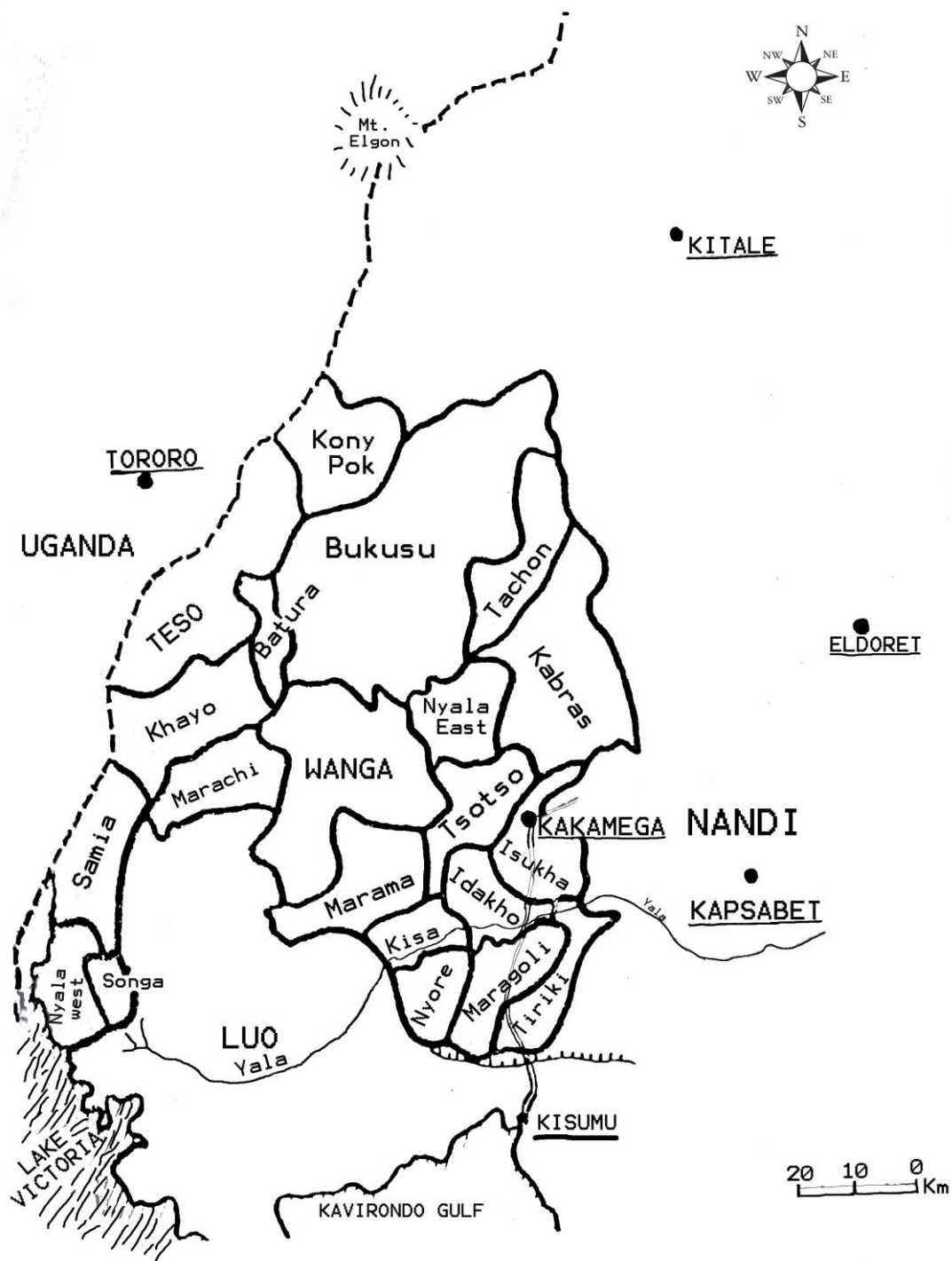
The County Director of Education
Bungoma County.



Map 1: Map of Kenya showing the location of Bungoma County



Map 3: Map showing the ethnic communities neighbouring Babukusu



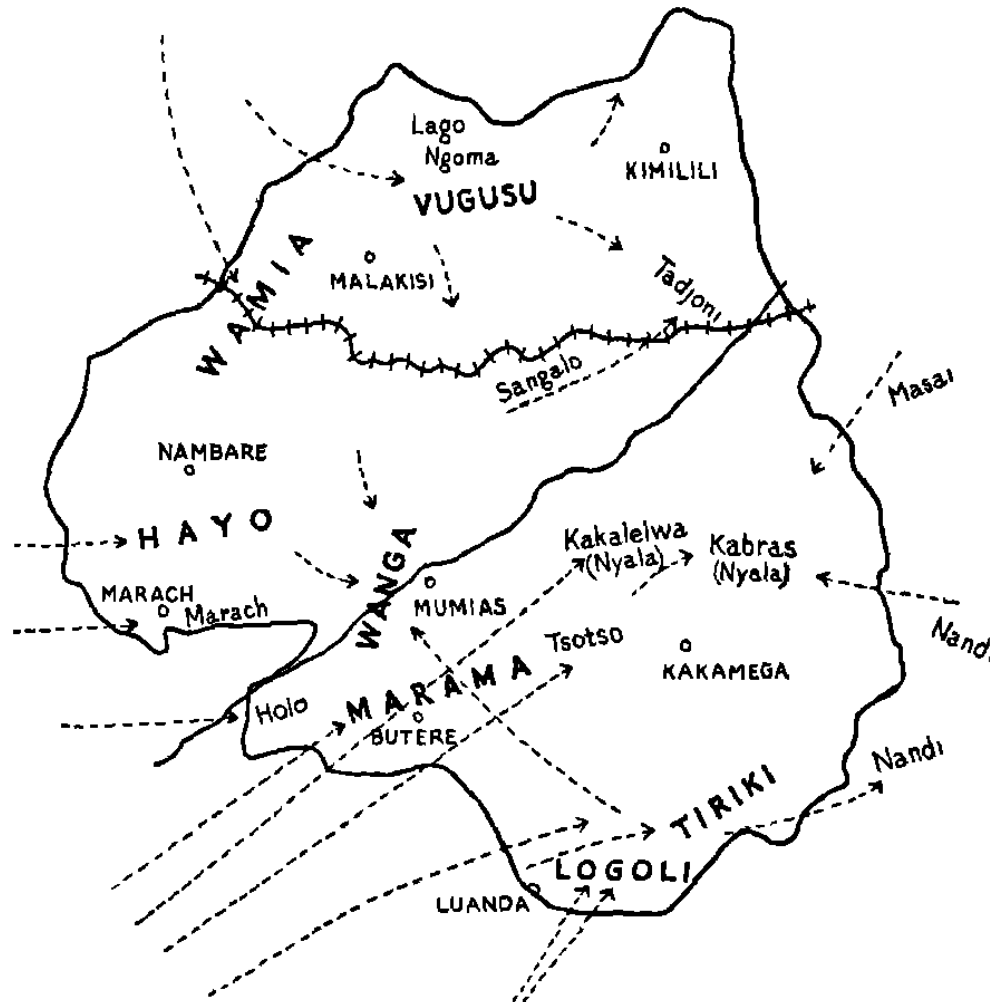
KEY

-: International boundary
- : Boundary separating ethnic communities

Source: Hein and Mohlig, 1978

Note: Batura are the researcher's own inclusion

Map 4: Map showing the migratory routes the Bukusu (spelled Vugusu) used.
UGANDA



KEY:

+++++ Kenya-Uganda Railway

— River Nzoia

Adapted from Wagner 1949

Plate 1: Mzee Anicet Wafula shows how the litungu is held and played.



Photo taken on 1st April 2013 by the researcher in Anicet's house at Ndengelwa village of Bungoma County.

Plate 2: Circumcision music performers playing improvised aerophones.



Photo taken by Timothy Makokha in August, 2012.

Plate 3: Beaded circumcision candidates smeared with a mixture of water and sorghum flour.



Photo taken by Timothy Makokha in August, 2012.

Plate 4: A man playing lulwika (horn) trumpet and wearing the ekutwa headgear.



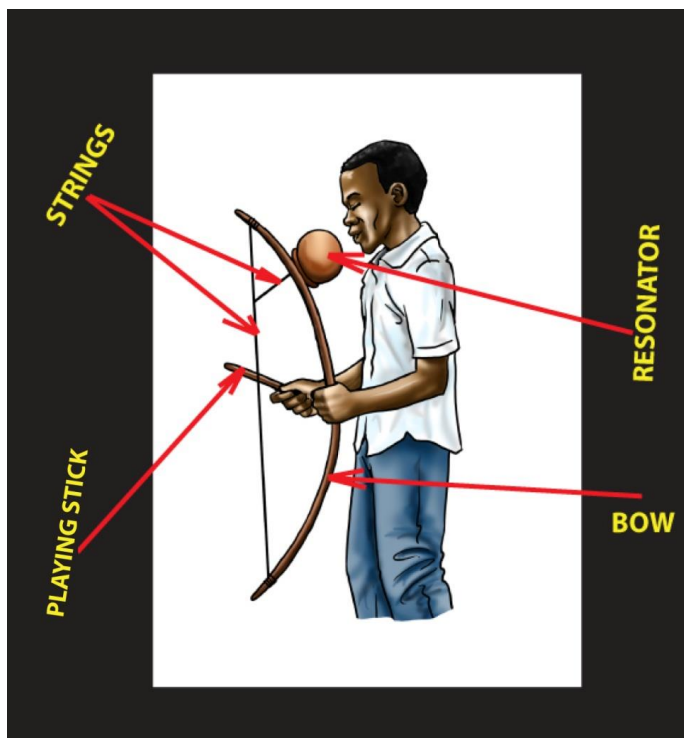
Photo taken in 2010 courtesy of Lydia Timona.

Plate 5: A funeral orator, Mumali Situlungu in his “traditional” performance costume.



Photo taken by Timothy Makokha in 2012.

Plate 6: Parts of a bow-like fiddle known as limoyi.



Adapted from Wahome (1986:8). Drawn by Peter Ndirangu and labelled by Edwin Kibet.

Plate 7: Initiation candidates with luliki and their escorts dancing in a linear motion.



Photo taken by the researcher at Nangwe village of Bungoma County on 10th August, 2012.

Plate 8: Women dancing kamabeka at a wedding ceremony.



Photo courtesy of Timothy Makokha.

Plate 9: A funeral orator performing the “stepping onto the arena” ritual.



Photo taken by Timothy Makokha in 2012.

Plate 10: Musicians using the chikengele instruments.



Photo taken by the researcher at the Nyayo National stadium in Nairobi in February, 2014.

Plate 11: “Traditional” dancers: Men have dyed biyula with shorts underneath.



Photo taken by the researcher on 31st December, 2011 at the Bungoma Cultural Centre.

Plate 12: Children playing painted drums (ching'oma) strapped differently.



Photo taken by the researcher on 31st December, 2011 at the Bungoma Cultural Centre.

Plate 13: Initiation candidates being escorted from the river by “armed” performers.



Photo taken by the researcher at Busiraka village of Bungoma County on 2nd August, 2012.

ate 14: Parts of the harp (litungu)

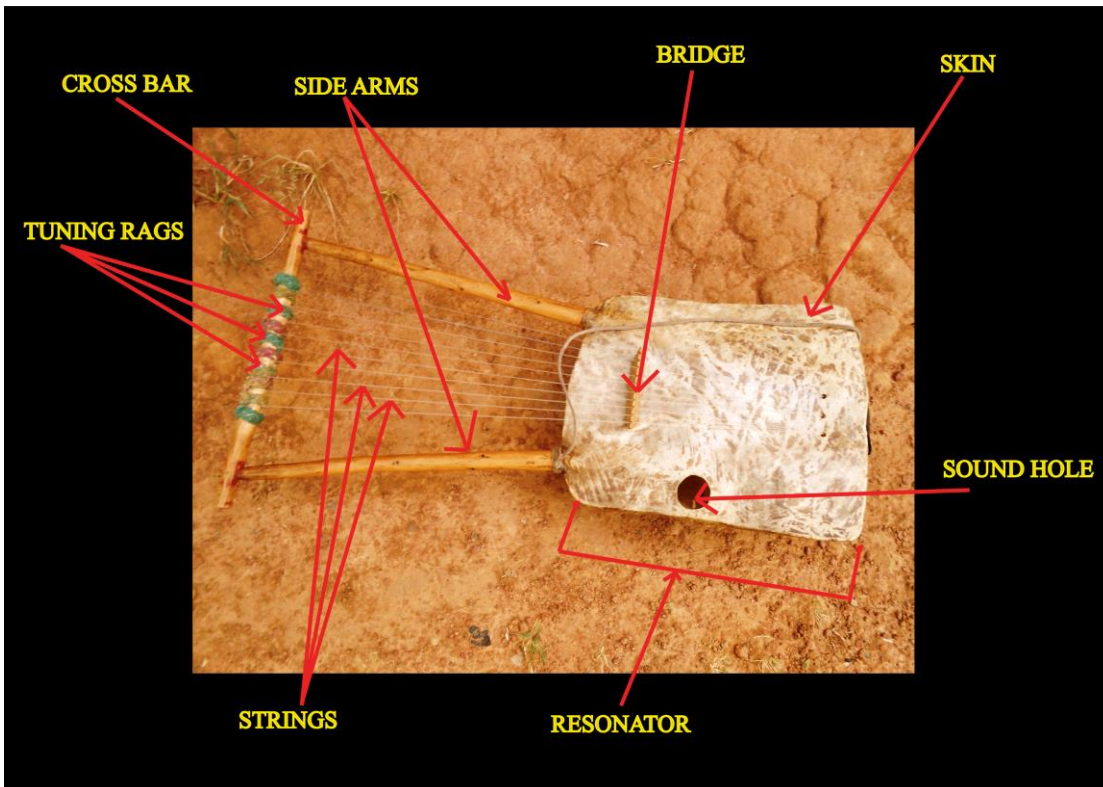


Photo taken by the researcher on 6th January, 2014 and labelling done by Edwin Kibet.

Plate 15: Parts of the siilili (fiddle).

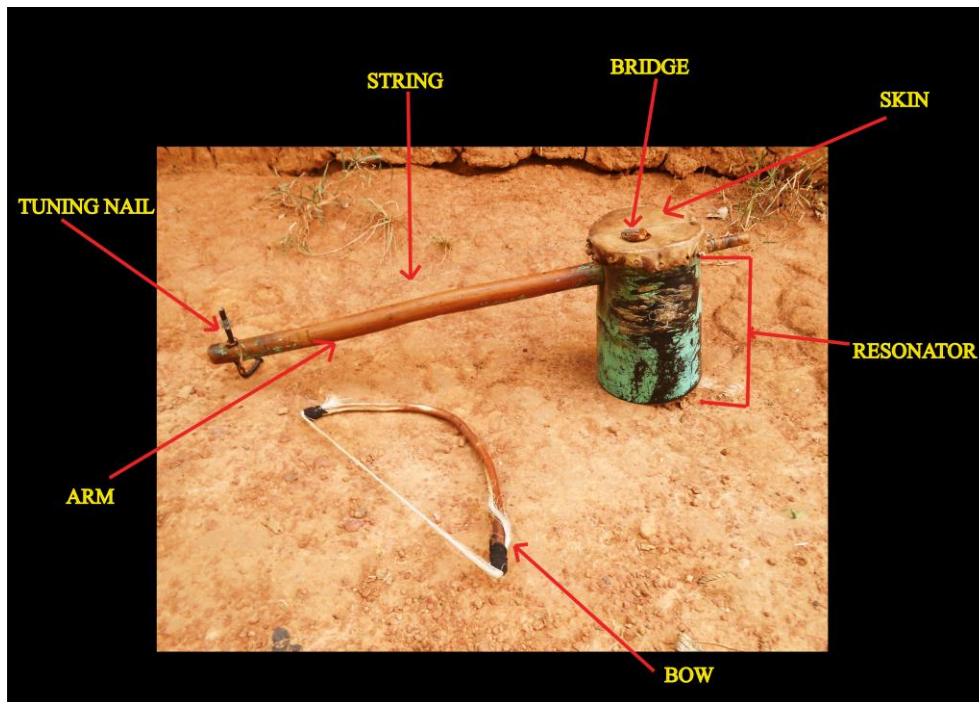


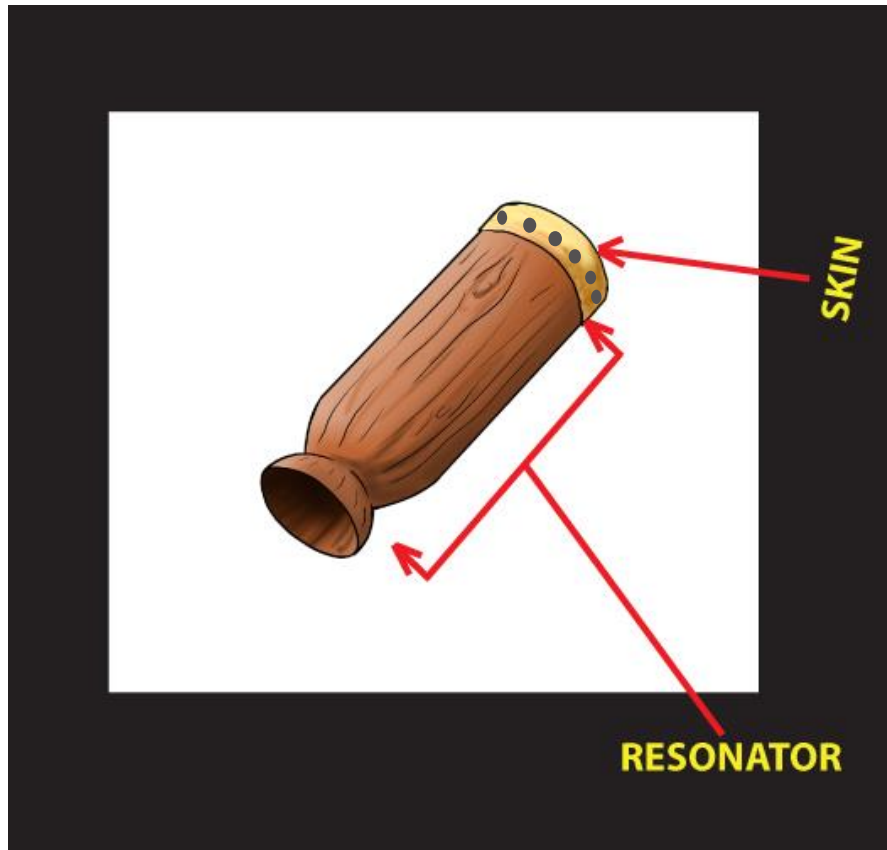
Photo taken by the researcher on 6th January, 2014 and labelling done by Edwin Kibet.

Plate 16: Dismas Kusimba shows how an improvised drum is played.



Photo taken by the researcher at Busiraka market in Bungoma County on 6th January, 2014.

Plate 17: A drawing of the efumbo drum.



Adopted from Wahome (1986:8). Drawn by Peter Ndirangu.

Plate 18: A harpist using a particoloured harp, microphone and sound amplifier.



Photo taken by the researcher on 31st December, 2011 during the Bungoma cultural celebration day.

Plate 19: A choir at a burial using the kayamba.



Photo taken by the researcher at Busiraka village of Bungoma County in April, 2014.

Plate 20: A circular dance performed after a candidate is circumcised.



Photo taken by the researcher at Ndengelwa village of Bungoma County on 2nd August, 2014.

Plate 21: Initiates playing hard on chinyimba bells engage in a vigorous dance.



Photo taken by the researcher on 2nd August, 2014 at Ndengelwa village of Bungoma County.

Plate 22: Leg rattles (bichenje).



Photo courtesy of Lydia Timona.