

**CREATIVE ARTS AND CULTURAL DYNAMISM: A
STUDY OF MUSIC AND DANCE AMONG THE
ABAGUSII OF KENYA, 1904 – 2002**

BY

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DECLARATION

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

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DEDICATION

To my dear wife Naomi Omosa and the entire Nyamwaka family

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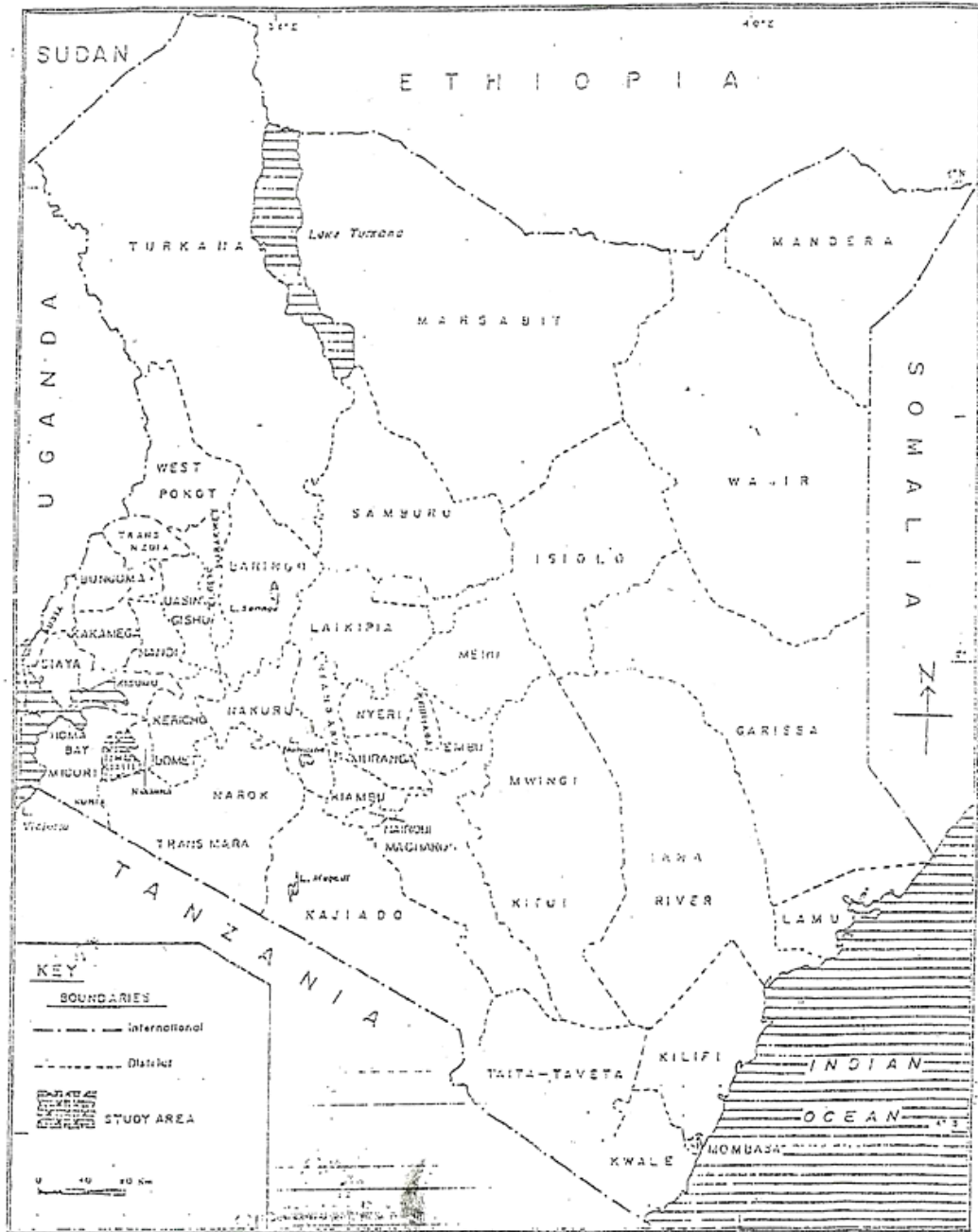
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ABBREVIATIONS

BA	-	Bachelor of Arts
DC	-	District Commissioner
CDC	-	Compact Discs
EALB	-	East Africa Literature Bureau
EAPH	-	East African Publishing House
EAP	-	East African Publishing
ED	-	Edited
KAERA	-	Kenya Archaeological and Ethnographic Research Association
KBCS	-	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
KLB	-	Kenya Literature Bureau
KNA	-	Kenya National Archives
KCSE	-	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KMF	-	Kenya Music Festival
MA		Master of Arts
ND	-	No Date
OI	-	Oral Interview
OUP	-	Oxford University Press
PHD	-	Doctor of Philosophy
SDA	-	Seventh Day Adventist Church

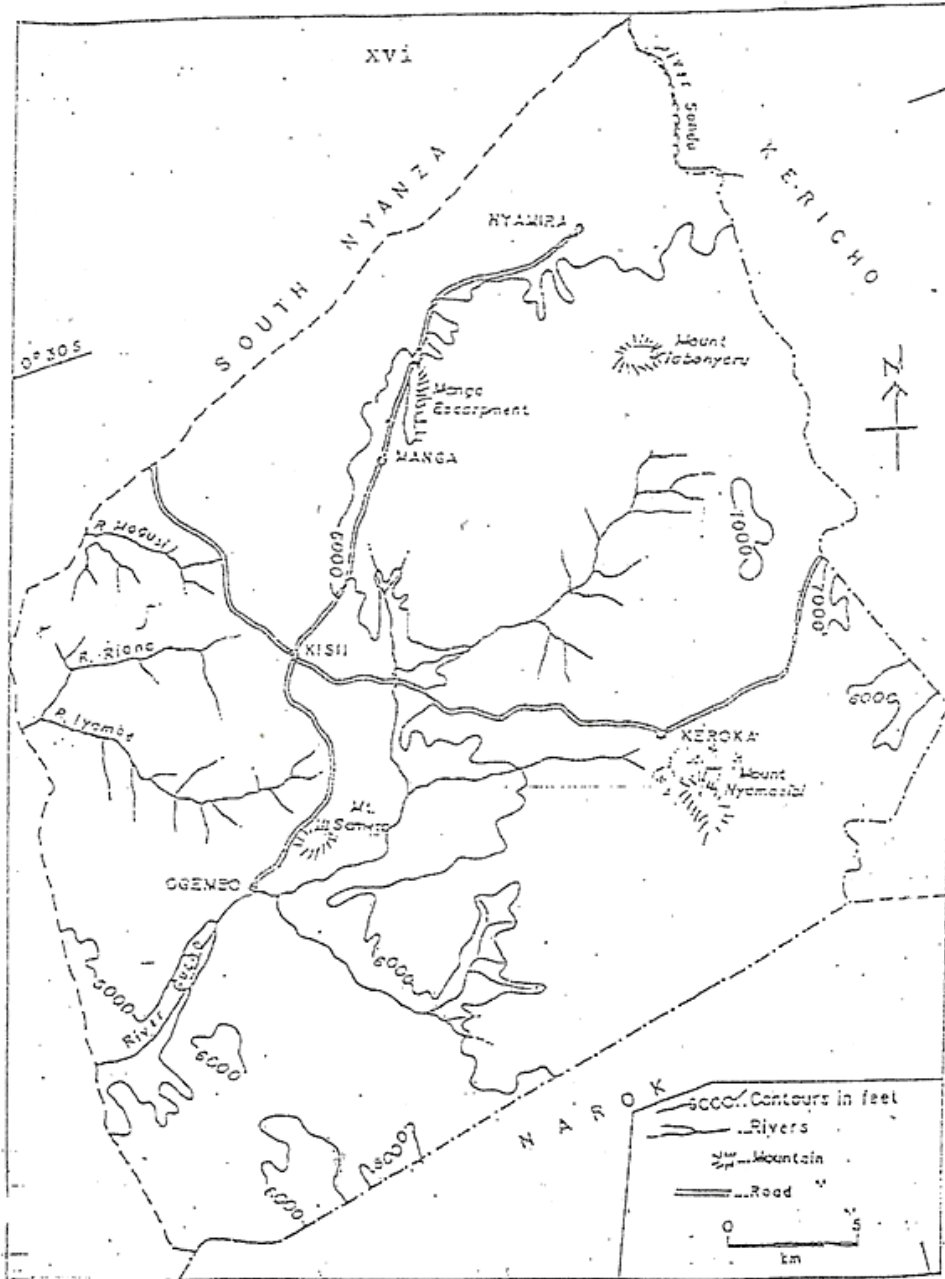
ABSTRACT

This study was set out to trace the historical development of music and dance among the Abagusii of Kenya in a period extending from 1904 to 2002. It further investigated the dynamism of these cultural aspects and how music and dance changed the cultural history of the Abagusii community overtime. The study was guided by diffusion, structural functionalism, theory of musical change and syncretism theories. Diffusion theory facilitated the identification and analysis of Gusii music and dance cultures which compare favourably with those of other parts of the world gained through the process of diffusion. Functionalism theory was applied in the study of the functionality of music and dance among the Abagusii. The theory of music change was used in the study of changes that took place in Gusii music and dance due to their contacts with other peoples. The theory of syncretism was used to study the relationship between Gusii musical instruments with those of other parts of Africa and outside Africa. It was found out that music and dance has a direct role in the understanding of the cultural history of the Abagusii and those of other African communities. This was especially so in the traditional societies where other forms of communication such as written word had not fully developed. It was also evident that traditional music and dance among Abagusii transformed immensely as a result of the community's contact with other African communities and the Europeans. Most of these transformations came with missionary education, Western policies and cultural practices, World Wars, World Economic order among other events. After independence, Gusii music and dance seem to have undergone major changes as a result of emergent cultures both in Gusiiland and Kenyan society. Purposive sampling procedure was used to obtain a total of 61 informants from whom data was collected, analysed and documented. Both primary and secondary sources were utilized in data collection. Primary sources involved filed interviews while secondary sources included published works. Data analysis was done using descriptive as well as inferential statistics. Findings from this study provide useful information which adds value to the repertoire of African art of music and dance. Further, it will provide reference material and theoretical approach for music and dance analysis to researchers of African creative and performing arts. Teachers and students in schools and colleges where subjects such as poetry, music, dance and creative arts in general will find this work valuable in the promotion and preservation of Gusii music and dance and those of other African societies.



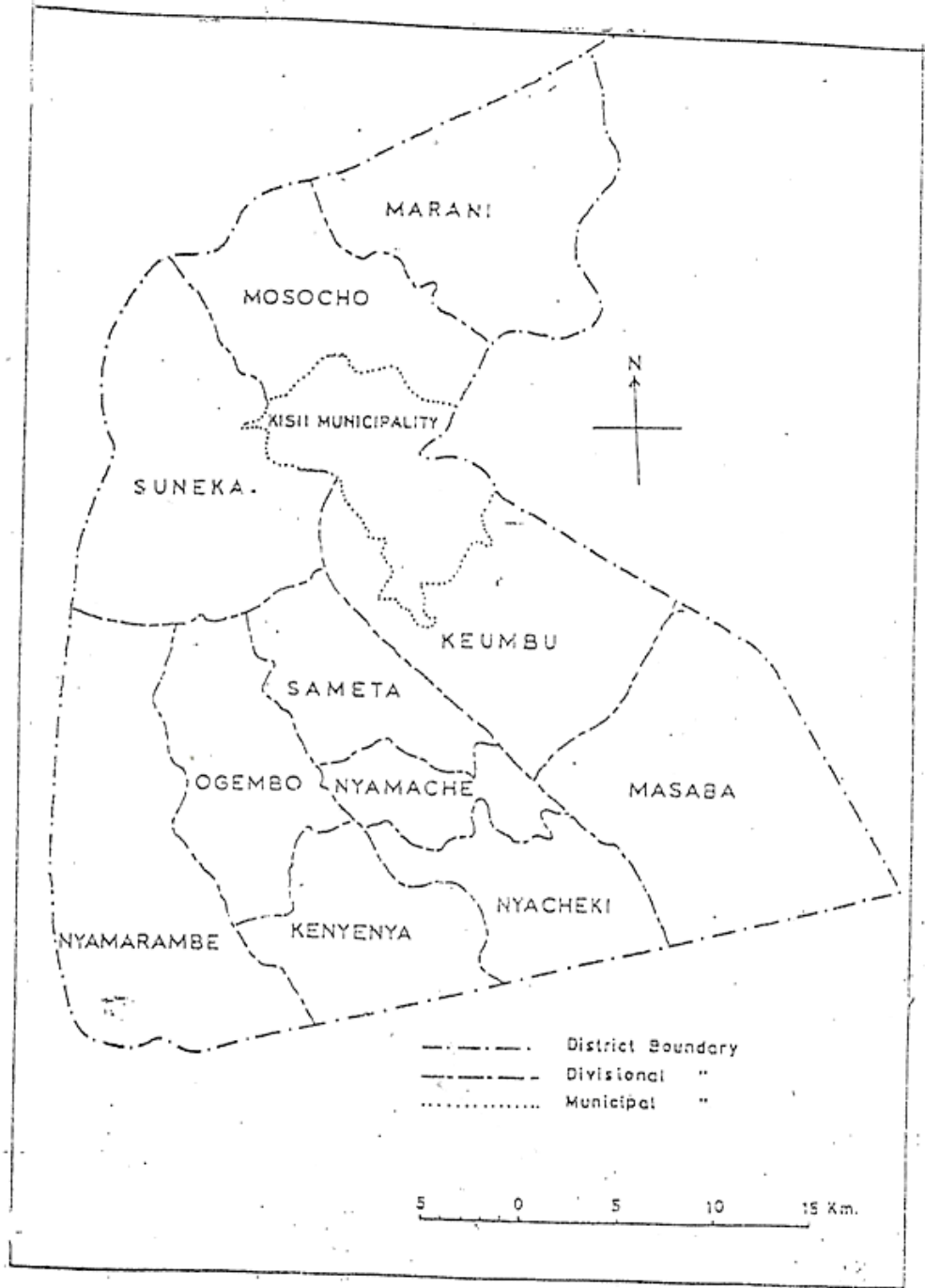
Map I: Kenya- showing the location of the Gusiiland

Source: Government of Kenya, Kisii District Development Plan, 1986-1988.



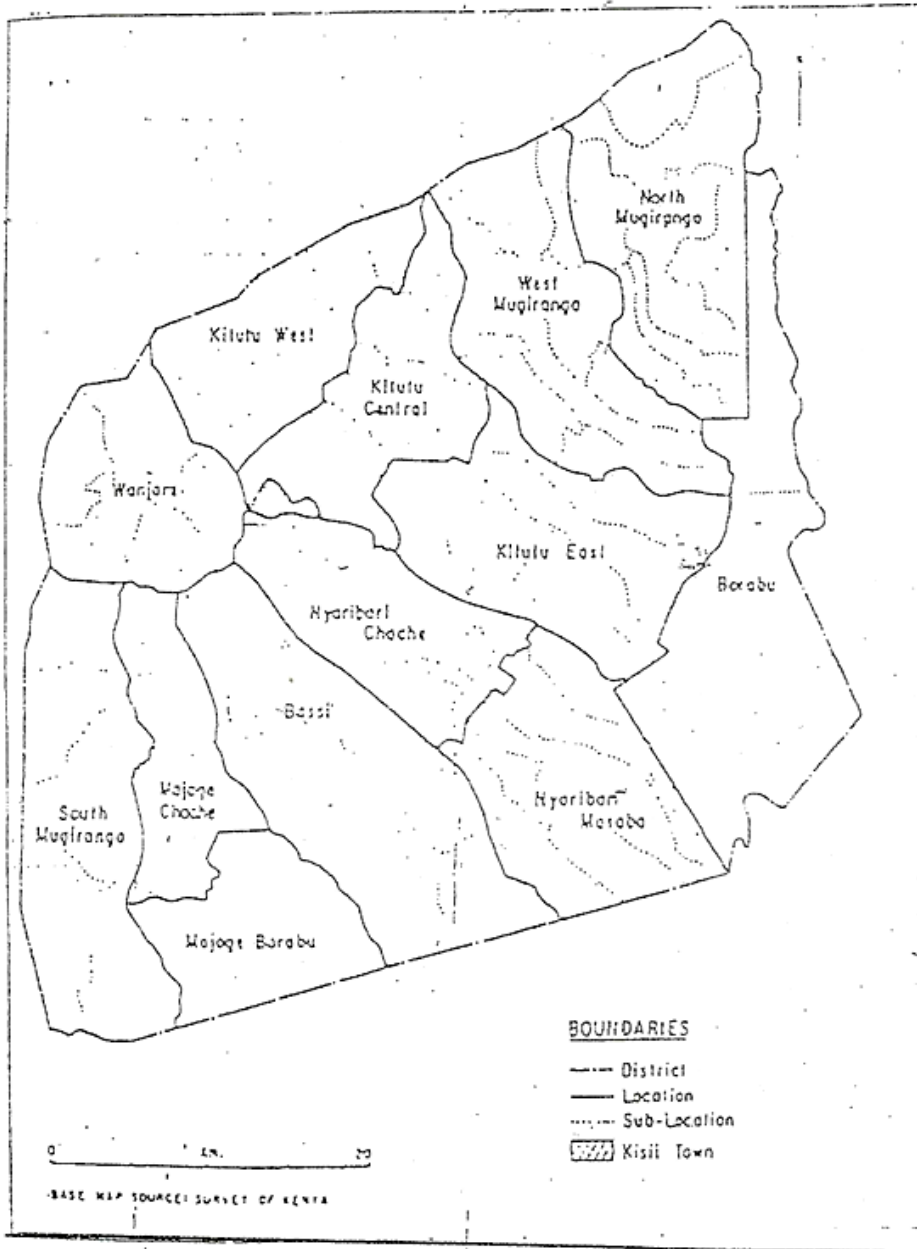
Map II: The physical Environment of the Gusiiland.

Source: Government of Kenya, Kisii District Development Plan, 1986-1988.



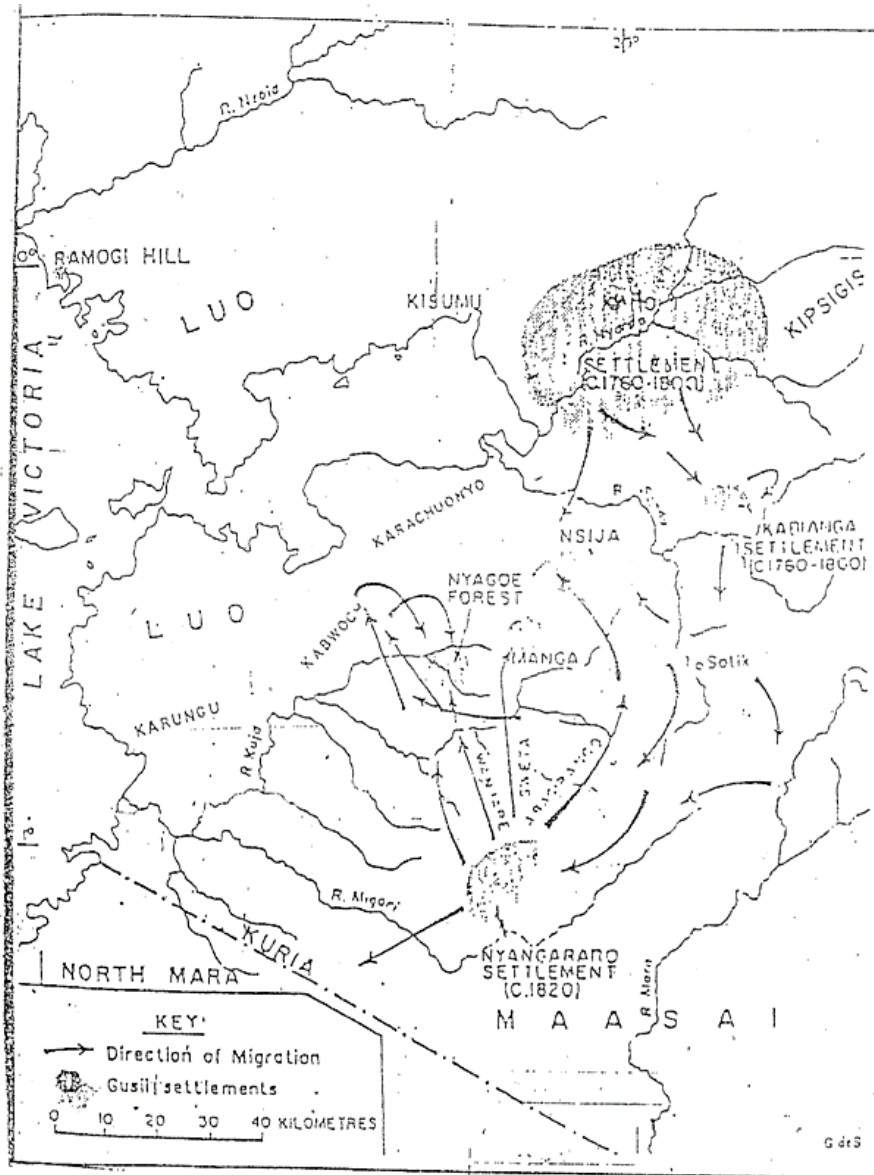
Map III: Administrative Boundaries of the Gusiland

Source: Onyancha B.K., (1989)



Map IV: Location and sub-Location of the Gusiiland

Source: Government of Kenya, Kisii District Development Plan, 1986-1988.



Map V: The Gusii Migrations and Settlement C.1760 –1850

Source: Ochieng' W.R., 1974

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Music and dance are the most powerful cultural medium in any society. This is especially so in countries where other forms of communication and cultural expression, such as written word are not yet fully developed. The history of many developing countries where colonial domination was evidenced indicates that the colonized people were always able to express themselves through song and dance in complete defiance of their oppressor. The people resisted cultural domination, with as much vigor as they resisted economic exploitation.¹ African songs, dances and musical instruments were used during musical performance to express resentment against the existence of the colonial system.² Their important role has been recognised by scholars for many years. African scholars who have studied African music and dance traditions such as Ball Anta, Mwau, Joe, and Kyambidwa emphasize the usefulness of music and dance as avenues of communication.³ These scholars further assert that with urbanization and the impact of western culture and cultural policies, it is evident that traditional music and dance, although still practised, have decreased due to the emergence of new idioms that combine African and western elements.⁴

¹ B.A., Ogot and W.R., Ochieng Decolonization and Independence in Kenya, 1940-1993, Nairobi, East African Publishers, P26.

² Ibid, P.26.

³ Nketia J.K., "Issues in African Musicology" Proceeding of the Forum Revitalizing African Music studies in Higher Education, Frank Gunderson(ed.) An Arbor The US Secretariat of International Centre for African Music and dance, University of Michigan, 2001, pp.154-155.

⁴ Ibid, pp.156-158.

African scholars who have studied the changing nature of music in Africa are Nketia, who discusses the contact of African Music and dance with external cultures,⁵ Dietz, who has studied the origin and development of musical instruments in Africa,⁶ Mbotela, who looks at the influence the missionaries had on African music and dance,⁷ and Tudor et.al., who have studied the influence of western music on the young generation of Africa.⁸ The above scholars have argued that interactions among African societies among other issues, enabled them to borrow musical resources. Further, they maintain that some usages became concentrated in particular culture areas, whereas others were widely distributed. The above studies are anthropological in nature. Regionally, Ranger has studied “Beni Ngoma”, a form of music and dance tradition which originated in East Africa between the first and Second World War and he has demonstrated that African music has been growing and spreading through time and space.⁹

Kenyan scholars have also attempted the study of music and dance. For instance Adwar, on the development and dissemination of music education in Kenya,¹⁰ Khayota, on the anthropology of Kuria Music and dance traditions,¹¹ Mwaniki on Embu songs and dances,¹² Ogot, on the role played by Mau Mau hymns in the struggle for independence,

⁵ Nketia, J.H.K., (1974), The Music of Africa, Victor Gollancz Ltd, London University (unpublished Thesis).

⁶ B.W. Dietz et al., Musical Instruments of Africa (Chicago, 1965).

⁷ J.J. Mbotela, The Freeing of Slaves in East African (London, 1956).

⁸ Tudor, D. and Tudor R. (1979), Black Music, Libraries Unlimited, Inc., Littleton, Colorado USA.

⁹ O. Ranger. Dance and Society in Eastern Africa 1890 - 1970. The Beni Ngoma (London, 1975), p.5.

¹⁰ Adwar A.H., Music Education in Kenya. A history perspective, Zapf Chancery Tertiryra Level publications Eldoret Kenya, 2005.

¹¹ Khayota m.o. et al, The Abakuria of Kenya: The Art of Music and Dance (Nairobi, 1989).

¹² H.S.K. Mwaniki., Categories and substances of Embu traditional songs and dances (Nairobi, 1986).

Kavyu, on performance of Kamba Music,¹³ and Okumu, on the development of guitar music in Kenya.¹⁴ Zake has also contributed to the study of Kenyan music and dance in his work on the folk music of Kenyan communities and its role as a form of cultural identity of Kenyan communities.¹⁵ While acknowledging such endeavours by the above scholars, most of whom were sociologists, anthropologists and conservationist, it is the conviction that historians should also contribute to the study of the dynamism of African music and dance through time and space.

Most scholars who have undertaken studies on the Abagusii community, have approached it from anthropological, sociological and philosophical perspectives. They include, anthropologists Mayer¹⁶ and Levine,¹⁷ who studied the general history of the Abagusii, Uchendu, Anthony¹⁸ and Omwoyo¹⁹, who have examined the Abagusii culture and social organizations historically. Others are, Choti,²⁰ who focused on the role of women in socio-economic organization among the Abagusii in the colonial period and Bogonko²¹, who studied the influence of Christian missionaries on the development of Gusii education during the colonial period, Ochieng²², on pre-colonial Gusii history. It can be concluded that most studies carried out in Gusiiland have been general, others in

¹³ B.A. Ogot and W.R Ochieng, Decolonization and Independence in Kenya 1940-1993, Nairobi East African publishers, 1995.P226.

¹⁴ Okumu C.C., The Development of Guitar Music, a Study of Kiswahili Songs in Nairobi. MA, Thesis, Kenyatta University, 1998.

¹⁵ G.S. Zake, Folk Music of Kenya (Nairobi, 1986).

¹⁶ ;reya M.P The Lineage principle in Gusii Society . (London, 1949).

¹⁷ R.A. Levine, Nyansongso: A Gusii community in Kenya (New York, 1950).

¹⁸ V.C. Uchendu and K.R.M. Anthony, Agricultural change in Kisii district - Kenya (Nairobi, 1975).

¹⁹ S.M. Omwoyo, "The colonial transformation of Gusii agriculture". M.A. Thesis, Kenyatta University 1990.

²⁰ C.J. Choti, "Women and Socio-economic Transformation in Kenya, 1850 - 1963, A case study of Abagusii." M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1998.

²¹ S.N. Bagonko, "Christian missionary Education and its impact on Abagusii of western Kenya" A paper Presented at the University of Nairobi, 1977.

²² W.R.Ochieng, A Pre-Colonial HisStory of the Abagusii of Western Kenya, C.AD 1500-1914(Nairobi, 1914).

specialized areas such as agriculture, industry, population, migration and settlement, religion, belief systems and customs among others. Despite its significance, the dynamism of creative and performing arts among the Abagusii, specifically music and dance has not been historically addressed. It is only a few scholars such as Obaga,²³ whose work is on the merger of indigenous Abagusii and western classical music idiom in the professional composition and notating of contemporary Kenyan music, have taken keen interest in it. It is therefore important that such a study be undertaken to bridge the existing gap in Gusii history.

At local level, most scholars who have attempted a study on the history of traditional music and dance have treated each element separately. In focusing on the study of music and dance among the Abagusii, the study bridges historical gap by demonstrating that it is possible these cultural elements as one unit from a historical perspective.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Given the fact that music and dance pervade the whole spectrum of traditional African life, and that these aspects give people cultural identity, coupled with the fact that traditional African music and dance studies have been inadequate, there was a serious need for this venture. This study therefore focuses on a historical study of who Gusii music and dance between 1904 and 2002, in an effort to determine its role both in pre, colonial and post colonial society and the changes that have occurred in music and dance due to historical interaction with neighbours, colonial policies and practices, western cultural influence and features of post-colonial Gusii and Kenyan society.

²³Obaga, A.O., "The Merger of Indigenous Abagusii and Western Classical Idiom in Arrangement and Composition of Kenyan music" M.A. Thesis, Kenyatta University, 2004.

The questions that were addressed in the study were:

1. What was the nature and role of the Gusii music and dance on the eve of colonial rule?
2. In what ways did colonial policies and practices influence Gusii music and dance in the early colonial period?
3. What were the major changes on Gusii music and dance during the war years, in the war and post war period?
4. How dynamic was Gusii music and dance during the post colonial period?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to investigate the dynamism of music and dance among the Abagusii between 1904 and 2002. Specific objectives were,

1. To analyse the nature of music and dance among the Abagusii on the eve of colonial rule.
2. To determine how colonial policies and practices and western culture influenced Gusii music and dance in the early the colonial period.
3. To establish the transformation of the Gusii music and dance in the war years, in the war and post war period.
4. To examine the dynamic nature of Gusii music and dance in the emergent cultures of the post colonial period.

1.4 Research Premises

This research is based on the following premises: That,

1. The art of music and dance was significant in Gusii culture and practices on the eve of colonial rule.

2. Colonial policies and practices and western culture immensely transformed traditional Gusii music and dance.
3. The war years, interwar and post war period greatly transformed the nature and function of Gusii music and dance.
4. Gusii music and dance became more dynamic and functional in the emerging cultures during the postcolonial period.

1.5 Justification and Significance of the Study

This is a historical study of Gusii music and dance, 1904-2002. The choice of this area of study was made on the basis that there exists a historical study gap which requires to be bridged. Most studies on the Abagusii cover such areas as general history, agriculture, social organizations and structures, industry, ethnic interactions among others. The history of Gusii music and dance has not been tackled. It is therefore requisite that such a study be undertaken. The study undertook the Abagusii's music and dance as its unit of focus, because local level research is necessary before generalizations can be made. There exist some local level studies in this area from the Kenyan communities such as Kamba music by Kavyu, Embu songs and dances by Mwaniki and Kuria Music by Khayota. No known research exists on the history of Gusii music and dance and therefore need to contribute to historical knowledge by studying the subject. We focus on the Abagusii because studies on the history of the community have not been exhaustive. The year 1904 is the starting point because it was then that the Abagusii became aware of colonial invasion of Gusiiland. The year 2002 is our terminal point because it was a transitional period from the Moi era to the Kibaki era. The period in between had a

number of socio-political activities which transformed the role and function of Gusii music and dance.

Findings from this study are expected to be of interest to historians, philosophers, anthropologists, and music and dance lovers in a number of ways. This will make a contribution to their scholarship in terms of topic, methodology and theoretical framework in a number of ways. First, it will increase their knowledge and perspectives on African cultural studies, especially creative and performing arts. Second, scholars will use findings from this study as a basis for further research on African music and dance. Third, it will sensitize such researchers to realize the fact that African music and dance are dynamic aspects in people's culture and can be studied historically like any other discipline in the field of research and scholarship. Further, the findings will also be useful to teachers and learners in schools and colleges where subjects such as music, poetry and creative arts are taught. This will provide them with academic materials for reference besides its use as teaching and learning resource, the knowledge gained from this study will enable them emphasize the practical aspects and appreciation in the study of African music and dance.

Policy-Makers and Planners in the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services may find these research findings useful in planning for social-cultural activities such as music and cultural festival competitions in their calendar of events. The understanding of the dynamism of Gusii music and dance may be used to enhance cultural heritage, at local, national and international scales. This will be achieved through further research in the promotion and preservation of Gusii music and dance and those of other African cultures.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the study

The study covers Gusiiland. Sample locations inhabited by musicians and other informed respondents on Gusii music and dance. The subject covered is the history of music and dance in colonial and post-colonial period, 1904-2002. This was as a result of logistical and time limitations. A lot more can be done to capture Gusii music and dance and a period after 2002 to present. Not all creative arts activities among the Abagusii have been captured in this study. There is a lot to study on other Gusii creative arts activities such as drama, games and sports, visual arts and others for future researches. The period of study saw a lot of transformative effects on Gusii music and dance. These changes came along with colonial policies, practices and western culture through institutions such as, missionary factor, education, economic, social policies as well as globalization. After independence, the emerging cultures of Gusii and Kenyan societies witnessed far reaching transformative effects on Gusii music and dance, which are historically captured in this study.

1.7 Literature Review

A considerable amount of research has been done on African music and dance in an attempt to look at the changes that have been taking place in the music of various societies in Africa. While all this has been done, historical studies dealing with Gusii culture, songs and dances in particular is somewhat scanty in nature. There are few scattered materials concerning the history of the Abagusii which gives some background information to our study. The following are some of the few works that parallel our area of study. However, not all the works here talk about the Abagusii in particular.

Nketia discusses social and cultural background of music in Africa. He further explains the traditions of Africa in the social context and their contact with external cultures. In his work, he exposes the changing musical traditions in Africa and their causes.²⁴ According to him, the Africans who were exposed to Western culture were barred from participating in traditional music. Graham (1989) attempts to catalogue and describes the enormous amount of music in Africa since the end of the Second World War. He discusses the historical background of music in Africa then goes into regional profiles among them in the East where he deals with individual countries.²⁵

Anyumba has written an article on historical influences on African music which is relevant to our study. In his article, Anyumba argues that music is an important tool in the study of African history. It is through music that we get to understand about African societies' economy, social life, religion, education, politics et cetera, in a wide context. Each song is to a certain degree a "comment upon aspects of society". Topical songs consequently concern a given instant or period of historical time, relating to some significant place, behaviour, person or practice. How far back they can be used depends on how far back living persons can remember when, how and for what purpose they were performed. "Obsolete" songs or African folk tunes are a relic of a historical past. According to Anyumba, the changing songs may be an eternal indicator of changing social institutions and the need to create songs more suited in spirit to new conditions. Songs can be very subtle index of dynamics of change.²⁶ Anyumba's work is useful in the

²⁴Nketia H.K., The Music of Africa, Victor Gollancz, Ltd London 1974.

²⁵ Graham, R Sterns, A Guide to Contemporary African Music, Pinto Press, London, 1989.

²⁶H.O Anyumba, "Historical influence on African music": A survey in B.A. Ogot (Ed.) Hadith 3 (Nairobi 1977).

study of the dynamism of Gusii music and dance as a result of the community's contact with the Europeans.

Mbotela has written accounts on the transformation of African music and dances. He asserts that the missionaries were pleased to give Africans musical instruments for bands, knowing that they were better than the African drums. Africans would entertain the missionaries every evening while they were to wait for these "new arrivals". Indeed, there was always great excitement when everything necessary was made to improve upon African music and dances. At first, Africans were taught to play flutes and in tonic solfa. They learnt to play a variety of instruments of which they did their best to know. They learnt and interpreted many good hymns. On feast periods like Christmas and half-term holidays, they used to entertain people of various destinations with their bands. As well, they played at farewell parties for prominent people. Such people included bishops, Christians of various places, missionaries and other people in the Christian missions. Men and women would come from their work, excited to hear the bands. African parents rejoiced that their young children had skills to give this new pleasure. All the boys and girls were happy and contented, and hoped that they would soon have their own Music.²⁷ Mbotela's account will be useful in our study in the understanding of Western influence on the Gusii songs and dances.

Dietz, et al has written on pre-colonial African musical instruments and their role. They assert that in African societies, musical instruments were agencies of political and social control. Their dynamic pulsation stimulated the rhythmic patterns of the lifecycle. They served musical-political functions. The music they emitted bridged the gap

²⁷J.J. Mbotela, *The Freeing of Slaves in East African* (London, 1956).

between politics and culture. However, the above scholars have only considered a few musical instruments such as horn, drum and flute which were not uniform in all pre-colonial African societies.²⁸ This work was useful in studying the usefulness and functions of the Gusii traditional musical instruments. T.O. Ranger has written on “The Beni mode as objective of study”. His sources are mainly drawn from anthropological background and are based on the cultural history of Tanganyika. Ranger asserts:

The particular form of popular culture on which I have chosen to focus on is the Beni “Ngoma” which takes its name from its essential musical feature. This is an attempt to reproduce the effect of a military brass-band, though the elaboration of this attempt might vary from the provision of a full bungle to a drum.²⁹

Singing, according to Ranger, was always an important part of Beni performance. Almost universally the language of Beni songs was Swahili and they normally took the form of simple commentaries on the current affairs. Invariably these kinds of songs and dances according to Ranger were very important activities of the Beni members. Ranger discusses the origin of Beni “Ngoma” and the great war of civilization, Beni in the towns of Eastern Africa between the First and second World Wars, Beni in Diaspora between the wars and end of Beni “Ngoma”. In his discussion, Ranger discerns the role that was played by Beni especially in East African region in uniting Africans to rebel against colonial administration.³⁰

In his well documented study of African cultural studies Ranger further comments:

²⁸B.W. Dietz et al., Musical Instruments of Africa (Chicago, 1965).

²⁹T.O. Ranger., Dance and Society in Eastern Africa 1890 - 1970. The Beni Ngoma (London, 1975), p.5.

³⁰Beni “Ngoma” was a popular culture which spread throughout Eastern Africa during the colonial period. I took its name from the essential musical features and instruments. It was a military band against colonial administration.

The Beni “Ngoma” was a popular culture in “traditional”Swahili towns, in the new ports and industrial cities, and in rural environments all over Eastern Africa.It was one of the series of brass-band responses by people in the tra-nsitional period from the pre-industrial to industrial society.³¹

This work became meaningful in the study of foreign dance cultures that penetrated Gusii land during the colonial period.

Zake³² has written on folk music of Kenya. In his works, Zake has attempted to categorize some of the major characteristics of folk music in Kenya. He has analysed its development, performance and the role it played among the various communities in Kenya. The history of folk music and dances among the Abagusii was studied on the basis provided by Senoga Zake’s criteria.

Adwar, (2005), wrote a short history of the development of music education in Kenya .She targeted music educators and students, researchers, teachers, musicians and all parties interested in music education. According to her, these groups of people would certainly find the work useful in understanding more about the dissemination of music education in Kenya. In her work, Adwar presents an overview of music education in Kenya from the earliest recorded time to the present. She emphasizes the role played by formal and non-formal institutions in the teaching and learning of music in Kenya ,further, Adwar discusses the profiles of the various personalities who have contributed to the teaching and learning of music in the country .³³ Adwar’s work was

³¹Ibid, p.6.

³²G.S. Zake, Folk Music of Kenya (Nairobi, 1986).

³³ Adwar A.H., Music Education in Kenya, A history perspective, Zapf Chancery Tertiry Level publications Eldoret Kenya, 2005.

useful in the understanding of the institutions that acted to promote and preserve Gusii music and dance.

In the study of the Kuria community of Kenya, M.O. Khayota et al., have written works on the art of music and dances among the Abakuria. In their works, they have discussed the Kuria ethnology, the language, the technique and the place of music in the cultural ceremonies among the Abakuria.³⁴ The above scholars have discussed the Abakuria music and dances from the anthropological point of view. However, they provided a ray of historical that was used to study the dynamism of Gusii music and dance.

Mwaniki has written on the Embu songs and dances. In this cultural study of the Embu, Mwaniki has categorised his work into various occasions in which songs and dances were performed. He has provided for a selection of Kiembu songs in their original form and language and also translating them into English, as well as interpreting them by the use of commentaries. Mwaniki's well researched and documented work has practically aroused an inspiration that popular culture in Africa is a rich field that can be researched on and given a historical perspective.³⁵ Mwaniki's work inspired the researcher to study the historical aspects of the Gusii music and dance' an area which had for long been neglected by historians.

Ogot³⁶ has written on the content of and the role played by the Mau Mau hymns with a view to shedding some light on the interior view of the movement and its

³⁴Khayota M.O. Et Al, *The Abakuria of Kenya: The Art of Music and Dance* (Nairobi, 1989).

³⁵H.S.K. Mwaniki., *Categories and Substances of Embu Traditional Songs and Dances* (Nairobi, 1986).

³⁶B.A. Ogot, (eds.) "Politics, Culture and Music in Central Kenya: *A Study in mau Mau Hymns* 1951 – 1956" In *Special Issue of Kenya Historical Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1977.

ideology. The songs expressed the sufferings Mau Mau Freedom Fighters had experienced and the need to fight for their independence or regain their stolen land. In this context, he defines culture as the expression of people as they move through time and space and complexities of human relationships such as in health, sickness, work, joy, life and death. This study became meaningful in explaining the nature of music and dance which the Abagusii composed to express bitterness against colonial rule.

Kavyu has written an introduction to Kamba music. He has attempted to discuss on the various occasions on which the Kamba people sang and performed various dances. He has provided for a translation of Kamba songs and their accompanying dances. Kavyu maintains that music and dances were powerful instruments in the unification of Kamba people. Kavyu's work has provided a wide range of knowledge of music and dances in reconstructing the cultural past of the Kamba community.³⁷ This study is useful in tracing the functionality of Gusii music and dance in the colonial and post-colonial period.

Okumu (1998) wrote on the development of Kenyan popular guitar music. He based his study on Kiswahili songs in Nairobi. In his work, Okumu discusses the origin and development of guitar music in Kenya from its early beginning to the late 1990s. He further discusses the role played by veteran musicians like Daudi Kabaka, Fadhili William, David Amunga, John Mwale, George Mukabi and other renowned musicians in the development of the popular guitar in Kenya. Okumu demonstrates that culture is

³⁷P.N. Kavyu, An Introduction to Kamba Music (Nairobi, 1977).

dynamic and not static.³⁸ Okumu's work enables us to understand the dynamism of Gusii music and dance, especially in the post-colonial period.

The works that mention or attempt to shed light on the history of the Gusii and their culture in general are anthropological, sociological, philosophical and historical in nature. Mayer³⁹ and Levine.⁴⁰ Who were anthropologists in Gusiiland, wrote the Abagusii history from the anthropological point of view. They wrote about the Abagusii organisation in the political, social and economic spheres. However, they paid little attention to the cultural history of the community. Although their work is somewhat scanty in nature, it gives a base on the understanding of the Gusii history. Ochieng's⁴¹ works, including the one in Ogot⁴² have discussed the origin, migration and settlement of the Abagusii. It is from Ochieng's work on the Abagusii cultural history, that many scholars who have written on the Gusii history have based their writings. The work provides a framework for the understanding of the community's social, economic and political life in general. However, none of these has concentrated on the Gusii culture, music and dances in particular as far as the colonial history of the Abagusii is concerned.⁴³

V.C. Uchendu and K.R.M. Anthony have examined the Abagusii culture and social organisation with a view of establishing the Gusii agricultural base. According to them, the Abagusii share fundamental similarity in the structure, elements of which are

³⁸ Okumu, C.C, op. cit.

³⁹ P.Mayer; The Lineage principle in Gusii Society. (London, 1949).

⁴⁰ R.A. Levine, Nyansongso: A Gusii community in Kenya (New York, 1950).

⁴¹ W.R. Ochieng, A Pre-colonial History of the Abagusii of Western Kenya C. AD 1500 - 1914 (Nairobi, 1974)

⁴² W.R. Ochieng', "The Abagusii of South Western Kenya," in B.A. Ogot (ed.) Kenya before 1900, (Nairobi, 1976), pp.80-86.

⁴³ W.R. Ochieng', Op Cit., (Nairobi, 1974).

imbedded in three main institutions: the lineage system, the clan system and the neighbourhood group. They see lineage and clanism as important aspects of kinship. They continue to assert that lineage membership, defense obligations which disappeared with the conquest of the British, invention and common sacred interests in ancestors as well as legal interests in lineage land, strengthen the Abagusii community. The two authors have not concentrated on the Abagusii cultural history, music and dances in particular. Their study interest was to get the social -cultural foundation in the understanding of agricultural history of the Abagusii community as a study of economic, cultural and technical determinants of agricultural change in tropical Africa.⁴⁴

Choti has written on the transformation of the socio-economic organisation among the Abagusii in Kenya. His focus is on the role of women in socio-economic transformation. In his introductory chapters, he has examined culture and socio-economic structures among the Abagusii in the pre-colonial period. He also discusses the various colonial policies and how they altered the Abagusii way of life. Although Choti's work is not directly related to our study, it provides a base of Gusii Society in which to fit in songs and dances among the community.⁴⁵

According to Levine⁴⁶, wealth among the Abagusii is a powerful tool in quest for political power and social prestige. Levine notes that the Abagusii culture emphasises on ancestral worship, authoritarianism, interpersonal hostility, clannishness, and very high acquisitive values. He sees the Abagusii as people who resort to court tribunals for the resolution for minor conflicts and the use of "powerful" individuals and "men of

⁴⁴V.C. Uchendu and K.R.M. Anthony, Agricultural Change in Kisii District - Kenya (Nairobi, 1975).

⁴⁵C.J. Choti, "Women and Socio-economic Transformation in Kenya, 1850 - 1963, A Case Study of Abagusii." M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1998.

⁴⁶S.A., Levine Nyansongso: A Gusii Community in Kenya, (New York, 1956).

influence” as instruments of social control. However, he has not paid any special attention to the Abagusii cultural history, music and dances in particular. S.N. Bagonko⁴⁷ has written on the coming of Christian missionaries to Gusiiland and the impact they had on the Abagusii education, health and the general living styles of the Abagusii. His contribution has been on the development of education among the Abagusii as opposed to the cultural history.

Omwoyo⁴⁸ has written on the Gusii past in the context of origins, migration and settlement. His concentration focuses on the transformation of agriculture among the Gusii during the colonial period. Omwoyo’s main contribution has been in the field of economic history. Indeed, the problem with the above cited works is that the authors have discussed the Gusii community without paying much attention to the Gusii cultural past, music and dances in particular. Although these scholars have discussed about the history of music and dance among the Abagusii, their studies enable us to understand the culture of the Abagusii under which music and dance was part of.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

In analyzing Africa’s cultural change, various theories have been advanced. These are diffusion, functionalists, and the product of change as a mixture of elements in dances, the theory of musical change as well as syncretism. In a sense, cultural change has been perceived as constituting significant alterations, which take place in social structures and

⁴⁷ S.N. Bagonko, “Christian Missionary Education and its Impact on Abagusii of Western Kenya” A Paper Presented at the University of Nairobi, 1977.

⁴⁸ S.M. Omwoyo, “The Colonial Transformation of Gusii Agriculture”. M.A. Thesis, Kenyatta University 1990.

social practices.⁴⁹ In this study, we shall mainly apply sociological approaches and thus enriching the perspective of cultural change with the vigour of historical method.⁵⁰

According to diffusion theory, most of the content of modern cultures appears to have been gained through the process of diffusion. The term diffusion refers to the borrowing of cultural elements from another society in contrast to their independent invention within the host society. For diffusion to operate on a substantial scale, there must be separate societies that have existed long enough to have elaborated distinctive ways of life.⁵¹

Culture has grown through a combination of the processes of invention and diffusion. It grew very slowly at first, mostly as a result of invention and as societies became differentiated the large-scale diffusion of traits became possible and the rate of cultural growth speeded up. In modern times and particularly in Western world, the rate of cultural growth has become overwhelming.

Diffusion theory is important to our study of Gusii song and dances in that it has largely concerned itself, among other things, to the detailed study of the relationship between the Abagusii and the people they interacted with. As a result there was a lot of borrowing of musical and dance elements.⁵² According to Nketia, these studies have been based on observation of materials, features of design and construction and certain ethnological postulations, the measurement of tuning systems and the application to the method of comparative linguistics to the analysis and the classification of names of

⁴⁹R.M. Kloss, Sociology With Human Face (Saint Louis, 1976), pp 79-81.

⁵⁰B.A Ogot, "The Remembered Past Reflection on the Natural and Value of Traditional Evidences", in Ogot, B.A., (ed.), Hadithi 2, (Nairobi, 1974).

⁵¹ O.D. Dudley, Culture and Social Change (Chicago, 1964).

⁵² J.H. Nketia, "Historical Evidence in Ga Religious Music" in Vansina, J. et al (eds.) The Historian in Tropical Africa, London, 1964 p.279.

musical instruments in selected culture areas.⁵³ For instance, B. Manfred has made large claims on the settlement of the Indonesian colonies, that of Madagascar and also those of the East Coast of Africa, the Congo basin and parts of West Africa. These claims have largely been based on remarkable similarities of certain musical instruments, which suggest something more than mere “coincidence”. The xylophone for example, is said to be too complicated to have been invented in two separate places.⁵⁴ This theory was appropriate in tracing the origin and development of the Gusii music, dance and culture.

Functionalist theory of culture is another model that became useful in our study of the dynamism of Gusii music and dance. The most important principle lies in the functional concept of culture. The modern anthropologist of the functional theory is fully aware that he has to organise his evidence, relate the customs, ideas and practices to the fundamental core around which they are built.⁵⁵ To the functionalists, culture is the whole body of implements, the charter of social groups, human ideas, beliefs and customs. It constitutes a vast apparatus by which man is put in a position, which is better to cope with the concrete and specific problems which face him in his adaptation to his environment, in the course of satisfaction to his needs. Technical skills as well as organisation are based on the development of symbolism of abstract concept primarily embodied in knowledge, belief of legal systems and societal constitutions. To the functionalists the use of language, tradition and education, that is, the continuity of the traditions are made possible.

⁵³J.H. Nketia, “The Instrumental Resources in African Music” in (Papers in African studies, No. 3, 1965).

⁵⁴B. Manfred, “Observation on The Study of Non-Western Music” Paul, C. (ed) in Les colloques of Wegmont. (Brussels, 1956) p.6.

⁵⁵B. Malinowski, The Dynamic Culture Change: An inquiry into Race Relations in Africa (London, 1945).

This theory became meaningful to the current study in that it recognises the fact that the Abagusii creative activities such as singing, dancing, decorative arts and sculpture were functional in nature. They had a purpose or function to perform. The theory argues that artistic activities are forwarded on the physiology of sense stimulation and muscular as well as nervous processes. Dance, games and sports among the Abagusii had practical importance. A functionalist approach to the role of dances is that the basic condition for an orderly social existence depends on the transmission and maintenance of culturally desirable sentiments. Associated with this model is the cathartic theory. It is rooted in the notion that dancing may have some therapeutic value. Music and dancing especially rhythms, effects of musical instruments such as drums, can create tension; anxiety and stress under certain conditions and release the same tension and stress.⁵⁶ The history of dances will then be of great importance for the study of mankind. It is the hump of social anthropology; we will apply this theory in our study of Gusii dances and their accompanying songs.

The theory of musical change, propounded by Backing (1964) was also applied in our study⁵⁷. Backing argues that musical change is brought by decisions made on the basis of their experiences of music in different social contexts. This theory has been used by many scholars to show how society's music changes. Further, Backing concurs with Merrian (1964), that through innovation, an individual forms a new habit which is subsequently learnt by other members of the society. Merrian further reduces the process of invention, innovation and cultural borrowing used in, this study.⁵⁸ Netty, (1964) in his theory of musical change asserts that there are other factors that affect music styles to

⁵⁶ P. Spencer, Society and Dance, (New York, 1985).

⁵⁷ Okumu, C.C, op cit. p 310.

⁵⁸ I bid , p, 9.

change. The contact among people and cultures and the movement of population, is one case of such contact. It is probable that most documented case of changing repertoires are due to culture contacts.⁵⁹ This theory was useful in studying the various changes that occurred in Gusii music as a result of the community contact with other African communities as well as the Europeans. The theory of syncretism was also useful to the study of Gusii music and dance.

In this theory, Merrian (1964) defines syncretism as a process through which elements of two or more cultures are blended.⁶⁰ This theory was used to study the relationship between musical instrument of the Abagusii with those of others parts of African communities and outside Africa.⁶¹ According to Nketia, these studies have been based on observation of raw materials, features of design and application of methods of comparative linguistic musical aspects in selected culture areas. This theory became useful in the study of the origin and development of musical instruments of the Abagusii. This is aptly expounded by arguing that when two human groups which are in sustained contact meet, they constantly exchange material culture and ideas among themselves more frequently. On the same vein, Okumu (1998) argues that the theory exhibits the borrowing of and exchange of musical elements that a society is in contact with then adopting them into their own musical style. The result becomes a new musical culture that has elements from the borrowed and lending culture.⁶² According to Merrian, the process of musical change and syncretism results in acculturation which he defines as cultural transmission process. This also results in diffusion which is herein defined as

⁵⁹ Nettie, B Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology, the Free Town Press, London, 1964.

⁶⁰ Merrian, A., P., Op cit., p303.

⁶¹ J.H. Nketia, "The Instrumental Resources in African Music" in (Papers in African studies, No. 3, 1965).

⁶² Nketia, J.H, "The Instrumental Resources in African Music" In (Paper in African Studies), No .3 (1965), pp 85-88.

“achieved cultural transmission or cultural change as it occurred in the past.”⁶³ Diffusion, as a theory will therefore perform the tasks of tracing the historical aspects of Gusi music and dance in the face of emergence and establishment of genre of music and sieve the foreign and traditional musical traits found in the new music as Okumu puts it.

1.9 Research Methodology

This study was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. It utilised both primary and secondary sources in collecting data. Quantitative methods of data collection technique were adopted for the study to obtain a valid and valuable data. Archival materials, orals interviews and field observation methods were all useful in data collection for valid work.

1.10 Research Locale

The study took Gusiiland as its area of study. Abagusii, who are designated as Bantu speaking people, live in Gusiiland. This region is occupied by five districts. These are; Kisii Central, Nyamira, Kisii South, Masaba North, Masaba South, Marani and Borabu. The area has a climate of the highland equatorial zone. It has rainfall of up to 1500mm. Gusiiland has an highland which lies between 2000 and 2,350 metres above sea level. The area has permanent streams which include; Gucha, Sondu and Mogonga. Gusiiland is endwoned with unique rock structure. For example soapstone, used for carving and making electric installations. The region is endowed with many resources. For instance it has pleasant climate with a variety of attractive features. It has well-drained and fertile soils. The area has woody and bushy grasslands.⁶⁴

⁶³ Okumu C.C, op .cit. P9

⁶⁴ G.S. Were and D.Nyamwaya, Kisii District Social Cultural Profile, (Nairobi, 1986), pg. 8.

1.11 Sampling

A population of 61 knowledgeable informants on Gusii music and dance were chosen to form a study sample. The community has properly-organised and distinct political, economic and social structures. Therefore, the population samples chosen objectively represented the area. Purposive and stratified sampling techniques were employed in this study. First of all, a list of administrative locations was obtained from the respective district offices. The researcher then proceeded to the various locations. The chiefs in these locations were able to identify the few musicians in their locations who formed a study sample. To avoid subjectivity and biasness, respondents were classified into male and female informants. A sample of each group was interviewed.

Data collection was done with the assistance of well-trained and in-serviced research assistants. Various data collection techniques were employed. These were, direct observation especially on Gusii musical instrument and music and dance performance, questionnaires and field interviews. Documentary sources viewed to be relevant to the research study were used as a source for secondary data. This mainly included; library materials such as books, journals, articles, theses, dissertations, conference and seminar papers. These were obtained from libraries of institutions of higher learning, such as; Kenyatta University's, Moi library and other relevant institutions of higher learning. Every effort was made to visit the National Museum establishments in Kisumu, Kitale and in Nairobi to study musical instruments which were not easily found in the field during research. The Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) Music libraries in Kisumu and Nairobi as well as the Kenya Repertoire of music were useful resources centres for

the study. Print and electronic media as well as newspapers were also useful for collation, corroboration and theoretical interpretation of primary data.

1.12 Data Analysis

At the end of research study a lot of information had been gathered from both primary and secondary sources. All these were subjected to research analysis to validate their accuracy. The aspects of accuracy, completeness and uniformity were achieved through proper editing of data. Those materials that were found with serious errors were discarded. Library research materials and archival sources were subjected to accurate and careful content analysis for validity. The originator of data were examined to see whether they were working under influence of any substance. Data were read repeatedly for proper judgment. The tape recordings from oral interviews were transcribed and analyzed to avoid misinterpretation of meaning that could have emanated from too little translation. In the qualitative method of data analysis, two levels were distinguished, and these were descriptive and thematic. At thematic level, the principal researcher established the main themes that were carried by the various songs and dances. At descriptive level, the various musical and dances were classified and described in terms of nature, forms as well as their dynamic trends.

The work is chronological in terms of chapters to capture the historical dynamism of Gusii music and dance in various periods. The first section gives background information to the context of the problem, the researcher's objectives, how the study was conducted, the theories used and how data was analysed. The remaining chapters deal with the historical developments that took place in Gusii music and dance on the eve of

colonial rule, in the early colonial period(1904-1919), the war and interwar periods (1919-1945), the post-war period up to 1963, and the post-colonial period.

CHAPTER TWO

GUSII MUSIC AND DANCE ON THE EVE OF COLONIAL RULE

2.1 Introduction

The Abagusii, who are linguistically Bantu speaking people trace their origins to a place called Misiri.⁶⁵ This place does not seem to be the Biblical Egypt but a location just to the north of Mount Elgon.⁶⁶ The Abagusii refer to all the tribes they migrated together with as abanto baito (our people).⁶⁷ Linguists, anthropologist and historians agree that traditionally and linguistically, the Abagusii are related to the people they claim as their people.

According to the Abagusii tradition, the entire community claim to have descended from Mogusii. The same tradition further has it that Kintu first settled at the big river valley in *Misiri'* (presumably) the River Nile Valley in Egypt. Kintu was expelled from *Misiri* on the ground that he was practising witchcrafts.⁶⁸ When he left *Misiri*, he led the migration from the region to Mount Elgon. Since the Abagusii were farmers, they migrated in search of fertile land for cultivation. Second, the knowledge of iron working enabled them to increase food production as they had better farming implements. This led to population pressure which forced them to migrate. Third, there were inter-clan and inter family conflicts which forced them to migrate in search of peace. There were also frequent conflicts between the Abagusii and the Luo which forced them to move further. A drought between 1590 and 1620 which forced the Abagusii to cross the Kano Plains to search for good living standards. The Abagusii are believed to

⁶⁵ W.R Ochieng., op.cit. p.12.

⁶⁶ O.I., with Birongo Obundi, at Keroka market, on 6/8/2004.

⁶⁷ O.I., with Francisah Kemunto, at Ichuni village on 17/8/2004.

⁶⁸ O.I., with Ezekiel Monda, at Isena Village, on 17/8/2004.

have lived for about three to four generations in the Kano plains before dispersing. By nineteenth century, the Abagusii had settled along the eastern shores of the Lake Victoria. They finally moved eastwards and settled at Goye in Yimbo Location. Their settlement extended to Urima, Agoro Sare and Ramogi. The Luo invaded the area and hostility developed between the two communities. The Abagusii later moved southwards. They further moved to the shores of the Lake Gangu in Alego and hence to Sakwa, Asembo, Seme and Kisumu where they stayed at Kisumu between 1640 and 1755. This lasted for about two generations⁶⁹

At Kisumu, many things happened. First, the mother of Mogusii, Nyakemogendi died there. Second, Mogusii also died at Kisumu. This could be true because when the Abagusii moved further eastwards to the Kano area, someone else other than Mogusii led them.⁷⁰ Indeed, it was during this time that sub-clan leaders such as Mobasi, Oibabe, Mochoruwa and Mogusero appeared. They led their small bands of clans from the famine-stricken Kisumu settlement to new settlements in search of food and security. Third, the Abagusii separated from the Logoli people. Due to severe famine, drought and plague, the ancestors of the Abagusii left Kisumu for Kano plains in search of food and better settlement. Kisumu was the cruelest of the places the Abagusii settled during their migrations. It was both very hot and overcrowded with human settlements. The Abagusii described it as ekemunto (a place of hotness and congestion). To commemorate their settlement and suffering at Kisumu, children who were born then were named Kemunto.⁷¹ This name is very common among the Abagusii community and its historical significant notable. A part from these hostile environmental conditions, the Luo and the

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp, 44-45.

⁷⁰ O.I., with Hezron Obiri, at Giesembe Village, on 27/7/2004.

⁷¹ O.I., with prismicah Kemunto, at ichuni village, on 17/8/2004.

Abaluyia clusters invaded the Abagusii. The former intensified cattle raids against the latter making them feel more insecure. The last straw on the camel's back that necessitated the immediate movement of the Gusii community from Kisumu was numerous deaths and diseases of both cattle and human beings.

The Abagusii moved and settled at Kano plains where they are thought to have stayed for four decades or two generations, probably between 1760 and 1800 AD, along the Lake shore from Dunga to Nduru and spread into the interior along streams in which furthest settlement inland was at the present day Kibigori. Here, they had a thin population and led scattered life. According to Ochieng⁷², the Abagusii pattern of settlement was largely influenced by Lake Victoria, and the rivers and streams that flowed into the Winam Gulf in Nyanza. The majority of people settled along the shores of the Gulf. They lived in scattered homesteads along rivers Miriu and Ombeny. They were led into the area by Kimanyi who took over from Mogusii.

In this area, the Abagusii carried out farming and other economic activities. People like Oibabe, Mochorwa, Mobasi and Mogusero had become prominent persons in the Gusii historical horizons. They are remembered by the Abagusii as brave warriors and leaders who founded some of the current Gusii sub-communities.⁷² One important aspect of Abagusii evolution as a community at Kano was the emergence of the clan concept. There was a community transformation from individual family units into small but distinct groups. Second, the small groups, evolved into a number of corporate clans which later developed into sub-communities headed by clan elders.

When clans drew together during emergencies, general leadership responsibility was shifted to the senior member of the dominant family. Such a member was believed

⁷² W.R Ochieng, op. cit., pp 50-54.

to be closer to the ancestors.⁷³The Abagusii adopted a workable system for differentiation and identification between lineages clans who had blood relation. This was meant to give clans exogamy and a sense of kinship. Clan members protected each other as sisters and brothers. They could not shed each others' blood nor could they intermarry. If any of these happened, the bonds between them would weaken. The Abagusii clans adopted the names of various totems (animals) with which they identified themselves. The following were the names of the totems adopted by the various Abagusii clans.⁷⁴

The totems played socio-religious and psychological roles in the relationships between members and clans. Some names of people or members of each clan attach them not only to their clan but to their totem as well. This explains why some names in Gusii are only found in certain clans.⁷⁵The table given below gives a summary of some popular totems among the Abagusii.

Table 1: Gusii sub - tribes and their totems

Sub-community	Name of the Totem
Abagirango	Engo (Leopard)
Abagichora	Engo (Leopard)
Ababasi	Enchage (Zebra)
Abasweta	Engoge (Baboon)
Abanyaribari	Engoge (Baboon)
Abagetutu	Engoge (Baboon)
Abamachoge	Engoge (Baboon)

⁷³ O.I., With Wilson Kenyenga, at Eronge Market, on 8/9/2005.

⁷⁴ W.R Ochieng, op cit, pp56-57.

⁷⁵ O.I., with Mac Oigoro, at Nyanturago Market on 3/8/2004.

Abanchari	Engubo (Hippo)
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The role of totems in the relationships between clans and among clan members was clearly defined. In this case, a totem can be defined as a class of material objects which pre-colonial societies regarded with superstitious respect, believing that there existed an intimate, obligatory and commitment which built special relationship. The members of a clan that revere a totem believed themselves to be of the same blood, descended from a common ancestor, and bound of by a common responsibility for each other and were united by a common faith in the totem. A totem gave the Abagusii a sense of unity in the community, which was deeply psychological and religious.

During their stay in Kano plains, the Abagusii had a mixed economy. They reared cattle mainly for milk and meat. They grew such crops as finger millet, sorghum, millet and roots. They hunted a variety of animals.

Hunting, mainly done by the young energetic men and boys, targeted such animals as *ching'era* (buffaloes), *Chingabi* (Gazelles), *Ebisusu* (Wild rabbits), *chiguto* (ant bears), *Ebirongo* (Porcupines), and *Chinchogu* (elephants). Most wild animals were hunted for food, some for their skins, which were highly valued for making shields, costumes for song dance and for sale to the neighbouring Luo community. Lions and Leopards skins were used for ceremonial purposes. The Abagusii organized themselves into various hunting groups. They celebrated over the spoils of the hunt and distributed them to the

beneficiaries immediately after the hunt.⁷⁶ During such activities music and dance played an important role in celebrating for their success in the hunt.

Various birds were either trapped or killed using sling-shots. This was mainly the work of young boys. Birds like *Amachore* (weaverbirds), *Amaruma* (doves), *chingware* (ducks) and others were trapped.⁷⁷ All these supplemented the Abagusii diet. Interviews carried out in the field indicated that the Abagusii women also gathered wild vegetables which included *chinsaga* (spider flower), *Rinagu*, (Black nightshade) and *Ototo* (East African Spinach).⁷⁸ However, this only comprised a small portion of the Abagusii diet. Music and dance also played an important role in keeping women busy as they carried these activities. Various work songs were performed which motivated the concerned workers to fasten their activities. With time, the Abagusii had to migrate from Kano to Kabianga due to overpopulation, infertility of Kano plains, which was caused by over cultivation, constant raids from the Maasai, Luo and the Nandi for cattle, lack of security and famine. Justifying why the Abagusii had to migrate from Kano plains, K. Moraa of Bokimotwe village, Nyamagesa Location remarked:

The climatical conditions were now changing; the soil had become infertile and could barely support cultivation of ne-ither grains no fruits. Indeed, it was a cruel situation. The story was that whoever had his brother got hold of his hand and started following their relatives who had left earlier enough.⁷⁹

Kabianga was unfavourable for settlement than the previous settlements. It was here that the Abagusii developed a saying that *motama nchogu oumera ng'era* (one who

⁷⁶ O.I., with Paul Mbaka, at Ichuni Market, on 20/8/04.

⁷⁷ S.M. Omwoyo, "The Transformation of Gusii Agriculture" M.A. Thesis, Kenyatta University, 1990, p33.

⁷⁸ O I., with Nyangweso Omboro, at Botondo Village, on 2/7/2004.

⁷⁹ O.I., with Keremensia Moraa, at Mache-achumbi village, on 10/9/2004.

runs away from an elephant meets a buffalo).⁸⁰ According to the Abagusii understanding, buffaloes are fiercer than elephants. They used this saying to imply that they fled from the previous settlements which they thought were unfavourable for their stay, but only to come to even more hostile environment. Life at Kabianga promoted a feeling of insecurity and helplessness. They were suffered a series of diseases which inflicted a substantial toll on their children and livestock. The Abagusii found themselves, exposed to forces of devastation and potential extinction. Famine struck in and took many human lives. Following numerous deaths of animals and failure of crops resulting from drought, the Abagusii called this place Kabianga, a Gusii term meaning (they have refused). This can be interpreted as the refusal of livestock and animals to give good yields (Kabianga). It should be noted that this name survives unto this day.⁸¹ When the name Kabianga is mentioned anywhere in Gusii land, it reminds the community the terrible encounter they had which claimed people's lives and property such as cattle and farm produce thus bringing about famine and malnutrition to the community. To commemorate this, Abagusii performed various songs and dances to for this important period which shaped the future of their cultural and economic history. The Abagusii were also subjected to rapid Maasai and Kipsigis cattle raids. They made attempts to improve their security by constructing chiburi, stockade (Plural) eburi (singular) or kraals to surround their homes. This marked the beginning of ebisarate (kraals) in the Gusii community which lasted up to and shortly after the coming of the Europeans into the Gusii land. These institutions were meant to bring people together along with their animals so that they could be able to defend themselves against omobisa (the enemy). In some places within the Gusii

⁸⁰ O.I., with Charles Nyabayo, teacher Birongo Secondary, on 10/10/2004.

⁸¹ O.I., with Wilfred Magato, a teacher at Eronge SDA secondary school, on 26/11/2005.

community, the ebisarate system lasted up to late 1970s when there were increased and forceful Maasai and Kipsigis cattle raids and inter-tribal wars.⁸²

The absence of Ebisarate system in the Gusii land presently could be explained by the following reasons among others; improved relations with the Maasai and the Kipsigis neighbours, improved government security increased population and the subsequent need for more land for cultivation, the schooling of the young boys who could be warriors and the intervention of Western intruders, as well as the role of religion which has promoted peaceful interaction.

The unresolved security situation at Kabianga led to magical – religious practices among the family, clan members and all those who belonged genetically to the entire community of the Abagusii.⁸³

They made attempts to stop the Maasai and the Kipsigis raids by performing some magical rite in which esasi (a dry cowdung) was burnt together with rirongo (a dung made from several ingredients including soil, grass and shoot) and some dry leaves from omosabakwa (a specific natural tree) that had never been tempered with by man. These mixtures were burnt in an open field where animals grazed so that smoke flew to the direction of the enemy. This practice was popularly known as gosamba ekeroso (burning of magical mixtures). This practice could only be done by council of elders and community diviners. The smoke from these mixtures was believed to make the enemy mentally numb and incapable of raiding them (gokireka - noun, kobakireka verb). If they came to raid, they could behave foolishly so that they could be easily killed. The rite was

⁸² O.I., with Bedictor Obae at Keumbu Village, on 16/8/2004.

⁸³ Onyancha B.K., " African Spiritual Response to Western Christianity with Particular Reference to Abagusii and the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Ogembo Division, Kisii District. Kenya", M.A Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1989.

believed to have yielded the desired ends. What the Abagusii desired to achieve was peace and harmony.⁸⁴ The magical rites were used in the control of many undesirable situations including natural ones for example hailstones, lightning and the danger posed by wild beasts such as hyenas and leopards. This is partly the historical basis of magical practices among the Abagusii⁸⁵. This was as a result of hostility from the Kipsigis and the Maasai who stole their cattle.

The Abagusii left Kabianga and moved to Gelelegele near Sotik. From here, a small group infiltrated the highlands, but the majority moved to Kilgoris. This division could have been probably caused by internal conflicts between the migrating clans. The clans that had moved to Kilgoris which is the present-day Trans Mara District settled at Ngararo in 1820. From here, after unstable and strained relationship with the Isiria Maasai characterised by cattle raids on both sides, the Abagusii were scattered during the battles of River Migori. They moved into the highlands, while some took refuge among the Kuria, and others among the Luo of Kabwoch near Nyakoe forest, Manga and Isecha. Throughout the rest of the century, when the majority of the Abagusii were already in the highlands, they started gradually spreading out within the whole territory to be joined by the group that had taken refuge among the Luo in Kabwoch, between 1820 and 1850. These groups again re-crossed the gulf separately to most of the present locations where they are found.⁸⁶

The Abagusii had been migrating as clans and over three centuries of migration, clan identity assumed a prominent form. Such clans as Kitutu, Nyaribari, Mugirango,

⁸⁴ O.I., with Johnson Mogire, at Nyamagesa market, on 6/11/2004.

⁸⁵ O.I., with Yuvinalis Gichaba, at Bosigisa village, on 9/7/2004.

⁸⁶ O.I., with Mokeira Nyakerandi, at Bokimotwe village, on 2/7/2004.

Bassi, Machoge and Wanjare are prominent in Gusii land.⁸⁷ However, some other clans continued to move and search for places to settle. Very often, members of particular clans on sensing population increase and scarcity of land moved to Borabu (open land without people) and settled leaving their fellow clan members behind in places of early settlements which are referred to as chache (land which is fully occupied by people) whose opposite is Borabu.⁸⁸ At present, the Chache and Borabu clans continue to cherish strong bonds, even though they have moved to scattered settlements such as the former white highlands popularly known as settlement schemes such as Manga, Nyansiongo, Matutu. Around this time, music and dance among the Abagusii had not fully developed since the community had not settled down to fully engage in such activities. Music and dance among the Abagusii was organized fully after the completion of migration and settlement in their present homeland. The various cultural beliefs and practices among the Abagusii right from birth, initiation, marriage, adulthood to death involved the use of music and dance.

2.2 Birth Songs and Dances

Reproductive fertility was a very important aspect among the Abagusii as was the case with other African communities. According to Keremensia Moraa, barrenness was believed to have been brought about by some vital cultural rituals, such as failure in keeping one's fire lighting throughout the seclusion period after circumcision, disappointment of ancestral spirits or witchcraft.⁸⁹ According to Abagusii, barrenness was solved by marrying another wife in case it was proven that it was the woman who was barren (omogomba). In case it was a man who was impotent, then the woman was

⁸⁷ W.R. Ochieng., op.cit. p.115.

⁸⁸ O I., With Tabitha Nchoro, at Bomobeia Village, on 16/8/2004.

⁸⁹ O. I., With Keremensia Moraa, at Mache-Achumbi Village, Village on 10/9/2004.

allowed to try outside the house.⁹⁰ This meant that she had to have sex with the husbands' brother or cousin to get children. For this to take place, sacrifices were offered before this took place by parents to appease the ancestral spirits. For this purpose, animals such as goats, sheep and hens of a particular colour that could be black or white as the medicine man (omoragori) prescribed were slaughtered. During such ceremonies, specific songs and dances were offered which were religious in nature.

A pregnant woman, according to the Abagusii traditional society, was highly respected. She enjoyed special treatment from the entire community. She was only allowed to perform light duties in the house and in the field. Pregnant women were generally barred from performing certain traditional ceremonies since most of these ceremonies involved dancing and vigorous movement that could affect the health of the pregnant mother. During funerals, pregnant women were not allowed to come close to a grave. It was believed that this happened; the unborn baby would be exposed or oriented to sorrows before coming to the "new world", ense enyia.⁹¹ A pregnant woman could not be allowed to eat bitter foods. This was because it was thought that the unborn baby would be rude, harsh or disobedient if it consumed bitter foods from her mother during pregnancy. In case a pregnant woman made a mistake, she was not supposed to be beaten; instead, she could be chided by word of mouth.⁹²

It suffices that all Abagusii cultural and religious beliefs and practices pointed to past experiences in history. Their world-view is accordingly shaped by past experiences. Their

⁹⁰ O.I., with Bathseba Matera, at Isena Market, on 2/8/2004.

⁹¹ O.I., with Christopher Abincha, at Bomobea village, on 3/8/2004.

⁹² O.I., Chweya Nyakerandi, at Bokimo village, on 13/7/2004.

knowledge of the past provided the means of interpreting the present and the future. This knowledge was in the custody of the ancestors who were the brave heroes and founders of the tribe. The only people who could participate in it were the elders of the families, lineages, clans and the tribe.

At the time of birth, the mother was helped by midwives and her fellow women. To mark the birth of a child, women performed ululation. This was a great moment of song and dance. Prolonged ululation indicated the birth of a baby boy. This was because male children were thought to be protectors of the community. To justify this belief, the Abagusii often had a saying, “Bamura Mbanga bande” (boys are not like others).⁹³ The implication of this saying was that boys were more reliable in defending the community against any external attack. Ululations for female babies were usually short and fewer as compared to those of female children. It was thought that when they grew up, they would go to different homes. As such, the community where they were born would not benefit long enough. Furthermore, the females work would be centred in the kitchen. It is worth noting that ululation accorded to the male children was usually accompanied by whistling from men, unlike those of female children which had only few words of praise.⁹⁴ Perhaps this was because male children were more valued than female children since they would defend the community against external attack when they grow up unlike the female children whose work would be centred in the kitchen.

⁹³ O.I, with Charles Mogaka, Manga Market, on 20/10/2004.

⁹⁴ O.I., with John Ogega, at Masimba Market, on 27/7/2004.

Among the Abagusii in the pre-colonial period pregnancy was dangerous often compared to as being perched on a tree, korina omote igoro. When a woman gave birth, she was seen as having safely climbed down a tall tree. People sang and danced to celebrate the newborn baby, termed omogeni, the ‘visitor’. Such a creature was new in the community and would definitely contribute a lot to development in the society when fully grown. The Abagusii treated a pregnant woman like a person who had set for a long journey to an unknown world either to return safely or die. A popular birth song was:

Song No.1. Kemunto (*Good mother*)

<i>Kemunto mwana Bwomoyo</i>	Kemunto, daughter of Omwoyo
<i>Rero nomogoko tore noro</i>	Today happy we are
<i>Ee sindigisa</i>	Ee welcome
<i>Kemunto mwana Bwomoyo</i>	Kemunto, daughter of Omwoyo
<i>Rero nomogoko tore noro</i>	Today happy we are
<i>Ee sindigisa</i>	Ee welcome
<i>Rero nomogoko omwana oiboirwe</i>	Today we are happy a child is born to us
<i>Ee sindigisa</i>	Ee welcome
<i>Kiomogoko</i>	The child has brought
<i>Nomwana otoire</i>	Pleasure to our invitation
<i>Ee sindigisa ee baminto</i>	Ee welcome ee our community
<i>Rero nomogoko ee</i>	Today it is happiness ee
<i>Rero nomogoko baminto</i>	Today it is happiness, our community
<i>Oiboirwe omwana omoke</i>	A new born has been given unto us
<i>Baito rero</i>	Our community today it is
<i>Ekiomogoko nomwana otoire</i>	Happiness the child has brought
<i>Ekiomogoko nomwana otoire</i> ⁹⁵	Happiness the child has brought

The image shows two lines of musical notation in 2/4 time. The first line starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. Below the staff, the lyrics are: Ke - mu - nto na bwo - mwo - yo e - re - ro mo - no - go - ko to - re - ro - e - . The second line starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It begins with a sixteenth rest followed by a sixteenth note, then continues with quarter and eighth notes. Below the staff, the lyrics are: ndi - gi - sa - sa Ke - mu - nto mwa - na bwo - mwo - yo e - re - ro mo - no - go - ko to - re - no - .

⁹⁵ A song sung by T. Gechemba, at Bonyamasicho, on 10/11/2004.

11

ro - e - si - ndi-gi - sa - sa re - ro - no - mo - go - ko mwo - no - i - boi - rwe e

15

si - ndi-gi - sa re - ro - no - mo - go - ko - mwa - no - i - boi - rwe - ee - si - ndi-gi - sa - kio - mo - go -

20

ko no - mwa - na - o - to - i - re - kio - mo - go - ko no - mwa -

28

na - o - to - i - re - e - si - ndi-gi - sa - re - ro - no - mo -
go - ko - ee e - re - ro - no - mo - go - ko - ba - mi - nto - oi -

39

boi - rwe - o - mwo - no - mo - ke - bai - to - re - ro - kio - mo - go - ko - no - mwa - na -

46

o - to - i - re - kio go - ko - no - mwa - na - o - to - i - re -

In the above song women praised the mother for having nurtured the baby from the time of conception to birth. Pregnancy and childbearing were important aspects as far as the Abagusii were concerned. Further, the song praised the child bearing occasion which had brought community members together.

Womenfolk at the scene burst into ululation, ebiririato. Usually a baby boy was received with twice, as loud and more prolonged ululation than that of a baby girl. This was mainly because the traditional Abagusii valued boys more than girls. This bias in

favour of boys could be explained through a Gusii proverb that Ensinyo magokwanwa mbamura etabwati,⁹⁶ meaning, “When people talk ill of a certain village, it is because it does not have boys”. Boys were generally regarded as protectors of society against external aggression. Naming ceremony was conducted in which people celebrated, sang and danced. Such songs and dances thanked God through ancestors for having given them a newborn baby. The songs and dances during this period were short, easy to memorize and perform. Sometimes words could be fitted into existing melodies and rhythms to suit the occasion.

2.3 Circumcision Songs and Dances

In the pre-colonial period, initiation was a very important aspect of life as far as the Abagusii were concerned. It was the rite through which an individual was introduced to adulthood. Every young person, boy or girl looked forward to this rite of initiation with a lot of anxiety. It was the duty of the society to prepare them both psychologically and emotionally during this period. A lot of leisure time was spent on teaching the youth on the significance of this rite. “Initiation was the gateway to adulthood, manhood and adulthood.”⁹⁷ The expectations of the community from the initiates were instilled into them through songs. Songs were chanted to inform candidates that they had become men and women ready to take up challenging responsibilities in the community, to marry and to be respected. Such songs acted as an educative tool to the concerned candidates. Below are two such songs for boys and girls, respectively.

Song No.2 Momura (Manhood)

1. C. *Oyo oyoooo*

He has become a man,

⁹⁶ M.M. Okeng’o, op. cit., p.9.

⁹⁷ O.I. with C. Nyabonyi, at Mwamosioma village, on 28/11/2004.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>R. <i>Oyoo</i></p> <p>2. C. <i>Obeire Momura</i>
<i>Obeire Momuraaaa...</i>
R. <i>Oyoo</i></p> <p>3. C. <i>Bono Mambia bono mambia ee</i>
R. <i>Oyoo</i></p> <p>4. C. <i>Ng'ina amosike,</i>
<i>Ng'ina amosike ee!</i>
R. <i>Oyoo</i></p> <p>5. C. <i>Tamotoma roche,</i>
<i>Tamotoma roche ee!</i>
R. <i>Oyoo</i></p> <p>6. C. <i>Ise mokami Oirire</i>
R. <i>Mboro Chiabo</i></p> <p>7. C. <i>Ise Mokami oirire</i>
R. <i>mboro chiabooo</i></p> <p>8. C. <i>Otureirwe ritimo</i>
R. <i>Nanguba mbibo</i>⁹⁸</p> | <p>This one!</p> <p>He was become a man
He was become a man
This one!</p> <p>This morning, this morning eh
This one!</p> <p>His mother to respect him,
His mother to respect him eh
This one!</p> <p>Not to send him to the river;
Not send him to the river.
This one</p> <p>The monster has taken
their Penis
The monster has taken
Their penis
He has been given a spear
And a shield</p> |
|---|--|

In the above song, singers are praising the male initiate for having endured the pain of becoming a man in the society. Parents and the community are encouraged to accord the male initiates the respect and the support they will require in their future roles as men. Among the Abagusii; once a boy had undergone initiation, he was not supposed to perform kitchen related chores. Instead, he took care of the community and also defended the community against external attack. The song for the girl initiates went as follows

Song Nso.3. Omoiseke (Womanhood)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Orengesagane</i></p> <p><i>Obeire Omoiseke</i></p> <p><i>Orengesagane</i></p> <p><i>Obeire mokabamura</i></p> <p><i>Otigire egosorio getii</i></p> <p><i>Ise amosike</i></p> <p><i>Anyore Omosacha</i></p> <p><i>Amorende anyore Abana.</i></p> | <p>She has been a lass</p> <p>She has become a woman</p> <p>She has been a wife of boys</p> <p>She has become a wife of men</p> <p>She has left jokes in the field</p> <p>Her father to respect her</p> <p>To get a husband</p> <p>To care for her and get children.</p> |
|---|--|

⁹⁸ A song sung by Peter. M .Keya at Nyanturago Market on 4/08/2004



Female initiates were given fair treatment as compare to male counter-parts since they were tought to be less hardy. However, in the above song, they were challenged to boldly take up their future roles as women upon graduation from their place of seclusion. For example; they were to be married and take care of their children for the continuity of life according to the Abagusii beliefs.

Initiation songs in general were very significant to the initiates as they informed them of their responsibilities and obligations to the community. These songs were sung in all parts of Gusii land where western influence had not intensively penetrated through Christian missionaries. Even where Christianity had gained significance, they were still sung. One piece of education they emphasized was that full community membership was achieved through pain, responsibilities and obligations. Ogochi iburu or nyangi (circumcision) was a gate to maturity, adulthood and full community membership, with new rights, duties, obligations and responsibilities. Male circumcision songs were specifically meant to encourage the youth to be ready to defend their community against any external aggression. The reference made to Kipsigis land and Maasai land in the above cited song was used to imply that the initiate was expected to defend the communities from the raids that were often waged by the neighbouring communities

mostly the Kipsigis, Kuria and the Maasai.⁹⁹ Therefore, it was imperative for the youth to be prepared for future roles of defending their community.¹⁰⁰ Through songs girl initiates were taught to be responsible women.

2.4 Marriage Songs and Dances

In the pre-colonial period, marriage among the Abagusii was the next important ceremony after that of circumcision. It was considered a sacred institution as it played an integral role in the continuity of life. Preparation for marriage among the Abagusii involved parents and close relatives of the concerned parties. Usually, it was the duty of a relative or a close friend of the man's family to look for the girl (bride) who was expected to hail from a "respectable family". This was generally a family, which was free from such vices as witchcraft, sorcery and pride. Once a suitable girl was found, the family of the bridegroom went into negotiations with the girls' family over the payment of dowry in terms of cattle and goats. However, the number of animals paid to the girls' parents depended on the ability of the bridegroom's family.

Marriage songs and dances were humorous and instructive. The songs further discouraged divorce and wife beating. These songs emphasised love among the couples as it was considered incredible to go for a wife and send her away. People who mistreated their wives were often referred to as abaisia, which meant lads, implying uncircumcised, young and immature boys.¹⁰¹

The Abagusii's expectation of marriage was manifested in the following song, which was performed as the bride and the bridegroom were escorted to their matrimonial home.

⁹⁹ O.I., with H. Isena, at Gesusu, on 27/12/2004.

¹⁰⁰ O.I., With Paul Kibindi, at bosigisa, on 21/7/2004.

¹⁰¹ A song sung by B. Moraa at Lietago Market, on 28/12/2004.

Song No.4.Mokegori (Agemate)

Mokegoriomoisia
Yara nkanyioma
Kinde Omoke
Etwani rende Yara
Inkanyioma Kindomoke
Mokegori Omoisa Yara
Etwoni rende Yara
Kemunto O'Nyamacharara,
Akarora Gwaisaneire
Agancha aikaranse
Kamoseria genda! genda!
Gaikaransa
Kamoseria genda! genda
KwabeiroKironchiyara,
Kironchi Otarochi
Inkorutwa ore omwaro
Otabwati mochionde
Otabwati mochionde¹⁰².

My age mate you 'Lad'
 I married
 When young
 I thought I was a cock
 I married when young,
 my age mate you 'lad'
 I thought I was a cock
 Kemunto Nyamacharara'
 Thought you were mature
 She agreed to stay
 But you chased her go! go!
 She agreed to stay on
 But you chased her go! go!
 You are an outcast
 And blind can not see
 Thrown on your grave shoot
 Because you don't have a home.
 Because you don't have a home.



¹⁰² Ibid.

19
nda kwa - bei - ro - ki - ro-chi ki - ro - chio - ta - ro - chi - nko-

24
ru - twa - o - ro - mwa - ro - ta - bwa - ti - mo - chi - o - nde

The above song was performed to warn men that whoever divorced could not have a home and therefore, would be considered an outcast. Like any other African community, the Abagusii valued children more than anything else. The Abagusii did not specify any limited number of children a couple could get during their lifespan. They believed that it was through children that the community could expand and be perpetuated. Songs were composed and performed during marriage ceremonies to put across the community wishes that for the achievement of the purpose of marriage, there was need to live in harmony, have mutual understanding within the family and have children who would ensure the continuity of the community and the future life that was to come their way.¹⁰³

According to Zake, in his work on folk Music of Kenya, a wedding ceremony among the Abagusii involved quite a number of activities. Merry-making songs and dances were performed. The best example was when the go-between, esigani, was sent to the girl's home. During such occasion, the girl's parents and relatives would eat, drink and then an obokano player would sing and get them dancing. Each dancer had the freedom to choose his or her style of dancing. However, the most popular dance was entabanana, which is jumping and shaking of the shoulders. In this dance, the obokano player who usually sat in the middle while dancers made a circle round him supplied the

¹⁰³ M.M. Okeng'o, op.cit. p.82.

music. A ceremony of dowry payment referred to as okomana followed. Among the Abagusii, dowry was given in form of cattle as noted earlier on. In addition, they provided a goat which was usually slaughtered at the bride's home for the wedding ceremony.¹⁰⁴

Okomana was followed by egekwana, meaning plans for the wedding. Old men from both families and clans usually did this. On the eve of the wedding day, female relatives of the bridegroom, would go to the bride's home where they would spend the night celebrating and dancing. In the morning, they would start their journey back with the bride and the bridegroom. On the wedding day, omonyanyangi, a marriage specialist arranged to conduct some oral interviews for the bride and the bridegroom. These interviews were mainly concerned with questions regarding the future lives and roles of the bride and the bridegroom. After the interview, the omonyanyangi would sing the following song:

Song No.5 Eeri ya Tata (Our father's bull) Choral chant

1.C. <i>Ee eri, ya tata</i>	Oh, my fathers' bull to
R.. <i>Eremerie Kimonge</i>	Plough for Kimonge
2.C. <i>Eeri twagorete mbori</i>	The bull we exchanged
R <i>Ere nemanwa</i>	For a goat with her kid
3.C. <i>Nabono twayegora</i>	And now we give it
R. <i>mwancheri.</i>	Free because of love.

In reciting the above chant, reciters underscored the importance of paying brideprice. Couples were reminded to attach a lot of importance to the value that dowry had as far as the Abagusii were concerned.

On hearing this, the bridegroom's relatives would feel pleased because the bull and the goat they had brought as part of dowry had brought home a wife. This was the theme

¹⁰⁴ G.S. Zake, op.cit., p.104.

of the above song. After the bride and the bridegroom had been declared husband and wife, small children were allowed to nip and pinch the bride in order to test her patience.¹⁰⁵ After a day or two, the newly married woman would sing a song in which she asked for a hoe to go and till the land as a sign of starting a married life. In the song, she could mention the lazy people who had a tendency of moving from house to house looking for beer that they themselves never brew. The woman could sing:

Song No.6 Ekebago Egesera (Good hoe)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1.C. <i>Emong'ererie Obokombe</i>
R. <i>Nekebago egesera</i> | Give me a hoe,
With a good handle |
| 2.C. <i>Emong'ererie Obokombe</i>
R. <i>Nekebago egesera</i> | Give me a hoe,
With a good handle |
| 3. C. <i>Nekebago egesera</i>
R. <i>Ng'endekwabusera Omogondo</i>
<i>Omogondo nyakieni Kebariri,</i>
<i>Omaiya Chingero</i>
<i>Bonyangero.</i> | A hoe so that
I can go to cultivate
The garden that is beautiful
O perfect person sings
And sings |
| 4. C. <i>Omokungu sioma sioma</i>
R. <i>Kayi akomanya arugeirwe</i>
<i>Gose mboke mbomwana</i>
<i>Omaiya Omaiya,, chingero</i>
<i>Bonyangero</i> | A woman who does
Not know where the
Brew is prepared in a pot
O' perfect person songs
And songs |
| 5.C. <i>Omokungu sioma sioma</i>
R. <i>Moe oboremo bwekeyembi</i>
<i>Omaiya chingero bonyangero oo.</i>
<i>Omaiya chingero bonyangero oo</i> ¹⁰⁶ . | A woman who loiters
Give her a hard ground
O' O' perfect person sings
O' perfect person songs and songs |

With the above song, the honeymoon for the newly married couple came to an end and the normal life of husband and wife began, with the married woman being integrated in her new home.

¹⁰⁵ O.I., with T., Nyaanga, at Gesabakwa market, on 22/11/2004.

¹⁰⁶ A song sung by G. Nyabonyi, at Girango village on 20/11/2004.

2.5 Work Songs and Dances

Among the Abagusii, there was clearly defined division of labour. This was based on 'sex and age'. It set adult males apart from women and children along lines which contributed to their categorical dignity. There was a very clear division of labour which was manifested in two separate hierarchies, where the male hierarchy (sons, husbands and male elders) was superior to the female hierarchy (daughters, wives and elderly women). Abagusii women performed the routine household duties such as grinding finger-millet and sorghum, cooking, collecting firewood, fetching water, taking care of the children, maintaining the houses, gathering vegetables and giving advice and guidance to young girls on various issues of life. They also plastered houses using clay soil. Mature but unmarried girls, abaiseke, helped their mothers with duties around the home and also with agricultural work. The uninitiated young girls looked after their small brothers and sisters. They also helped their mothers with some of the household chores such as cleaning the houses and fetching firewood and water.¹⁰⁷

Emeremo, work, was understood by the Abagusii to be God-given occupation. It was geared towards improving the social, political and the economic life of the Abagusii. Songs and dances were performed as the Abagusii enjoyed their occupation. This was because work sessions according to Abagusii tradition were joyful experiences.¹⁰⁸ The Abagusii occupational songs in the pre-colonial period defined clearly the issue of division of labour. Efforts to develop the character of youths and shape them into responsible citizens were not shunned in the traditional Abagusii community.¹⁰⁹ Division of labour ensured that each member of the community performed certain tasks based on

¹⁰⁷ C.J.O. Choti, op. cit., p.67.

¹⁰⁸ O.I., with Oori maeba at Nyamagesa market on 23/1/2005.

¹⁰⁹ M.M. Okeng'o op. cit., p.84.

sex and age. The following table shows tasks and their performers in the pre-colonial Abagusii society. While performing these tasks, various songs that covered many subjects

were performed.

Table 2: Tasks and their Performers in the Pre-Colonial Abagusii Society

Task	Performer
(a) Subsistence	
Bush-clearing for cultivation	M
Land tillage	FM
Sowing of finger-millet and sorghum	F
Planting vegetables and weeding	F
Erecting scare crows	M
Harvesting	B
Looking after animals	MF
Milking cows	M
Making ropes	M
Fencing	M
Cutting sticks for fencing	M
(b) Searching for food	
Hunting	M
Fishing in the river	MF
Gathering mushrooms	FM
Gathering edible fruits and plants	FM
Gathering edible insects e.g. locusts	FM
Trapping birds	M
(c) Domestic / household chores	
Cooking	F
Brewing of beer	F

Keeping floor clean	F
Collecting firewood	F
Cutting wood from the forest	MF
Tending house fire	F
Splitting wood	MF
Making iron implements	M
Fetching water	F
Weaving cloth	FM
Slaughtering animals	M
Feeding children	F
Taking care of the sick children	F
Baby sitting	F
Counseling children	B
(d) House building tasks	
Gathering thatching grass	M
Roof thatching	M
Gathering vines for binding	M
Preparing wood for building	M
Preparing ground for building	M
Hauling the material for the site building	MF
Mud-smearing and plastering	F
Cooking for builders	F

Source: Adapted from A Oakley, Subject on Women, Pantheon Books, New York, 1981, PP. 140-141, 180.

Note

B - Tasks performed equally by females and males

F - Tasks performed by females only

M - Tasks performed by males only

FM-Tasks performed usually by women which are normally performed by men

MF - tasks performed usually by men which are normally performed by women

People were encouraged to work hard in whatever task they were engaged in. A hard working person was compared to a weaverbird, which was usually busy whenever it wanted to build a nest. Those of the Abagusii community who relied mainly on begging were encouraged to work like a weaverbird so as to have their own food. The following song was to put this message across.

Song No.7 Getinginye (Clever bird)

<i>Getinginye keng'aini kerigie Oboundi</i>	A clever bird builds
<i>Kiagache emburegotwa gesoe mwaye</i>	Its nest when it rains it shelters
<i>Egetinginye ekeng'aini kerigie Oboundi</i>	A clever bird builds
<i>Kiagache embur egotwa gesoe mwaye</i>	Its nest when it rains it shelters
<i>Gesoe mwaye baba mburegotwa gesoe</i>	Its nest when it rains it shelters
<i>Mwayebaba mbura egotwagesoe mwaye.</i>	Its nest mother it shelters
<i>Getinginye keng'aini kerigie Oboundi</i>	A clever bird builds
<i>Kiagache emburegotwa gesoe mwaye</i>	Its nest when A clever bird builds
<i>Egetinginye ekeng'aini kerigie Oboundi</i>	Its nest when it rains it shelters
<i>Kiagache embur egotwa gesoe mwaye</i>	A clever bird builds
<i>Getinginye keng'aini kerigie Oboundi</i>	A clever bird builds
<i>Kiagache emburegotwa gesoe mwaye</i>	Builds when it rains it shelters
<i>Egetinginye ekeng'aini kerigie Oboundi</i>	A clever bird builds
<i>Gesoe mwaye baba mburegotwa gesoe</i>	It shelters when it rains it shelters
<i>Mwayebabambura egotwagesoe mwaye.</i> ¹¹⁰	When it rains

The above song encouraged people to be self-disciplined in searching for economic resources so that they could improve standards of living as the clever bird used to do.

Laziness was not entertained among the Abagusii in the pre-colonial period. For instance lazy people were ridiculed in the following work song:

Song No.8 Nyamworoto- (A lazy person) Choral chant

<i>Nyamworoto tamanyeti</i>	The lazy one does not know how
<i>Korema baba</i>	To dig, mother

¹¹⁰ A song sung by students of Kereri Girls' Secondary School on 4/11/2004.

Nyamworoto tamanyeti
Korema baba
Nigo agoisaransa Oragerigwa
Nyamworoto O'baba
Nyamworoto tamanyeti
Korema mogondo
Ee nyamworoto.

The lazy one does not know how
 To dig, mother
 The lazy one sits waiting to be fed
 The lazy of my mother
 The lazy does not know how
 To dig in the garden.
 Oh lazy person

In another work song, the proverbial lazy woman was criticised and at the same time encouraged to work hard for the betterment of her home. This message was effectfully communicated through song and dance as in the below song for work sessions .

Song No.9 Mokungu (Woman)

<i>1.C.Mokungu nyamworoto</i>	A lazy woman, give her land
<i>R. Moe oboremo bwekenyambi</i>	With overgrown couch grass
<i>2.C.Mokungu nyamworoto</i>	A lazy woman, give her land
<i>R.Moe oboremo bwekenyambi</i>	With overgrown couch grass
<i>3.C.Moe oboremo bwekenyambi</i>	Give her land with couch grass
<i>R.Nabwo akorema obwata omotwe</i>	She tills it and holds their head
<i>4.C. Mokungu nyamworoto</i>	A lazy woman
<i>R.Moe oboremo bwekenyambi</i>	Give her land with couch grass
<i>5.C.Moe oboremo bwekenyambi</i>	Give her land with couch grass
<i>R.Nabwo akorema obwata Omotwe</i>	She tills it and holds the head
<i>O'maiya, Omaiya</i>	O'perfect O'perfect
<i>Cchingero bonyangero</i>	Sings and sings
<i>6 C.Mokungu omworo</i>	A lazy woman, give her a piece
<i>R.Moe oboremo</i>	Of land
<i>7.C.Bori bwekenyambi</i>	Overgrown with couch grass
<i>R.Nabwo akonyara</i>	So that she digs
<i>8.C.Kero akorema</i>	When she tills
<i>R.Obwata omotwe</i>	She holds her head
<i>Oye nomogongo Oye namakere.</i>	She holds her back and waist.
<i>Oye nomogongo Oye namakere¹¹¹.</i>	She holds her back and waist.

In the song above, laziness was discouraged. Lazy members of the society were seen as parasites that never deserved any fair treatment from the society at all. In this way then, songs in the pre-colonial period were educative tools which advised people to

¹¹¹ A song performed by Kenyerere Women Group Choir, at Ichuni market on 18/12/2004.

constantly work hard in whatever task they were involved in. This confirms the fact that Abagusii cherished work above all other things. Laziness was denounced by everybody.

Group workers used to carry food and drinks to their places of work which were far away from home. They sang a variety of songs to inspire them to work faster and efficiently for long hours during work sessions. The following was one of such songs:

Song No.10 Tata Nekebwaro (Father is a rhino)

<i>Tata nekebwaro baminto</i>	My father is a rhino,
<i>Nekebwaro</i>	He is a rhino
<i>Tata nekebwaro baminto</i>	My father is a rhino,
<i>Nekebwaro</i>	He is a rhino ee
<i>Tata nekebwaro</i>	My father is a rhino
<i>Na mama nekebwaro</i>	And mother is a rhino ee
<i>Tata nekebwaro</i>	My father is a rhino,
<i>Na mama nekebwaro</i>	Mother also is a rhino
<i>Mama nekebwaro</i>	Mother also is a rhino
<i>Aa ee ee ae ee ee ,na mama</i>	Ae ee ee,ae ee ee Mother also
<i>Nekebwaro</i>	Is a rhino
<i>Na mama nekebwaro aaa</i>	And my mother is a rhino ah
<i>Kemunto ngagokania</i>	Kemunto* I refused you,
<i>Kemunto ngagokania</i>	Kemunto I refused you
<i>Kemunto ngagokania</i>	Kemunto I refused you,
<i>Ae ee Omoyo</i>	Ae ee heart
<i>Na mama nekebwaro</i>	Mother also is a rhino
<i>Aa ee ee ae ee ee ,na mama</i>	Ae ee ee ae ee ee mother also
<i>Nekebwaro</i> ¹¹² .	A rhino.



¹¹² A song sung by J. Mikaye, at Mwamoriango village on 9/1/2005.
*Kemunto, apparently, was the singer's fiancée.

11
ne-ke-bwa-ro - na - ma - ma - ne - ke - bwa-ro - ta - ta - ne-ke-bwa-ro - ma - ma - ne - ke-bwa-ro -

16
a - e - e - e - e - a - e - e - e - e - na - ma - ma - ne - ke-bwa - ro - na - ma -

21
ma - ne - ke-bwa-ro - na - ma - ma - ne - ke-bwa-ro - ke - mu - nto - nga - go - ka - nia - ke - mu - nto

26
nga - go - ka - nia - ke - mu - nto - nga - go - ka - nia - ke - mu - nto - nga - go - ka - nia - a - e - o - mo -

31
yo - mu - nto - nga - go - ka - nia - mu - nto - nga - go - ka - nia - a - e - e - e - e - a -

36
e - - - e - - - - - e - - - - e

In the above song, the ability of a hardworking man, especially the father in a home was compared to that of a rhino, a hardworking animal. The ability to work on a farm with a lot of energy was highly regarded among the Abagusii. A rhino was a wild animal, which was known to have a lot of energy for work. That is why the above song kept on referring to a rhino as an embodiment of hardworking members of the community. Parents used to work much faster than their children. That is why the song kept on referring to father and mother working as hard as a rhino. Despite this song being modified, it still has thematic relevance among the Abagusii. The functionality of this song was to discourage laziness.

2.6 Herding Songs

The domesticated animals, which were reared by the Abagusii in the pre-colonial period, included cattle, goats, sheep and poultry. Among these, cattle were the most valued as they were a source of meat, milk, butter, ghee and blood. Their skins and hides were also used in making beds, cloths and shields.¹¹³ In general, livestock had religious significance. Religious rituals required sacrifices of poultry, cattle, sheep or goat. Goats and poultry were commonly offered to the Abagusii ancestral spirits or God, Engoro during times of illness, drought or various kinds of misfortunes. Cattle were also important because they were used in marriages. Livestock keeping was a demanding activity that required tight security against raids especially from the cattle-loving Kipsigis and Maasai. Cattle songs mainly existed in the livestock rearing regions; the songs were punctuated by whistling and various types of vibrations such as ‘fwa - fwa - fwa -, fwa, ee - chwa, ee - chwa and ee - chwa. It is very important to note that the Abagusii like the Embu had a unique language that was understood by only the herdsmen and their herds. Real cattle song singers were expected to be intelligent, skilful, diligent persons capable of making cattle to stop feeding, moving or doing anything else in order to listen attentively to the song, apparently enjoying the music. Like the Embu, cattle songs among the Abagusii enabled the herdsmen to control their large herds effectively.¹¹⁴

Cattle songs were sung to induce the cattle to eat and to rally near the headman for further “instructions” and stop eating and leave the grazing fields for the cattle sheds. Hence the headman had to be careful as to what to sing depending on the time of the day. In their songs, the herdsmen sang on many subjects. Like the Embu, these included

¹¹³ C.J.Choti, op. cit., p.77.

¹¹⁴ H.S.K. Mwaniki, op.cit, p.42.

praising the animals, orientating the animals to a new geographical area, instructing the animals to eat grass or drink water and comforting them to ‘relax’. This was a special category of entertainment songs for relaxation purposes. The following song was sung to that effect: Song No.11 Mbweriare (In the dairymshed) Opens with a chant

<i>Chiombe chiato e chiombe chiato</i>	Our cattle ee our cattle
<i>Chiombe chiato e chiombe chiato</i>	Our cattle ee our cattle
<i>Nyag’era na maritati</i>	The black and spotted
<i>Chiombe chiato</i>	Our cattle
<i>Mbweri are ee baba</i>	The thief in the shed mother
<i>Mbweri are ee baba</i>	The thief in the shed mother
<i>Mbweri are Omoibi mbweri are</i>	He is there thief is there
<i>Nga mbeni twaigure</i>	We heard a knock
<i>Mbeni morogoba</i>	A knock in the evening
<i>Kura mono ee baba</i>	Scream loud ee mother
<i>Kura mono ee baba</i>	Scream loud ee mother
<i>Kura mono chiombe chiachire</i>	Scream loud cattle have gone
<i>Kura mono chiombe chiachire</i>	Scream loud cattle have gone
<i>Nga mbeni twaigure</i>	We heard a knock
<i>Mbeni morogoba</i>	A knock in the evening
<i>Chiachire ee baba</i>	They have gone ee mother
<i>Chiachire ee baba</i>	They have gone ee mother
<i>Chiachire chiombe chiachire</i>	They have gone our cattle
<i>Nga mbeni twaigure</i>	We heard a knock
<i>Mbeni morogoba</i>	A knock in the evening
<i>Chiombe chiato chiarimeire sigisi</i>	Our cows have goneto kipsigisland
<i>Kura mono chiombe chiachire</i>	Scream loud cattle have gone
<i>Kura mono ee baba</i>	Scream loud ee mother
<i>Nga mbeni twaigure</i>	We heard a knock
<i>Chiombe chiato chiarimeire sigisi.</i> ¹¹⁵	Our cattle have to Kipsigisland

Mbwe-ria - re e - e - ba - ba - mbwe-ria - re - e - e - ba - ba mbe-ria - re - o -

5
moi - bi - mbwe - ria - re - mbwe - ria - re - o - moi - bi - mbwe - ria - re - nga - mbe - ni - twai - gu - re -

¹¹⁵ A song sung by S. Nyakweba, at Masimba market, on 29/11/2004.

8
mbe-ni-mo-ro-go-ba ku-ra-mo-no-e-e-ba-ba ku-ra-mo-no-e-e-ba-ba

12
ba ku-ra-mo-no-chio-mbe-chia-chi-re ku-ra-mo-no-chio-mbe-chia-chi-re

15
re nga-mbe-ni-twai-gu-re mbe-ni-mo-ro-go-ba chia-chi-re-a-a-ba-ba

19
chia-chi-re-a-e-ba-ba chia-chi-re-chio-mbe-chia-chi-re

22
chia-chi-re-chio-mbe-chia-chi-re re nga-mbe-ni-twai-gu-re mbe-ni-mo-ro-go-ba-chio-mbe-

25
chiai-to-chia-ri-mei re-si-gi-si chiai-to-chia-ri-mei re-si-gi-si chiai-to-chia-ri-mei

30
re-si-gi-si

The above song was usually sung by a herdsman taking care of the animals that had been stolen or raided but had been recovered. In the song, the herdsmen narrated the story on how raiders had taken them by surprise but then the animals were later recovered. The herdsmen would be happy for recovering their animals. This happiness was usually expressed through song and dance.

Diligence in a herdsman was vital and praiseworthy. In the pre-colonial period, the Abagusii had a saying that Chiombe ne chia Nyakemogi nyariso riomo.¹¹⁶ That is, cattle can only belong to one who does not blink his eyes and has dry eyes. Whoever looked after the animals was expected to be careful not to lose any. Negligence of work was not tolerated. The following song was sung to encourage the herdsmen to take great care of their livestock:

Song No.12 Omonto ogetikende (A man of the next grazing field)

<i>Ee Omonto okorwa ase</i>	Ee somebody from a
<i>Ogetii kendee baba</i>	Different field ee mother
<i>Omonto ogetii kende</i>	Somebody from a different field
<i>Boria eeri eye magwari angó'</i>	Asks whose bull is spotted one
<i>Ee Omonto ogetii kende</i>	Ee somebody from a different field
<i>Ee baba</i>	Ee mother
<i>Omonto ogetii kende oboria</i>	Ee somebody from a different field asks
<i>Eeri eye magwari angó'</i>	Whose bull is spotted one
<i>Aboria eeri eye magwari 'ango</i>	Is this spotted one
<i>Ee baba tarochi</i>	Ee mother
<i>Aboria eeri eye magwari angó'</i>	Asks whose bull is spotted one as if
<i>Tarochi Eng'ina Nyabisembe</i> ¹¹⁷ .	Can't see bull's spotted mother.

The song warned herdsmen to be careful when grazing their animals lest they loose them. Those members of the Abagusii community who had large herds of animals were supposed to put identification marks on them, so that they could be easily traced in case they got lost in grazing fields. A careful herdsman was expected to know all the animals he looked after lest he lost one or two. Inquiry about the presence of a spotted bull amongst his herd as pointed out in the above song was a sign of carelessness. A stranger from a different field or grassland could be excused though. But the owner who knew the cattle very well could not be excused. Even a person from a neighbourhood field or grassland with the skills of likening animals could notice the bulls' mother. This song

¹¹⁶ M.M.Okeng'o, op. cit., pp.84-85.

¹¹⁷ A song sung by J. Kimanga, at Mwaboto village, on 22/10/2004.

played a vital role in encouraging the herdsmen to develop a sense of intelligence, skills and attitude for the perfection of their herding task.

2.7 Beer Party Songs and Dances

Beer parties among the Abagusii in the pre-colonial period were organised to bring members of the community together. Such parties were a forum for guidance, counseling, consultations, celebrations for the community's achievement such as good harvest, conquering of enemies in war and reviewing of the community's history. Women did the brewing of amarwa, beer. When the brew was ready, word went round the village inviting community members to the party courtesy of young boys and girls.¹¹⁸ Upon receiving word, adult members of the society would come to the drinking place. Beer drinking was accompanied by a great moment of singing and dancing. Abagaka (men) could sit at the eero, living-room of the house where the beer was prepared in enyongo enene, a big pot. Using chingore, straws, which were usually, prepared from wild plants, the men sipped beer as they discussed community issues. Gradually as they got drunk, they could start singing in praise of the occasion. The following was one of such songs:

Song No.13 Nyansaiga (Comrades)

<i>Nyansaiga mbono tokonywa</i>	Comrades we are now drinking
<i>Nyasaiga oiye oiye nyansaiga</i>	Comrades oiye oiye comrades
<i>Amarwa maronge nyasaiga</i>	This beer is good comrades
<i>Oiye oiye nyasaiga</i>	Comrades oiye oiye comrades
<i>Kanywe amarwa bitina- nyasaiga</i>	Drink peacefully – comrades
<i>Kanywe amarwa bitina</i>	Drink peacefully
<i>Nyasaiga oiye oiye nyasaiga</i>	Comrades oiye oiye comrades
<i>Nyasaiga Amarwa maserNyasaiga</i>	This beer is good comrades
<i>Oiye oiye nyasaiga</i>	Comrades oiyeoiye comrades
<i>Kanywe amarwa bitina nyasaiga</i>	Drink peacefully comrades

¹¹⁸ O.I. with C. Moraa at Keumbu Kisii, on 4/1/2004.

Oiye oiye nyasaiga¹¹⁹.

Oh yea oh yea comrades.

Nya-nsai - ga mbo - no - to - ko-nywa nya-nsa - i - ga - oi - ye - oi - nya-nsai - ga - a -
 ma - rwa - ma - ro - nge - nya-nsai - ga - oi - ye - oi - ye - nya-nsai - ga - ka - nywa - ma - rwa - bi - ti - na
 nya-nsai - ga - oi - ye - oi - ye - nya-nsai - ga - a ma - rwa - ma - se - ra - nya-nsai - ga - oi -
 ye - oi - ye nya-nsai - ga - ka - nywa - ma - rwa - bi - ti - na nya-nsai - ga - oi - ye - oi - ye -
 nya - - - nsai - - - ga.

Traditionally, Abagusii women were never allowed to mix with men in beer parties, let alone using drinking straws. They had to use ebisanda, calabashes and in seclusion. The climax of beer party was marked by a variety of dances accompanied with ululations from women. Women at beer parties also sang to warn of exploitation of the weak by a section of the community. They could be heard singing the following song: In singing the below song, the Abagusii women felt discriminated against when it came to the distribution of resources such as wealth, division of labour and eating certain kinds of foods such as poultry

Song No.14 Ngoko Nkorere (The hen is crying)

Ngoko nkorere bwandire
Ngoko nkorere bwandire
Magenana magenane
Ngoko nkorere bwandire
Magenana magenane
Nemborie mobiri niche

The hen is crying bitterly
 The hen is crying bitterly
 Oh my eggs my eggs
 The hen is crying bitterly
 My eggs
 Yes you have eaten and

¹¹⁹ A song sung by C. Moraa, at Keumbu Kisii, on 4/1/2005.

Ninche narure mborie
Mabori ninche ninche narure
Engoromoni ngokarariewe
Engoromoni ngokarariewe
Oo yaye buna ndereairirwe
*Oo yaye buna ndere airirwee*¹²⁰.

Said it is me
 Have eaten and said it is me
 Famine is approaching soon
 Famine is approaching soon
 Oo I let me cry they have
 Oo I let me cry they have.

Ngo - ko - nko - re - re - re - bwa - ndi - re ngo - ko - nko - re - re - re -
 bwa - ndi - ra - ma - ge - na - na - ma - ge - na - ne ngo ko - nko - re - re re bwa - ndi - ra - ma -
 ge - na - na - ma - ge - na - ne - mbo - rie - mo - bo - ri - ni - che ni - che - na - ru - re -
 mbo - rie - mo - bo - ri - ni - che - ni che - na - ru - re ngo - ro - mo - ni - ngo - ka - ra -
 rie ngo - ro - mo - ni ngo - ka - ra - rie oo - ya - ye bu - na - nde - re - a - i - ri - rwe -
 oo - ya ye - bu - na - nde - ra - a - i - ri - we - - - - In

their songs, they also condemned injustice and corruption. In this respect, beer party songs tackled quite a number of subjects that included warning, advising, discouraging, encouraging and appreciating. For instance, irresponsible relations such as borrowing peoples' items without returning to the owners were discouraged. It was expected that

¹²⁰ A song sung by M. Ondieki, at Mache –Achumbi, on 15/10/2004.

once somebody borrowed an item from somebody, he or she was to return it to the owner. The following song was usually performed at a beer party to discourage borrowing of items without returning them to the owners:

Song No. 15 Mokungu (Woman)

<i>Mokungu sikomoino</i>	Woman of the neighbourhood
<i>Kae Bosibori</i>	Return to Bosibori her
<i>Eensio yaye</i>	Grinding stone
<i>Mokungu sikomoino</i>	Woman of the Neighbourhood
<i>Kae Bosibori</i>	Return to Bosibori
<i>Ensio yaye</i>	Her grinding stone
<i>Kae Bosibori</i>	Return to Bosibori
<i>Ensio yaye</i>	Her grinding stone
<i>Nero akona Gosera</i>	She grinds with it in
<i>Mwaye ee baba</i>	Her house
<i>Omaiya, omaiya</i>	Perfect person, O'Perfec person
<i>Chingero Bonyangero.</i>	Sings and sings.

6
 ngu - si - ko - moi - no - ka - e - bo - si - bo - rie - nsio - ya ye ka - e - bo - si - bo - rie - nsio - ya - ye ne - ra - ko -

10
 na - go - se - ra - mwa - ye - o - ma - i - ya - o - o - ma - i - ya - chi -

14
 nge - ro - bo - nya - nge - ro.

Mo - ku - ngu - si - ko - moi - no - ka - e - bo - si - bo - rie - nsio - ya ye Mo - ku -

From the above song, peoples' material possessions were highly valued. If one did not have certain tools for use, he or she was free to borrow from the nearest neighbour. The song emphasized good relations in material borrowing and community sharing.

Loitering was also discouraged in the Abagusii community. Songs to discourage such vices were sung at beer parties as well. Abagusii had a saying that whoever loiters from house to house was lazy and irresponsible. The saying, Mogendi gendi bisieri tana koborwa mbori¹²¹, that is, one who loiters from door to door at whatever circumstances is likely to encounter an allegation. Loitering at a deeper level meant not being organised even in marriage.

In the pre-colonial period, the Abagusii, like any other human society, resented all human vices such as witchcraft, theft, corruption, injustice and robbery. They had songs, which were freely sung, and danced at, at beer parties, all of which pointed accusing fingers on the above vices. All the Abagusii subjected such vices to criticism. This was because they would lead to broken marriages, unstable families, and unstable society, a low development and suspicion among community members. Witchcraft for example, was singled out as the most dangerous vice of all societal members, the young and the old resented it strongly. They registered fear of it. Witchcraft in the community led to divorce, a thing which was bare in the pre-colonial Abagusii society. In case there was divorce due to witchcraft or any other reason, a man in the Abagusii community opted to resorting to the option of marrying another wife. A divorced woman, in most cases would be reluctant to leave her husbands' house as this meant leaving her children in the custody of her husband or co-wife. The co-wives were notoriously known for maltreatment of other women's children.

Abagusii composed several songs and poems to decry witchcraft. The following was a common song sung at beer parties to warn against the practice witchcraft.

¹²¹ O.I. with J. Mikaye, at Nyamagesa market on 21/1/2005.

Song No.16 Nyanchoka Mogesroni (Nyanchoka wife of Hesron)

Nyanchoka mogesironi

Ee baba

Nyanchoka mogesironi

Mogesironi

Gwatachire Omwana Obande

Ee baba

Gwatachire Omwana

Obande ee baba

Koeyana bunegesengi

Ee baba koeyana bunegesengi

Kioriosana

Nyanchoka mogesironi

Ee baba

Nkere ee nkere e nkere

Ee nkere ee nkere.

Nyanchoka wife of Hesron

Ee mother

Nyanchoka wife of Hesron ,

Wife of Hesron

You have stepped on child somebody

Ee mother

You have stepped on child

Of somebody ee mother

Breathing like beast

Ee mother Breathing like beast

Of the bush

Nyanchoka wife of Hesron

Ee mother

It is ee it is so

It is so it is so.

Nya - ncho - ka - mo - ge - si - ro - ni - e - ba - ba - e - nya - ncho - ka - mo - ge - si -

ro - ni - e - si - ro - ni gwa - ta - chi - re - o - mwa - no - ba - ndi - e - ba - ba

e - gwa - ta - chi - re - o - mwa - no - ba - ndo - koe - ya - na koe - ya - na - bu - ne - ge -

se - ngi - e - ba - ba - o - koe - ya - na - bu - ne - ge - se - ngi kio - ro - sa - na

e - e - nke - re - e - e - nke - re e - e - nke - re

2.8 War Songs and Dances

In the pre-colonial period, the Abagusii had songs and dances, which were special for warfare from the time of preparation for war, to war period and after the war.

Throughout their history, the Abagusii were involved in tribal animosity. The various

Abagusii clans fought against each other. The best example is that of the Bassi and Nyaribari. The Abagusii also fought with the Kipsigis, Maasai and the Luo. Cattle thefts, and other conflicts and cultural disagreements often caused these clashes.¹²² War songs were performed by the Abagusii to assert their superiority and also to encourage warriors to fight “winning battles”. In preparation for war, the warriors in high spirits performed songs and dances in order to confront the enemy with a lot of confidence. War songs were sung and poems recited especially by women and the old men to praise the warriors so that they could fight to the very end of the war. After war, songs and dances were performed to praise the warriors more especially after they had recovered the animals that had been stolen by the enemies.¹²³

2.9 Funeral Songs (Dirges)

Death is the last social process one undergoes in society after birth, circumcision and marriage. There is a saying among the Abagusii which states, makweri makoro that is, death is as old as mankind¹²⁴. The Abagusii consider death as an inevitable eventuality. It was accepted inescapable reality of human existence. The Abagusii respected the dead and often offered sacrifices to them. They believed that a person who died at an advanced age joined the ancestral spirits in the underworld from where he or she determined events on earth.¹²⁵ It was against this background that funeral dirges communicated a sense of optimism so as to perpetuate the noble belief of death being a

¹²² O.I. with N. Ogeturenki, at Rigena village on 31/12/2004.

¹²³ W.R. Ochieng', op. cit., p.156.

¹²⁴ O.I., with N.Ogeturengi, at Rigena village on 31/12/2004.

¹²⁵ O.I. with C. Moraa, at Keumbu, on 4/1/2004.

normal and expected phenomenon of life.¹²⁶ The Abagusii tended to attribute death to ancestral powers or Engoro, God. Death was also attributed to witchcraft.

After death, funeral songs were performed. These were short and repetitive choruses that were hummed at amabe, funerals. The nature and wording of those choruses entirely depended on such factors as the environment surrounding the death which included the cause of the death, the age of the deceased and the relationship of the death to the mourners. Songs were composed instantly to mourn the dead. Such songs varied in their style of presentation and performance but they all pointed at a major theme of mourning the dead person.

The Abagusii understood death as an evil that attracted both friends and foes. At death, one won the community's veneration even if he or she was bad during his or her lifetime. Death being the greatest misfortune and agonising experience, was a communal concern. The community came together to assist in the final disposal of the deceased's remains and also to console the bereaved members and to give them new hope. In consoling the bereaved family, mourners, friends and relatives could suddenly sing a variety of funeral dirges in honour of the departed one .Below is such a song.

Song No.17 Baba n'gina Kerubo (Mother Kerubo)

<i>Baba, ng'ina kerubo</i>	My mother,mother Kerubo
<i>Notana korera okure</i>	Dont cry she is dead
<i>Baba ng'ina kerubo</i>	My mother,mother Kerubo
<i>Notana korera e ochire</i>	Dont cry she is gone
<i>Bororo mbori goita</i>	Sorrow never kills
<i>Kanga bwaitire abange</i>	It would have killed many
<i>Bororo mbori goita</i>	Sorrow never kills
<i>Kanga bwaitire abange</i>	It would have killed many
<i>Makweri namakoro</i>	Death is an old phenomenon
<i>Notana korera baba</i>	Don't cry mother

¹²⁶ M.M. Okeng'o, op. cit., p98.

<i>Makweri namakoro</i>	Death is an old phenomenon
<i>Notana korera baba</i>	Don't cry mother
<i>Ngai ndarusie</i>	Where will I get a
<i>Omwana onga kerubo</i>	Child like Kerubo
<i>Ngai ndarusie</i>	Where will I get a
<i>Omwana onga kerubo Baba,</i>	Child like Kerubo mother
<i>Baba, Ngina omwana</i>	My mother, mother of the
<i>Notana korera</i>	Child don't cry
<i>Baba ng'ina</i>	My mother, mother of the
<i>Omwana notana korokure</i> ¹²⁷	Child don't cry she is dead.

Research findings from the field indicated that funeral dirges were common in Gusiland.

With a deliberate use of repetition, the mourners in the above funeral dirge affirmed to their audience that death was a reality in the continuity of life. Death was inevitable and had been there since time immemorial and yet the society continued to be there. Therefore, there was no cause for much worry. The dirge implied that death was not to break the family or community down. Instead, it was to provide a base on which the future was to be projected. However, mourners in their funeral dirges agreed that death of a beloved member of a given family was a very bitter experience. But then, they comforted the audience that sorrow does not kill. If it were so, it could have killed many people on earth. The implication here was that bitterness could not harm the living. The bereaved in such funeral dirges were reminded that other members of the community had faced similar experiences before but had not died neither had they lost hope.

In another funeral dirge, mourners always accepted that death was a bad experience to the family, which could not be easily forgotten. They sang the following:

Song No. 18 Ngatara Magombo (I visted Magombo)

<i>Ngatara aaria Magombo nganyora</i>	I visted Magombo,I found
<i>Omongina okorera</i>	Mother crying
<i>Ngatara aaria Magombo nganyora</i>	I visted Magombo,I found

¹²⁷ A funeral dirge performed by C.Moraa and I. Mogire at, Chingoko village, on 17/11/2004.

<i>Omongina okorera</i>	Mother crying
<i>Ngai ndarusie omomura onga</i>	Where will I get a son
<i>Nyanchera?</i>	Like Nyanchera?
<i>Ngai ndarusie omoiseke onga kemunto?</i>	Where will I get a daughter like Kemunto?
<i>Obororo nobororo bwaitire abange</i> ¹²⁸ .	Sorrow is sorrow has finished many.

In the above funeral dirge, mourners communicated the message that physical departure of a beloved son or daughter of a given family meant a great loss not only to the family but the community in general. It was a loss to the mother who experienced pain at pregnancy and at birth which now became a waste as a result of death. Mourners who usually were close to the deceased performed the above funeral dirge in the funeral. They did so out of emotional affliction. Erieri, songs were performed at the post-burial remembrance ritual for a departed relative during which some sacrificial offerings were made. On the appointed date, relatives from far and near sang and danced to remember the dead. The obokano, rirandi, engoma and chikonu featured prominently as musical instruments during such performance. Erieri and eburu songs were performed with vigor using bows, arrows, spears and shields. The song texts praised the deceased as they also comforted the bereaved.

2.10 Religious Songs and Dances

In the pre-colonial period, singing and dancing or some sacred chanting accompanied each religious practice among the Abagusii. People acknowledged their creator through worship. They worshipped to thank him for being kind to them, they could plead or appeal to him over the things they thought he had allowed to happen or sent to them as a punishment. These include plagues, epidemics and droughts. All occasions were

¹²⁸ A song performed by B. Mokeira at Manga market on 17/11/2004.

accompanied by repetitive but rhythmical and tonal chanting among the Abagusii like the case of Embu.¹²⁹

During worship, the performers were not expected to sing in high-pitched voices. A moderate voice and movement of the legs backwards and forwards could do. However at such occasions, there was hectic stamping of ground with sticks or with the performers' feet. The significance of this was to express tribute to the ancestors on one hand and appeal to them on the other. At certain points of performance, the male participants could jump as high as two or three feet above the ground as an expression of joy. There was a moderate clapping of hands especially by the female participants to express joy.

The moderately pitched voice in the religious songs was a gesture of humility before God and ancestors. Dry seasons were thought by the Abagusii to be occasions for Engoro, and the ancestors to express their displeasure about certain behaviour of the community. They were seasons for punishment. In petitioning God and the ancestors' spirits, performers of religious songs were expected to supplicate and show remorse¹³⁰. This was done in humility of mid-pitched voices during performance.

In celebrating a good harvest, the Abagusii had a celebration, which they referred to as ribina that is merry-making dancing. This was a dance for closing the old year and beginning of the new. When the Abagusii wanted to please their God, they danced the ribina so that their 'gods' would in turn send them rain. This took place in the open air

¹²⁹ For example, see H.S.K. Mwaniki, Op. Cit., p.60.

¹³⁰ M.M. Okeng'o, op. cit., p.102.

and in circles.¹³¹ The inner ring stood facing the outer ring. Each participant placed the left hand on her breasts, while the right hand was held by the partner straight in front of the body. They jumped very high, nodding their heads. Every time jumping stopped, they took two steps backwards and then started again without getting back at the original place. Ribina dance was usually performed by women only.

When drought lasted for long after ribina dance, the elders of the clan, both men and women, met at a chosen place for prayers. The leader wore a black skin. A goat was slaughtered, roasted whole and eaten. Left-overs were left there. They drank beer while others danced Orogunchara, an antelope horn was blown to summon others to come and join in the dance. It is said by the Abagusii tradition that on the same day, sometimes before they stopped dancing, rain would fall. An alternative procedure was when women arranged the dance. Two women from one village would walk to another village, to a woman who was known for throwing clubs and for performing singing the ribina dance. They would snatch the clubs and a small skin of an animal from her as a sign of competition in ribina dance by the various villages. The woman whose club and skin had been taken would report to the elders who would arrange for the ceremonies. They then smeared their body skins with oil and red ochre.

Meanwhile, the two women messengers would inform their people to prepare themselves. They in turn would oil and dye their skins until the contest day. Neighbouring villages from whom the club and skin were taken would then go to those who had challenged them, collect their gear and arrange for the day they would meet. When the day came, both men and women, young and old wore their prepared skins and proceeded to the proposed field. They danced and danced until very late. This dance was

¹³¹ G.S. Zake, op. cit., pp. 97-98.

usually done during the afternoon. In this case also, rain used to fall after the dance. After the rains, crops could grow well and the Abagusii used to have good harvests.

In celebrating a good harvest, the Abagusii could sing in a high raised voice with a vigorous dance for what God had done unto them. The following song serves as an illustration:

Song No.19 Banto baito (Our people)

<i>Banto baito, abanto baito</i>	Our people, our people
<i>Banto baito, abanto baito</i>	Our people, our people
<i>Baito chinchugu</i>	Our groundnuts grew
<i>Nchiama roche</i>	Well near the river
<i>Nchiama buya</i>	The harvest is good
<i>Ewawa Nyarikamoro nchiama!</i>	Ooh what a good harvest!
<i>Nchiama roche</i>	They grew well near
<i>Nchiama roche</i>	The river, grew well
<i>Nchiama roche</i>	They grew well
<i>Nchiama roche</i>	The river, grew well
<i>Baito chinchugu</i>	Oh people groundnut
<i>Nchiama roche</i>	Grew well the river
<i>Nchiama roche ewawa</i>	Grew well near the river
<i>Nyarikamoro nchiama</i>	Yes they grew.

In performing the above song, the Abagusii thanked God for the good harvest.

2.11 Music and Dance in Story Telling Sessions

The Abagusii, like most African people, held story-telling sessions in the evening when supper was being prepared or when they had eaten and were waiting to sleep. Usually, grandparents told the young people stories, but parents too could tell their children stories. There were specialized story-telling sessions reserved for those getting ready for circumcision. Someone could say, Mogano ngochande- ‘Story coming.’ The listeners responded, Mogano inchoo-‘story come’. The narrator then started telling the story. When the narration ended, the listeners could say, Taga inkine buna Emanga n’esameta

ya Gusii ‘let me grow like the two highest mountains in Kisii’. Songs and dances were very useful in enhancing story-telling sessions as it aroused interest among the listeners. They also inspired story tellers to colour their narrations. The Abagusii loved singing individually as well as in groups. In story-telling sessions, there were praise songs which were sung for pleasure and enjoyment. There were old songs and dances which the people sung and passed on to the younger generations. There were also new songs which the Abagusii musicians composed on current issues. Some of these commented on social, political and religious aspects of the people’s lives. These songs were accompanied with musical instruments. Music and dance formed a very important genre of oral literature since it could be performed practically. It acted as a vehicle through which other forms of oral literature among the Abagusii could be understood by future generations.

2.12 The Development of Gusii Music and Dance on the Eve of Colonialism

The Gusii songs and dances continued to develop in terms of melody, rhythm, accompaniments, role and performance. This is linked to the historical development of the Abagusii, their contact with other peoples as well as their environment. In the early period, songs and dances among the Abagusii were simple and repetitive. On the eve of colonial period, such songs had distinct melodies and rhythms with limited verse repetition. The birds that the hunters came into contact with during their hunting exercise provided melody that was used in most of the folk songs. Such songs began to develop systematic rhythms. For example, birds like the weaver bird (richore) and doves (amaruma) produced sounds like:

Chwe chwe chwe
Churi churi churi

Shew shew shew
Fully fully fully

Ku ku ku ku churi churi
Kwe kwe kwe kuku kuku

Co co co fully fully
Que que que hen hen

All these sounds were adopted and modified into meaningful melodies, which enhanced the performance of folk songs. During the field interview, Ogero observed that whistling which usually climaxed singing was adopted from the sunbird. He further asserted that dancing styles among the Abagusii were imitated and developed from the wild animals such as antelopes, wildbeest and hare. Such animals usually ran and produced such sounds as: ‘*didi didi tititi ti ti chiritiri ti tiritiri*’ as they were chased during hunting.¹³² Such sounds were incorporated into the Gusii folk songs and dances. This reminded them of their past history as a hunting community during their stay at Kisumu. During song and dance performance, elders among the Abagusii decorated themselves with leopard skins and hats made of feathers from wild birds. They danced in a circular manner as they remembered their past hunting history. After successful battles against their traditional enemies such as the Maasai, Kipsigis and the Luo, the Abagusii warriors decorated themselves with lions’ skins to celebrate. Usually, they sang praises to themselves as they returned home from the battle. They sang songs of praises as they imitated the lions and occasionally produced a sound similar to that of a lion. This again reminded them of their past hunting experiences when they could even attacked dangerous animals such as lions. Such songs had well-developed melodies. The following song serves as an example.

Song No. 20 Sibwori (Lions)

Mbono tokare gocha
Sibwori nyarimo Moo
Mbono tokare gocha

We have now come
We lions – Moo
We have now come

¹³² O.I., with John Ogero at Bosigisa village on 27/12/04.

Sibwori nyarimo Moo
Twairanire twensi ntwe
Sibworiri nyarimoo
Mbono tokaregocha
Sibwori nyarimoo
Mbono tokaregocha
Sibwori nyarimoo
Sibwori nyarimoo oo
*Sibwori nyarimo moo*¹³³.

We lions - Moo
 We have all come back
 We lions - Moo
 We are now coming
 We lions – Moo
 We have all come
 We lions – Moo
 We have all come
 We men Moo.

Mbo - no to - ka - re - go - cha su - rua - ri - nya - ri - mo - o - - - - -

Mbo - no to - ka - re - go - cha su - rua - ri - nya - ri - mo - o - - o - - - - -

tai - ra - ni - re twe - nsi - ntwe - si - rwa - ri - nya - ri - mo - o - o - - - - -

tai - ra - ni - re twe - nsi - ntwe - si - rwa - ri - nya - ri - mo - o - o - - - - -

Mbo - no to - ka - re - go - cha su - rua - ri - nya - ri - mo - o - - o - - - - -

Mbo - no to - ka - re - go - cha su - rua - ri - nya - ri - mo - o - o - su - rwa - ri - nya -

ri - mo - o - o - su - rua - ri - nya - ri - mo - o - o

¹³³O.I., with Wilson Kenyenga, at Eronge Village, on 8/09/05

With time, such songs were modified and sung in such places as beer parties, social ceremonies and for general entertainment. The various songs and dances performed at birth, circumcision, marriage, work, beer party and death continued to change both in form and function. At the time of the Abagusii settlement, for example, songs sung during the birth of a child were few and simple. Such songs were not usually accompanied with musical instruments. The songs developed in both rhythm and melody, from poems to theme songs and were highly specialized. They included; thanking God for bringing forth a new creature, advising the parents on the importance of proper childcare and asking God to take care of the new born as he or she would become an ‘asset’ to the whole community.

The early circumcision songs of the Abagusii during their settlement at Kano were single line melodies with few words and a lot of repetition as can be seen in the example below:

Song No 21 Obeire Momura (He has become a man)

<i>Obeire momura</i>	He has become a man
<i>Obeire momuraa</i>	He has become a man
<i>Obeire momura</i>	He has become a man
<i>Obeire momuraa</i>	He has become a man
<i>Nginamosik nginamosike</i>	Mother to respect this
<i>Oyoo Oyoo.</i> ¹³⁴	This one.

O - bei - re - mo - mu - ra o - bei - re - mo - mu - ra o

bei - re - mo - mu - ra o - bei - re - mo - mu - ra ngi - na - mo - si - ke - ngi - na -

¹³⁴A song sang by Bendictor Obae at Keumbu Village, on 16/08/04.



Initiation songs were similar to them and were often short and simple. With time, such songs were accompanied with ululation and whistling, from women and men respectively and some form of mild dancing. Circumcision songs developed both in style and performance. A variety of musical instruments and some musical improvisations were affected. For instance, as women escorted the female initiates to their seclusion, they ululated loudly and exuberantly as they jumped up and down. They carried short twigs as a form of happiness. Some decorated themselves with flowers and leaves (egwagwa)¹³⁵ and danced very vigorously. In cases of male circumcision, female dancer's especially young mothers and the initiates' mothers would welcome them as they drew closer to the place of seclusion. The women carried emioro,(panga) and twigs as they danced and ululated loudly. Those with sharp implements ran forward mimicking the male singers. They ran backwards as they cut some of the vegetation within the vicinity¹³⁶.

The male counterparts appeared as if they were teasing the women with such objects as spears and long sticks. This kept the women from seeing the initiates. Songs sung during this period had many themes emphasising maturation and social development in the Abagusii community. The male initiates were expected to defend their community physically against foreign invasion and attack. Both male and female initiates were expected to secure the community's values, customs, traditions, and

¹³⁵O.I., with Wilfred Magato on 4/4/05.

¹³⁶M.M. Okongo, op. cit., p.118.

etiquette. The men who carried spears and long sticks, as they escorted initiates to seclusion, sang war and praise songs to communicate the message of tolerance to the initiates. The songs reminded them of the past when they went to the neighbouring communities. It further indicated to the male initiates what was expected of them as they assumed the role of defending the community against external aggression. The green colour of the twig leaves which women carried signified life while the flowers' yellow colour signified determination and hope in the life of the Abagusii. According to Mokeira, yellow flowers gave Abagusii farmers hope of prospering agriculturally.¹³⁷

On hearing this moving speech from a senior elder, other elders broke into songs and dances in praise of the wise leader. This manifested a sense of appreciation and belonging to the community¹³⁸. After a moment of songs and dances, the elders in the meeting agreed that the Abagusii should leave Luoland as soon as it was convenient¹³⁹. The elders welcomed such a good decision with songs and dances. During this period, the beer party songs and dances were simple, short and covered only one major theme. A half a century on the eve of colonialism, the Abagusii circumcision songs had also developed in terms of text, themes and styles of delivery. Such songs had fully matured in the content as compared to a century before whereby such songs had few texts which had very little hidden meaning. Proper tuning before performance was a common feature of these songs. In a female 'circumcision' song, for example, the clitoris was symbolised by the chameleon. Abagusii reference to the chameleon at this period was mainly from the perspective of colour. A chameleon changes its colours now and again. It cannot be noticed easily in any particular environment. The association given in reference to the

¹³⁷O.I., with Mokeira Nyakerandi of Bokimwotwe village, on 2/07/04.

¹³⁸O.I., with Machanda, Oigoro, at gotinyanko village, on 3/08/04.

¹³⁹W.R. Ochieng, *op. cit.*, p.147.

clitoris as a chameleon was that of being considered ‘sacred’.¹⁴⁰ ‘Sacred’ because its feelings were prone to change from excitement during copulation and pains at birth. This was evidenced by the following song:

Song No.22 Gwakunire enkuna (You have touched touch)

<i>Gwakunire nkuna kuna</i>	You have touched granny touch
<i>Gwakunire enkuna kuna</i>	You have touched granny touch
<i>Kuna Moyare baba kuna nakunire</i>	Touch granny - touch
<i>Enyambu - kuna</i>	I have touched a chameleon - touch
<i>Nakunire enyambu</i>	I have touched a chameleon
<i>Kuna moyare ee</i>	Touch
<i>Baba kuna</i>	Touch ee granny touch
<i>Kuna onkuneranie - kuna</i>	Touch and touch for me - touch
<i>Kuna onkuneranie - kuna moyare</i>	Touch and touch for me
<i>Baba Kuna.</i>	Granny touch

Gwa - ku - ni - re nku - na - nku - na gwa - nku - ni - re - nku - na - nku - na

ku - na - mo - ya - re - ba - ba - ku - na na - ku - ni - re - nya - mbu - ku - na - na - ku - ni - re - nya - mbu - ku -

ku - na - mo - ye - re - bba - ba ku - na - ku - no - nku - ne - ra - nie ku - na ku - no - nku -

ne - ra - nie - ku - na - ku - na - mo - ya - re - ba - ba - ku - na

This song was developed to caution the initiates to abstain from pre-marital and ‘free’ or ‘unholy’ sex. The songs reminded the initiates to preserve the Abagusii culture and customs, which condemned sex before marriage. Any girl according to Abagusii customs, who had sex before marriage was considered an outcast.

¹⁴⁰O.I., with J. Obwocha, at Gesusu market, on 13/08/04.

In male circumcision songs, the penis was referred to as a python, an animal which the Abagusii came into contact with as they were settling in their present highlands. A python was a dangerous snake, which was feared. It swallowed both domestic animals and human beings. Throughout the early history of the Abagusii, a python was understood as a carrier of warning from the ancestors.¹⁴¹ When a person spotted a python, he perceived it to be a warning from the ancestors. A person under such a situation had to please the ancestors by offering a sacrifice of a black or red goat. As well he or she was required to name the immediate born child, a male or female in the family after the python. This explains why some of the Abagusii members were called and still are called Basweti (meaning python). In referring to the python during the male circumcision songs, performers aroused in the audience the fear they had for the python. The penis was seen to be dangerous because it could break virginity in the event of having pre-marital sex. Virginity was expected to be respected and safe-guarded. This message was contained in the following circumcision song:

Song No. 23. A. *Twachire buya* (We have come well)

<i>Twachire buya twachire buya aa aa</i>	We have come well we have
<i>Bono mambia,</i>	Come well ah
<i>Bono mambia ee ee</i>	This morning,
<i>Oyotarochi tiga ache</i>	This morning eh
<i>Kwerorera</i>	Whoever has never seen
<i>Kwerorera</i>	Let him come
<i>Enyamweri korwa Engoro imee</i>	To see for oneself a
<i>Kwerorera</i>	Python from its hole
<i>Enyamweri korwa Engoro imee</i>	To see for oneself a
<i>Kwerorera</i>	Python from its hole
<i>Enyamweri korwa Engoro imee</i>	Python from its hole
<i>Korwa engoro imee.</i>	From inside hole.

¹⁴¹J. Moraa, Ibid.

Another major development of circumcision songs in this period was purposeful repetition of phrases. Repetition sustained durability of such songs, hence calling for memorisation and cramming. In such songs, the final position syllables were usually lengthened. This elongation contributed to the development and achievement of the intended rhythm. It also contributed to the consistency and unity of rhythm. For example, in the male circumcision songs, such elongation of the end position syllables was uniform throughout the lines. This was reflected as in the following song:

Song No 23 B

<i>Obeire momura,</i>	He has become a man,
<i>Obeire momura aaa</i>	he has become a man ah
<i>Bono mambia,</i>	This morning,
<i>Bono mambiaaaa</i>	This morning ah
<i>Ng'ina amosike,</i>	His mother to respect him,
<i>Ng'ina amosikee</i>	His mother to respect him
<i>Tachi roche,</i>	Not to fetch water,
<i>Tachi rocheee</i>	Not to fetch water eh
<i>Tachi kwaa,</i>	Not to fetch vegetables,
<i>Tachi kwaaa</i>	Not to fetch vegetables aaa
<i>Oyo Oyoo Oyoo¹⁴².</i>	This this one - this one.

This kind of development led to the maturity of the Gusii circumcision songs which gave them a high quality of artistic value that defined them as true oral performance in their cultural history. The rhyming of 'aaa-' and 'eee-' contributed to the development of entertaining beats.

Most of the early work songs among the Abagusii as they settled after centuries of migration were simple with limited themes which mainly focused on specific tasks, which the Abagusii performed. Such songs were usually short and often repetitive. The song leader would vary the melodic line a bit each time a song was repetitively sung.

¹⁴²The above song was collected from Nyamagesa village, during the male circumcision ceremony on , 30/11/04.

Such a song was spontaneous. That is, it was instant not formally set. Artists were not given any tuning or rehearsals before singing. A singer could begin singing and dancing as his or her work and the audience inspired him or her. He or she could invent all devices suitable to his or her communication at that particular time.

During the early cultural history of the Abagusii, work songs were limited because the community had not settled. They were in most cases involved in warfare with their neighbouring communities and hence had little time to engage in most of the economic activities. For example at the turn of the nineteenth century, the majority of the Abagusii migrated to the Trans-Mara and Ngararo, close to the settlement of the Isiria Maasai. Here, a number of Abagusii families, particularly those of Wanjare extraction, foresaw the bloody day of confrontation with the Maasai, and therefore, erected their settlements. When the Maasai eventually attacked the Abagusii and drove them into Gusii highlands, they eventually took refuge in Nyakoe Forest, where they hid until they were joined by those who sought asylum in Luo land.¹⁴³ Around this time, the Abagusii population was small indeed and they had only a few economic activities such as few animals, limited cultivation and hunting and hence work songs had been not fully composed.

Gusii economy, during their stay in the forest as their population increased, consisted of the rearing of cattle, sheep, goats, and a few crops. They cultivated such crops as millet, finger millet, potatoes, and pumpkins. All these were supplemented with fruits, honey, milk, ghee, blood, and meat from fowl and hunted animals¹⁴⁴. All these activities necessitated the development of songs and dances among the Abagusii in the

¹⁴³W.R. Ochieng, *op. cit.*, p.165.

¹⁴⁴O.I., with Leah Among'ina, of Ramasha village, on 27/09/04.

mid-nineteenth century. During this period, it was not easy to dance while performing the many work tasks which had emerged. The songs, which accompanied these occasions, were developed in such a way that the tone, voice variation, head gestures and some limited body movements could be made. Nodding of the head, ululation, shaking of shoulders and whistling by mouth were some of the para-linguistic features that were developed to suit the performance of work songs. The mood created inspired, mainly the workers to perform their work with a lot of excitement and jubilation, which facilitated efficiency and enjoyment in performing the various work tasks.¹⁴⁵

In the early period of the Abagusii migration and settlement, dances were usually simple with limited movements. As the Abagusii interacted with the neighbouring communities such as the Luo, the Maasai and the Kipsigis, they borrowed some dancing styles, which enriched their dance performances. To enhance and cultivate dancing styles dances and songs competitions were organised by village elders during market days. Around this time, trading activities had increased in volume as the Abagusii were now settled with a number of economic activities and items for trade. Dance competitions brought together people from different villages or clans. For this purpose, the following were some of the dances that were thoroughly rehearsed at the backstage before actual public performances.

First, there was mayenga (beer party dances), a slow motion dance which was performed in a circle with the shaking of bodies but not of heads. Second, there was chigicha (twisting and shaking of shoulders), which was fairly quick dance with a lot of movement. Arms were thrown backwards and forwards and hips shaken very fast. This was too rigorous a dance for the aged and therefore left to the youth. Third, there was

¹⁴⁵J. Onkaga, op. cit.

sungusia (dancing right in a circle), a dance which was slow, stately and the feet barely left the ground. In this dance, dancers moved to the right in a circle facing inwards shaking their hips. There was also a dance, which was called koiyeria amareko (shake the shoulders).¹⁴⁶ In this dance, the obokano player enhanced the performance. He sat in the middle, while both young and the old stood in a circle. He could sing and play his music. The dancers responded with the dances, moving round, and shaking their shoulders forwards and backwards. After a few minutes, they could kneel down holding their waists sideways and continued moving on their knees.

Entabanana (jump and shake shoulders) dances were the most interesting of them all. In these dances, the obokano player sat in the middle while dancers made a circle round him as he hummed out music. When he played his music, dancers could jump forward while shaking their shoulders and then jumped backwards and shook their shoulders too. This was repeated many times rhythmically until the dancers sweated.

The young men among the Abagusii also had their dances, which they performed with spears and shields in the dancing arena. After a long, vigorous, but enjoyable dance, they would sit down to listen to stories told by elders. These stories touched on the past experience of the Abagusii. These experiences included war, with the neighbouring communities, past culture and customs as well as their economic activities.¹⁴⁷ In telling these stories, the elders used songs as a record of memory to instill an element of remembrance among the youths. After listening to interesting stories, the young men did a lot of wrestling and vigorous jumping as a form of appreciation. Preparation for ogokinana (wrestling), involved the sitting together in pairs. A chorus from a leader

¹⁴⁶G.S. Zake, op. cit., p.103.

¹⁴⁷O.I., with Pacificah Mokeira, of Magena Village, on 11/09/04.

followed, and upon a command from the elder, a pair would come out to start wrestling. After a fall or draw, they would continue jumping upright. This went on until they settled down again to continue listening to stories that touched on the community's history. In the evening, they could go home to rest.

There also existed Amarwa (beer party) dances which had limited dancing. A number of people from different Abagusii clans and villages met at a chosen house where 'traditional' liquor was prepared two days in advance. Members were required to carry along with them their drinking straws and stools. The pot was put in the middle and each member dipped his straw to sip the beer.¹⁴⁸ After drinking for a while, they danced and sang songs covering various themes of the past history.

2.13 Musical Instruments and Their Role in the Gusii Music and Dance

The existence of musical instruments among the Abagusii is as old as mankind. The Abagusii traditions indicate that the community had a rich and varied musical repertoire. Many instruments in Gusii land seem to have developed from imaginative use of objects originally designed for other purposes. The Abagusii musicians made and played several varieties of instruments. The drum for instance has its origin in the pot. The latter was used to mark the step of a dance and also as a charm against evil spirits.¹⁴⁹ So the drum was originally designed for religious purposes. Individuals among the Abagusii had direct access to God through homestead heads. This was usually done at harvesting time, start of New Year and thanksgiving. Originally, bells or flutes were used to ward off evil spirits. The sounds produced by these instruments were strong enough to cast away evil spirits. Musical instruments among the Abagusii in the pre-colonial period, were equally

¹⁴⁸G.S. Zake, op. cit., p.104.

¹⁴⁹O.I., with John Ogero, at Bosgisa village, on 27/12/2004.

used to repel evil or invoke a deity. The use of instruments for religious ceremonies has continued down to the present day, though at various times they have been a suspect of their secular associations.

The history of musical instruments among the Abagusii can be traced back to the period of initial migration and settlement of the community by about 1750. During this period, various Abagusii families had occupied the valley of River Sondu, as far East as the foot of Wire Hill in Kabondo.¹⁵⁰ The musical instruments of this period appear to have been made from natural objects capable of producing sound. The animals they hunted, such as antelopes, buffaloes and elephants provided them with horns and bone pipes which were improvised as means of amplifying human voice.¹⁵¹

A call from a horn, or drum, was always interpreted as a signal of trouble. Originally, the reaction was instinctive. Upon hearing the sound of either of these instruments, young men left other activities and dashed the weaponry, and rushed in the general direction of trouble. The clan military leader would often be among the first warriors to arrive at the scene. The warriors would take their position according to his command. The horn and the drum were found to be effective musical instruments for song and dance performances. The Abagusii discovered also that tubes possessed acoustic properties that enabled them to produce more than one note when played by the vibration of lips.

When the Abagusii migrated from Kano, their first stop was Gosia, near Ngoinyo Hill, in North Mugirango where they continued with their large hunting ventures and cattle raids. Here, they made bow and arrow weapons to fight against their enemies.

¹⁵⁰W.R. Ochieng, op. cit., p.74.

¹⁵¹O.I., with Mary Ratemo at Nyamasibi market, on 26/08/2005.

They later discovered that a stretching string, when making a bow, produced a musical note. They adapted it as a musical instrument. The discovery of various musical instruments made the Abagusii to come together for entertainment and mutual support.¹⁵² The Abagusii realised that the musical bow, the ancestor of all plucked traditional instruments could be modified and reinforced with a resonator to produce distinct musical sound. This was to discriminate it from the hunters' bow so that it could have an independent origin. This was done either by placing a pot on the ground beneath the instrument or a gourd attached to it or the player's mouth.¹⁵³ The string could either be struck by a stick or plucked with the fingers.

On the eve of colonial period, the Abagusii involved themselves in various manufacturing skills. Some people specialised in the making of hoes and iron implements such as spears, knives and arrows, while others were involved in major industrial activities all over Gusii land. For instance, the Nyangoko iron works, in the Sironga Valley of North Mugirango, specialised in the manufacturing of musical instruments such as tap rings, bells, shakers and round rings all of which were used to enhance song and dance performance. Besides the manufacturing of these musical instruments, earrings ebitinge, leg-rings and omootoro were manufactured by the Nyangoko iron workers. Other sites where musical instruments and other iron implements were manufactured include Central Bobasi, South Mugirango and Machoge.¹⁵⁴

The construction of musical instrument in the traditional Gusii industries required a high degree of skills and craftsmanship. For example, the piercing of a tube to a

¹⁵²W.R. Ochieng, op. cit., p.89.

¹⁵³O.I., with Thomas Nyag'au, at Ichuni market, on 18/08/2004.

¹⁵⁴C.J.O. Choti, op cit., p.64.

uniform depth of expanding its width, and the flaring of the bell of wind instrument increased sonority in musical performance. All these involved accurate workmanship from wood and metal. The Abagusii craftsmen had to combine efforts in the construction of pipes in metal and wood, in fashioning them to the right length, in securing uniformity of tone through a single low, and in adjusting the great variety of sounds so that they could blend happily. The best known craftsmen of musical instrument during the pre-colonial period were Omwenga, Oirere, Nyambeka, Obaga, Sanduki, Ombati and Motoki.¹⁵⁵

The above craftsmen had to select materials such as wood or pine for string instruments, pots, animal skins and gourds that were to be used as resonators. Upon selecting the relevant materials for instrument making, the craftsmen would experiment until they were satisfied with the kind of musical notes these instruments made. That is to say that the skills of the craftsmen for musical instruments were acquired by long practice, and the principles that determined both tone and intonation were discovered through trial and error.

The musical instruments and other implements by the Abagusii specialists were sold locally and others exported. The Luo provided a ready market for these commodities. The Abagusii also depended on the Luo for the supply of musical ideas and instruments such as obokano, jingles and beautifully decorated head-dresses that were used by the lyricists during the performance of songs and dances. As noted earlier or even today, some musical instruments such as the lyre, wind horns and flutes of the Abagusii look similar to those of the Luo and are played more or less in a similar manner.

¹⁵⁵O.I., with Batheseba Matera, at Isena Market, on 2/08/04.

The Gusii musical instruments were classified into four main categories based on the sound they made. On stringed instruments, a column or body of air was made to vibrate. Nyasinga, Onsongo, Ayioko and Ombati were renown specialists who made and played stringed instruments during this period.¹⁵⁶ People from such clans as Basi, Majoge and South Mugirango who were lovers of traditional songs used to buy their string musical instruments from the above specialists. The payments for musical instruments were usually made in kind, in exchange for other goods such as iron implements like hoes, spears and arrows or even traditional beer. There were membraphones. In this case, a stretched membraphone vibrated. Drums were the major example in this class. As noted earlier, drums were imported from Luoland during the early trade contacts between the Abagusii and the Luo. The knowledge of making drums was, therefore, borrowed from the Luo. This enabled the Abagusii specialists to make different sizes of drums for several other purposes besides being used as a musical instrument.

During their stay in Nyakoe Forest which Logan has estimated to be the period between 1825 and 1850,¹⁵⁷ Abagusii women made pots from a particular type of clay which was obtained from swampy areas along river beds. They made pots of various sizes and shapes. Some of these pots were used as a resonator in producing musical sounds. Stringed instruments were also adapted mainly from the Luo and were modified to produce more musical notes. One stringed instruments such as otete*, enyabubu*, embegete*, egetonto*, engoma*, a hunting horn and obokano proved to be useful as musical instruments. obokano was the most popular. During this period obokano could be played repeatedly to produce several notes, there were few specialists who knew how

¹⁵⁶O.I., with Mokeira Nyakerandi, at Bokimotwe village, on 2/7/2004.

¹⁵⁷M.W. Logan, Kenya national Archives, DC/Ksi 3/2/1907 -1924.

* Have no English Equivalent.

to play obokano. The most renowned players of the instruments were Obaga, Sanduki and Nyakerita. The history of wind instruments can be traced back to the pre-colonial period owing to the relationship between the Abagusii and their neighbours such as the Luo, the Kipsigis and the Maasai. It is replete in the annals of history that the pre-colonial African societies were characterised by intensive warfare. Before looking at the origin of wind instruments among the Abagusii, it might be instructive to have a brief understanding of the relationship between the Abagusii and their neighbouring communities from the point of view of military organisation and aggression. In the pre-colonial period, the Abagusii did not have a single military organisation under one command. Each clan conducted its wars and raids separately. The highest form of military co-operation was at communal level.

The military leader of each clan would always be a well-known and respected clan warrior. He would be the man in charge of clan warriors whose age ranged from eighteen to forty years. Most of the training was received at ebisarete, cattle bomas where warriors communally looked after cattle, like life in Sparta and kept off women. In the ebisarete, the entire livestock of a village or sub-clan were driven in for the night. Everybody who had cattle would send a few of his sons to stay with young men.

The young warriors, who lived in these villages, were normally armed and would keep watch in turns, at night, in case of attack. They were usually armed with spears, arrows, horns and drums. The leader in the camp was usually being chosen from the most senior and toughest warrior. Young warriors in ebisarete lived on milk, roasted meat

from wild animals and they were often allowed to slaughter rams or goats if they so wished.¹⁵⁸

Wrestling, hunting, dancing and singing as well as military practices were part and parcel of ebisarate. To send quick messages, the drum was used. This was because the drum had varying rhythms, which could be distinguished. Each event or occasion had a specific drum rhythm that communicated its sermon. Later, it was discovered that a horn, a wind instrument could be used to send quick messages across the villages in case there was trouble. The discovery made the Abagusii to develop a wide range of wind instruments for sending quick messages. It was also discovered that the horn and the flute could be used as musical instruments. Pipes were made of reeds, bamboo, or, in some parts the tip of an antelope horn. Engoma, a hunting horn dominated in this category. The performer blew across the end of the pipe, producing a single note. Flutes were also discovered as musical instruments during this period.

2.14 Development and Role of Musical Instruments Among the Abagusii

As the Abagusii settled in their present day highlands by 1850, their social structure had been completed.¹⁵⁹ They had well-defined social, political and economic organisations. The community members' participation in social processes such as birth, circumcision, marriage and death was mandatory. Religious ceremonies, merry-making and beer party ceremonies were joyful moments whereby entertainment was necessary. This was usually accompanied by song and dance.¹⁶⁰ Musical instruments were used to add "beauty" and enjoyment to these occasions. Therefore, musical instruments were

¹⁵⁸W.R. Ochieng, op. cit., pp. 203-205.

¹⁵⁹M.W. Logan, Kenya National Archives DC/KSI 3/2 (1907-1924).

¹⁶⁰O.I., with N. Ogeturenki, at Regena Village, on 31/12/2004.

developed to suit the various song and dance performances. For example, the drum was developed in such a way that it could produce distinct notes which could discriminate it from other musical instruments. In this case, a lighter piece of wood, well-treated and dried skin was used in the making of drums. It was also learnt by the Abagusii artists that a drum could last longer if it was properly maintained. At times, the drum was beaten with free hands but on a rhythmic pace. In other cases, some sticks were used to produce a variety of rhythms and notes from the drum. The format of drum beating greatly varied from one artist to another.

By 1900, obokano had been modified and fitted with eight strings for it to produce quality notes. This kind of development ensured that obokano could be played alone without any percussion instrument. Since obokano around this period was made of eight strings, it was not easy to integrate the sounds. It was supposed to be played by musical experts. Kebaso, Motoki, and Nyasinga, were the well-known lyricists in Gusii land around this period.¹⁶¹ They were often invited to the various community functions where they entertained the audience with their instruments. To make it last longer, animal skin and leg tendon of cattle were used as strings. These materials made the obokano produce double bass and this could reach well down below the range of human voices. Words could be fitted to the tune of obokano on rhythmic fashion and the whole melody was repeated several times with apparently very few variations. Later, techniques of playing the obokano improved. Instead of sitting at one point playing the instrument, he placed it over his shoulders as he moved round the circle dancing along with the dancers. The player had to have the thumb and pointing finger of the right hand plucking the first and fourth string simultaneously. The thumb and the middle finger of

¹⁶¹O.I., with Charles Nyabayo, at Keroka market, on 6/7/2004.

the left hand sometimes played the seventh string, while the thumb of the right-hand sometimes played the second and the third strings. The sixth string was played by the left-hand thumb.¹⁶² This was a style of fingering while playing the Obokano.

The horn was developed in such a way that it could now produce double notes as compared to the early one, which only produced a single musical note. To achieve this, a horn player had to open a hole at the tip of the horn or reed and could open and close it with a finger or thumb. Two-tone messages could be sent from one hunter to another without alarming their prey. Further development of musical instruments involved ensembles of end-blown pipes, which could be frequently played together by a number of performers. Each performer in such cases had the responsibility of inserting his one note into the music at the correct moment.¹⁶³ In the pre-colonial period, multiple holed flutes were developed to play a variety of melodies, the Abagusii as well used cattle horns as trumpets. Ensembles of open-ended instruments made of horns, gourds, or a mixture of both materials also served as musical instruments. The majority of artists preferred them because they were easily found since they were locally available materials. These instruments added beauty of melody and enabled human voices to blend well during performances.

In the early period of European occupation in Gusiiland, the Abagusii developed idiophones, i.e. vibrating instruments. These instruments included objects that were struck, shaken, or otherwise set in motion. They produced either melodic sound, as with the xylophones, or non-melodic noise, as with rattles, bells, seed pods, clappers and tubes. Most of these instruments were acquired from the people whom the Abagusii

¹⁶²G.S. Zake, op. cit., pp. 146-147.

¹⁶³O.I., with Oira Maeba, at Nyamagesa Market, on 23/1/2005.

interacted with through trade, working together in European farms and industries. This was as a result of being forced to work outside the district. Around this period, there were also other cultural improvisations, which were also considered as “instruments”. Such were egechuria whistling, okong’ata, trills and ekerori, that is making sound such as a flute’s by mouth.¹⁶⁴

Ribina songs were accompanied with the obokano, lyre, ebirori, flute, and chikonu, drum music. The ebirori provided signals as to when the dance movement, which accompanied the songs, should begin or when new songs were to be introduced. It was also used to punctuate the songs and to add some rhythmic interest when the performers reached its climax. The obokano, reinforced the melodic line at some points and gave choral accompaniment to the tune. The chikonu, provided a continuous rhythmic flow of background accompaniment to the whole performance.¹⁶⁵

On a selected Ribina day, clan women from various villages would meet with their chikonu, drums accompanied by their men with obokano to provide accompaniment to their songs and dances. The women wore Chindege, leg bells, ebitinge, leg rings, amatete, beads, and the skin garment called chingobo decorated with etago, red ochre. This ochre was also used to decorate the hair. Women from various families would dance in turns, and there were always people from different clans to determine the best dancers. Occasionally, however, the competitors could dance simultaneously during which time they would borrow dance styles and techniques from each other.

Both men and women during ribina ceremonies wore chindege, leg or ankle bells, as accompaniment. Circumcised girls also used them in the day they appeared in public

¹⁶⁴M.M. Okeng’o op cit., p.123.

¹⁶⁵G.S. Were and D. Nyamwaya, “Gusii music and Dance” in Republic of Kenya: Kisii District Socio-cultural profile. (Nairobi, 1986) p. 181.

after seclusion and at marriage ceremonies at the time of song and dance performances. These instruments were also worn during funeral dances. They could be worn on wrist, ankle or knee. The leg bells were also called chinchigiri among the Abagusii.

Egetureri, an antelope buck's horn was used by the adult males as an accompaniment for songs in wartime. It was also used during song and dance performances at funerals. It was as well used by boys when they usually went to weed in the fields. Ekeroria, a bamboo flute, was used for entertainment when herding cattle. It entertained both the performer and the animals being herded. Engoma, an instrument made out of eng'era, buffalo, and horn was blown as a signal of either a ceremony or trouble such as war. Rirandi, an instrument made from gourd had the largest big gourd resonator sound chamber with a hole at the bottom which let out the sound. At the top of this resonator were attached a number of stems of elongated gourds joined together with beeswax and tightened with tree bark strings. With all these characteristics, rirandi, produced enough sound. It was usually played at social functions to provide rhythmic patterns within a welter of singing and drumming.

Ong'eng'o, a bow like musical instruments, is believed to have been introduced to Gusii land by the Luo during their trade contacts around 1880¹⁶⁶. This bow provided entertainment at marriage ceremonies and at other social functions. The above were the major musical instruments that played a vital role in the history of the pre-colonial Gusii songs and dances. Other minor instruments were risakwe, reed rattles, embegete, tube flute and otete, one stringed instrument. All which played a role in the perpetuation of unity and understanding among the Abagusii in the realm of entertainment.

¹⁶⁶O.I., with H. Isena at Gesusu market, on 27/12/97.

2.15 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter was intended to give background information to the origin and the early cultural history of the Abagusii and how they affected the evolution of music and dance in the early beginning. The Gusii environment, their migration and settlement, their early cultural history as well as the role played by Gusii music and dance at different times and stages of their history especially in the eve of colonial period is surveyed. It gives a base from which the dynamism of Gusii music and dance can be traced in this chapter that we begin to see the dynamism of music and dance among the community reflecting the various changes that occurred in the period. We have seen that Gusii music and dance were part and parcel of the Abagusii traditional life as it was reflected at every stage of the development of the community. The birth of a new-born baby, circumcision, marriages ceremonies, work sessions; religious festivals and dances were all moments of music and dance. In this, we do realize that music and dance among the Abagusii was functional in nature. Music and dance covered various subjects ranging from praise, worship, educations, satire among other issues in the society. The Abagusii loved singing individually or in groups both in happy and sad occasions.

CHAPTER THREE

GUSII MUSIC AND DANCE IN THE EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD, 1904-1919

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the nature of the Abagusii music and dance in the early period of colonial occupation in Gusiiland. It further discusses how the interaction between the Abagusii and the Europeans revolutionalised their music and dance. It focuses on how colonial policies and western culture influenced the composition and performance of the Gusii music and dance. In this chapter, we realize that Christian missionaries who controlled most of the educational facilities in Gusiiland had significant impact on Gusii music and dance.

3.2 The nature and role of Songs and Dances in the Early Colonial Period

When the Europeans entered Gusiiland, the Abagusii made stealthy efforts to understand the nature and motives of the white people, whom they had been told had forcefully entered the territories of the Abaluyia, Kipsigis and the Luo. The Abagusii composed and sang various songs to condemn the forceful occupation of their land by the British. They expressed their bitterness and displeasure against to the unfolding occupation. They particularly castigated forced labour, introduction of hut tax and the destruction of their traditional way of living. Such songs brought a sense of unity among the Abagusii clans who came together to fight for their rights. While working on European farms where they were forced to work, Abagusii men sang several songs all of which pointed at the

oppression they had undergone in their own land. They also performed such songs to keep them in high spirits so that they could finish work in good time. When the colonial rule in Gusiiland abolished ebisarate, cattle villages, by counting their huts and imposing heavy taxes on them, in the name of hut tax, the Abagusii, especially the young men who lived in the ebisarate protested this move by singing songs of bitterness against the British rule. Nevertheless, these villages were eventually destroyed.

During the early occupation of Gusiiland by the British, changes were introduced which altered the traditional social roles among the Abagusii. The Abagusii composed songs and poems to give them encouragement and pleasure as they performed these duties. The Abagusii also had songs that dealt with their social activities such as circumcision, marriage and death. These songs and dances were performed and passed on orally from one generation to another. The community had complex rhythmic songs which were accompanied by dances that had several pattern formations.¹⁶⁷ The cross rhythms of various instruments played against each other developed an intense exuberance, which was evident in the mutual excitement, generated between the musician and the audience. The Abagusii did not use the diatonic scale as opposed to the Europeans in their songs. They also had no musical scales but sang in terms of notes that were classified as high, medium, or low. In some songs, especially occupational, they used pentatonic scale, compared to the European scale. The five-note scale was not but rather had some of its notes lower than those of diatonic scale. The songs had forms, some of which were based on call and response. In this case, the choir could repeat the exact words of the soloist while singing or could only sing the chorus while the soloist sang the verses using same melody.

¹⁶⁷O.I, with Charles Mogaka market 27/07/04.

The Abagusii music and dance made use of traditional musical instruments to enhance performance. Some of the instruments were their own creation, while some were adapted from the neighbouring Luo community during their trade contacts. The basic instruments were such as ekon (drum), obokano (lyre), Ekeroria (flute) and orogunchara (horn).¹⁶⁸ The imposition of the colonial rule in the Gusiiland by 1907 fundamentally altered the pre-colonial socio-economic structures. It did not only disrupt crucial pre-colonial mechanisms of control over persons but also inaugurated a period of flux that lasted until the *Great Depression* of 1929. The colonial administration encouraged cash economy, such as trade and urged the Abagusii to grow new crops that included cash crop for export. The state oriented such efforts entirely towards men, excluding women and children from access to agricultural extension services and credit.¹⁶⁹ Men were also urged to go for wage labour outside their villages and women became more bound to homes.¹⁷⁰ The Abagusii workers, especially men, sang various traditional songs while working in the European farms and plantations', such songs expressed their feeling of bitterness and dissatisfaction towards forced labour, introduction of taxes and plantation farming whereby the Europeans benefited at the expense of the local people. Such songs were easy to perform. It was at this period that they developed a famous song among the Abagusii that talked about the effects of the coming of the Europeans. The song was:

Song No. 24 Enyoni yachire (The bird has come)

Enyoni yachire

The bird has come

¹⁶⁸J. Monyeka op cit.

¹⁶⁹J. Parpart and K.A., Staudt, Women and the State in Africa (London, 1989), P.37.

¹⁷⁰C.O., Choti, "Women and Socio-economic. Transformation. in Kenya, 1850 - 1963, A case study of the Abagusii", M.A. Thesis University of Nairobi, 1998.

* This song was later accepted as a work song among the Abagusii.

Ekona Kouyauyaaa
Enyoni yachire
Ekona kouyauya
Mokiare genda bwango
Enyoni yachire
Ng'a nero omosongo
Enyoni yachire
Ng'a nero omosongo
Korende nobororo
Korende nobororo
*Nobororo bwoka.*¹⁷¹

Which keeps on flying
 The bird has come
 Which keeps on flying
 Age mate move fast
 The bird has come
 It is the white man
 It keeps on flying
 It is the white man
 But it is painful
 But it is painful
 Very painful.

E - nyo-ne-ya-chi-re ko - na - ko-u - yau - ya - - - e -
 nyo-ni-ya-chi-re - ko - na - ko-u - yau - ya - ko - na - ko-u - yau - ya - mo - kia - re - ge - nda -
 bwa - ngo e - nyo-ni-ya-chi-re nga ne - ro - o - mo - so - ngo - - - e
 nyo-ni-ya-chi-re nga-ne-ro - o - mo - so - ngo ko - re - nde - no - bo - ro - ro - ko - re - nde - no -
 bo - ro - ro - no - bo - ro - ro - bwo - ka.

In singing the above song while working in settler plantations, the Abagusii workers referred to the whites as “clever birds” implying cunning. They saw the white men as having come to exploit them. The workers saw the Europeans as a people who had come to destroy their socio-cultural and economic structures. One very interesting

¹⁷¹ A song performed by Anna M . Obiri at Mwamosima Village on 8/07/04.

thing was that the Abagusii workers sang those songs of bitterness even in the presence of their masters. On inquiring what these songs were all about, the Abagusii could trick the Europeans by telling them that the songs were sang in praise of their jobs and their colonial ‘masters’ knowing very well that the Europeans did not understand Ekegusii (Gusii language). They knew also that the European could not discover easily since the workers cherished hard work and efficiency in their production activities.¹⁷² During the meetings of the clan elders and their villagers, songs and dances were performed by the Abagusii to resent colonial imposition in Gusiiland. Songs also gave the Abagusii a sense of togetherness in fighting the common enemy who was obviously the Whiteman. Songs and dances around this period acted orally as a record of the Abagusii community’s changing history. They served this purpose effectively since other methods of recording the community’s history had not been invented.

3.3 The Impact of Western Culture and Policies on the Gusii Music and Dance, 1907 - 1919

Before 1907, the fertile Gusiiland was unoccupied by the white settlers. It was difficult to cultivate due to its hilly terrain¹⁷³. The only white settlers were in a “buffer zone” between Kisii and Kericho. There was also a small plantation near Kisii town owned by Europeans¹⁷⁴. However after 1907, the British foreign office, then in charge of the British East Africa protectorate, allowed settlers in Kenya in order to make both the protectorate and the railway to generate funds. The foreign office had been disturbed by

¹⁷²O.I., with Otworu at Bogeche village, on 12/08/04.

¹⁷³A. Raikes, Pregnancy, Birthing and Family Planning in Kenya Changing Patterns of Behaviour (Copenhagen, 1990) P.19.90.

¹⁷⁴S.M. Omwoyo op cit., pp. 89-90.

the high costs incurred in running and maintaining the protectorate and railway respectively.

The protectorate therefore, had to be made self-sufficient financially and cease depending on the foreign office. The railway had to pay back the costs for its construction and continued maintenance. It was for those reasons that the policy of settler agricultural production was formulated and launched in Kenya at the beginning of colonial rule. Among other things, it aimed at attracting private investment for developing and investment in the protectorate. Overtime, the Abagusii were influenced by colonial policies to start growing crops for sale over and above the level of pre-colonial production. They were gradually introduced into the money economy and found themselves producing both for subsistence and sale¹⁷⁵. As early as 1908, it was recorded by the colonial administration that the Abagusii were very industrious and excellent cultivators¹⁷⁶. In the years between 1907 and 1919, the colonial government was concerned with economic development through agricultural production and trade. The government also aimed at improving communication networks integrating new crops and agricultural implements into the Gusii economy. In 1909, the colonial government had introduced the ox-drawn plough in Gusiiland as well as the European hoe. All these advancements required the recruitment of labour from among the Abagusii. Some Abagusii clans resisted this move by the colonialists. They could hide in the forests where they composed songs that satirised the Europeans. Those who offered themselves for wage or sometimes-free labour in the European farms and public works also sang songs partly to keep themselves busy as they worked, and also to express dissatisfaction

¹⁷⁵W.R. Ochieng, *An Outline History of Nyanza upto 1914* (Nairobi, 1974). P. 86.

¹⁷⁶KNA DC/KSI/1/1, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports, 1908 - 1912.

towards forced labour. Those who were seized forcibly worked at Sotik farms, Maasai Reserve and Muhoroni.¹⁷⁷

The introduction of new iron implements such as hoes, axes, mapanga and ox-ploughs increased farming and other economic activities among the Abagusii. In performing those activities, the Abagusii sang many work songs. The Abagusii composed some songs to suit the various economic activities, which came up as a result of the introduction of new tools and equipment. An example of such a song is “The bird has come which keeps on flying” as discussed earlier on. Livestock keeping was one sector of the Abagusii economy that was most affected by the imposition of colonial rule. In September 1905, a British patrol was sent on a punitive expedition against the Abagusii who were alleged to have frequently stolen Luo cattle. The Abagusii lost a total of 400 head of cattle to this expedition. As a result of ambushing a patrol, singing songs and performing dances of victory the Abagusii killed a sergeant. They further lost another 400 head of cattle after being subdued on killing the sergeant¹⁷⁸.

Colonial administration wanted to transform the Gusii economy by depleting livestock in order to force them to enter into money economy. They thus turned to the destruction of cattle villages, ebisarate. The colonialist disliked these cattle ‘bomas’ and regarded the young men as war-like and offenders against the British.¹⁷⁹ The imposition of hut tax in 1907, whereby all the huts in the boma was a blow to the ebisarate. Lack of money coupled with forced labour in default of payment, forced the Abagusii to pull down the huts in the ‘bomas’. They sang songs of bitterness protesting against the

¹⁷⁷O.I., with J. Kimanga, at Mwaboto village, on 22/10/97.

¹⁷⁸P.M, Gordon ‘An outline of the History of the District of South Kavirondo - Kenya colony’, 1780 - 1946, unpublished memo, 1946, p.36.

¹⁷⁹C.J.O Choti, op. cit., P.88.

British. Eventually, all the cattle villages were dismantled. In this regard, in 1909, the then District Commissioner wrote:

In my report of last year, I mentioned that I consider it important that the cattle villages should be broken up and the young men who inhabit them forced to return to their parents' villages until married. This has to a great extent come about automatically through my having them counted for hut tax and informing the natives that every hut in a cattle village must pay¹⁸⁰.

After the abolition of cattle villages, Abagusii men moved their animals to their respective homes, closer to women. This period was a very bad one because with the disappearance of cattle villages, they feared there would have to be no life for the Abagusii anymore. For marriage, they needed cows, they used their skins as clothes, their horns as containers, their milk and meat as food. The decline of ebisarate came with the coming of the white man, who did not like the existence of groups of warriors who would form the nuclei for rebellious armies¹⁸¹.

The abolition of cattle villages had instant impact on gender roles. The burden of milking cows, previously carried out by men at cattle villages, now fell on the hands of women. This meant increased workload of Abagusii women. It also became their responsibility to clean the cattle kraals¹⁸². Men worked on European farms and in such activities as hunting and gathering to earn living for their families. As the Abagusii were performing all these roles, songs became a source of pleasure and comfort. Songs also

¹⁸⁰KNA DC/KSI/I/I, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports, 1908 - 1912.

¹⁸¹Quoted by, M. Silbersmidt, In Rethinking men and Gender Relations: An investigation of men, their changing roles within the household, and the implication for gender relations in Kisii District, Kenya, Centre for Development Research, (Copenhagen, 1991), P. 40.

¹⁸²C.J.O. Choti, op. cit. P. 89.

served as a record of the Abagusii's past history as they sang songs and recited poems to recount the past.¹⁸³ With the emergence of extra roles among the Abagusii songs and dances also increased in number to cover the various and numerous socio-economic activities that had been necessitated by the colonial policies and western culture.

The levying of taxes was meant to coerce reluctant Abagusii men into wage labour. In June 1909, some 50 Abagusii men were employed in levelling rough roads. However, even the few enlisted, it was noted, "proved rather troublesome about turning out to work and if left to them commence at about 9 a.m. and leave at mid-day"¹⁸⁴. Abagusii men were not willing to be engaged in manual labour. At this time, they only wanted to raise money for taxes and once this limited objective was met through the sale of agricultural produce, manual labour, particularly away from home, did not appeal to the majority of young men¹⁸⁵. In the pre-war period, manual labour including portage had to be extracted by force. The 300 Abagusii men enlisted to work for a contractor at Sultan Hamud in 1910 must be viewed from his perspective of forced labour, given the high rate of desertion (100 before leaving Gusiiland)¹⁸⁶. Here again, they sang songs to denounce the move to force them into wage labour, a thing which was opposed to the Abagusii. We realize that they wanted to remain in their villages so as to maintain family ties and guard against theft from their neighbouring communities such as the Luo, the Kipsigis and the Maasai.

Traditional songs and dances among the Abagusii continued to develop due to interaction with other communities. For example, the Abagusii and the Luo communities

¹⁸³O.I., with Simba, a music teacher at Nyanturago Secondary School, on 11/12/04.

¹⁸⁴KNA DC/KSI/1/1, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports, 1908 - 1912.

¹⁸⁵S.M. Omwoyo, *op. cit.*, P.107.

¹⁸⁶W.R. Ochieng, *op. cit.*, P.244.

‘borrowed’ songs, dancing styles and even musical instruments from each other. This improved their quality of songs and dances.¹⁸⁷ This in the long run contributed to the development of the Gusii songs and dancing styles. The two communities exchanged ideas, shared their past historical experiences and developed strong cultural ties. Abagusii borrowed some words of the Luo language particularly of the names like lyre, flutes, wind-horns and drums. Musical rings such as ebitinge and chinchigiri, of the two communities look so much alike meaning that they must have developed these instruments from each other during their interactions especially in market places during inter-community music competitions¹⁸⁸. These instruments are often played very similarly. Some Abagusii elders allege that even in pre-colonial times some famous Luo lyrists used to perform in Gusii Highlands in the homes of famous people like abagambi, in the various social ceremonies which included weddings, sacrifice offering, entertainment and in market places during times of wrestling competitions. It was from such occasions that the Abagusii learnt how to play various music instruments such as engoma, a wind instrument which the Luo call “Abu”¹⁸⁹. The mode of dress or costume in song and dance performance was adapted and developed to enhance song and dance performances. This was probably so because these performances had to be modified so as to compete effectively in music competitions which were organised at village, clan, community and inter-community levels. Women wore ebisero (goatskins) that were tied around the waist with a thin string made out of an ant bear’s hide. Each woman wore two pieces, one covering the front parts and the other covering the buttocks. At the hem of the goat skin dress were stuck some tiny but shiny pieces of beads of several colours.

¹⁸⁷O.I., with J. Onkaga, op. cit.

¹⁸⁸Ibid. see also W.R. Ochieng, op. cit., pp.215-216.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., p.216.

The beads reminded them of their trading activities in the past. The weaving of jingle anklets became very attractive and hence arrested the attention of the audience. This was especially more appealing in the case of a wedding songs.

The Abagusii song and dance continued to be performed with a variety of accompaniment. Some of the musical instruments used were ekonou (the drum), chinchigiri (hunting horn) embegete*, egetonto*, and enyabububu* Historically, some of these instruments like ekonou, chinchigiri and enyabububu were acquired from the Luo through trade contacts in Kabondo and Kamagambo markets in the early nineteenth century¹⁹⁰. As the Gusii songs and dances continued to be developed and enriched throughout the nineteenth century, improvisations were discovered which were also considered as ‘instruments’. They included egechuria (whistling by mouth), okong’ata (trills) and ekerori (making sound such as a flute’s by mouth). Besides serving as musical instruments, ekonou enene (the big drum) was used to send message of important events like birth, death and communal meetings¹⁹¹.

3.4 The Advent of the Missionaries in the Gusiland

By 1911, with the completion of graded roads, Christian missionaries and the Asian traders had started moving into Kisii¹⁹². This was the time when the British administration was busy laying out this foundation of the government and the economy. The missionaries came into the Gusiland armed with “the good news”. The first missionaries to arrive were the Fathers of Mill Hill Society of Roman Catholic Church

¹⁹⁰O.I., with Yohaana Nyamwaka at Bonyamoyio Village, on 18/12/04.

¹⁹¹O.I., with Dennis Oira at Bonyagatami village, on 23/08/04.

* These musical instruments have no English equivalent. These are single stringed instruments made up of animal skin and are played to enhance song and dance performances.

¹⁹²Kenya National Archives - DC/KSI/3/2.

who in 1911 founded a missionary station at Nyabururu in Wanjare¹⁹³. Father G. Bradsma opened a missionary school whose objective was to improve the moral, social and intellectual status of the natives'.¹⁹⁴

The Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) later came to the Gusiiland and established missionary stations at Nyanchwa in 1913. It was from these stations that Christianity was spread in the entire Gusiiland. Missionaries in Gusiiland were strongly opposed to traditional religion, songs and dances among the Abagusii. They often referred to these practices as “heathen and anti-God.” Instead of engaging themselves in the traditional practices, the Abagusii were encouraged by Christian Missionaries to sing Christian songs and accept the “Holy and Living” Christian God. This angered many elders who complained that mission stations taught young people idleness and rudeness, nor were many of the missionaries in the district genuine Christians. Most of them according to the elders settled with an intention of accumulating lots of profits. Those who were opposed to the coming of the Christian missionaries sang and chanted poems to express their dissatisfaction towards the missionaries and the colonial rule. It was at this juncture that the Christian missionaries flew in to establish stations at Nyanchwa and Nyabururu relying on the security provided by colonial administration. Meanwhile, the Abagusii converts did not react against missionaries, as this would be against the will of God.

Those who accepted Christianity were often referred to as abasomi (readers). The term bosomi was used to refer to SDA villages where abasomi lived. The converts in mission stations, who claimed to have been possessed by the Holy Spirit, screamed, sang and spoke in tongues to the embarrassment of church authorities who could not follow

¹⁹³Kenya National Archives - DC/KSI/3/7.

¹⁹⁴O.I., with Agnes Nyasani at Keroka market, on 6/08/04.

the language used to communicate by the converts. They sang and danced to praise God. What Christian missionaries brought to Gusiland was a “white Christianity” holding a “white Jesus in view”. Their religious pictures and films, methods of worship, songs and dances, dress, church organisation and all religious endeavours were modelled along Western lines¹⁹⁵. Traditionalists who were opposed to Christian way of life conducted traditional ceremonies and sacrifices, which were climaxed on Saturdays. Songs and dances were performed to grace the occasion. Such songs usually had good melodies and attracted people from various villages who also joined in the dancing and singing. Saturday was chosen as a day of offering sacrifices because, it was the day when everybody including traditional priests were free from other involvements. Abasomi could not participate in the exercise of offering sacrifices, as this was “ungodly”, according to the Christian teachings. They instead attended church services and sang Christian songs as example below

Song No.25 Bionsi Yeso (All to Jesus)

<i>Bionsi Yeso bionsi asore</i>	All to Jesus I surrender all
<i>Bionsi Yeso bionsi asore</i>	All to Jesus I surrender all
<i>Bionsi namoire Yeso</i>	All I have given to Jesus
<i>Moyo bwonsi narure</i>	My heart all
<i>Bionsi namoire Yeso</i>	All to Jesus I surrender
<i>Moyo bwonsi narure</i>	All my heart I have given
<i>Moyo bwonsi narure</i> ¹⁹⁶	All my heart I have given .

Unlike the SDA, the Roman Catholic Church was liberal towards some aspects of the Abagusii culture. For example, they allowed the Abagusii to ‘circumcise’ their females. This encouraged the singing of circumcision songs. The Catholics also

¹⁹⁵A song sang by J. Obwocha, Riaisena vilage at , on 12/081/04.

¹⁹⁶P.M Gordon, op.cit, P.44.

incorporated indigenous musical instruments such as the drums and chinchigiri, jingles in the singing of sacred songs, a thing, which the SDA church was against.

In the early decades of colonial rule, Western education among the Abagusii was not a priority. The colonial government was concerned with general economic progress of the colony. Education was left to missionaries up to 1930s¹⁹⁷. The missions that undertook the burden of school education in Gusiiland included the Roman Catholic Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Both missions established mission stations at Nyabururu in 1911 and Nyanchwa 1913, respectively. Missionary activities challenged African socio-economic and political life. Their primary aim was to evangelise and win Africans for Christ by ‘civilising’ them. Literary education was secondary. This fact was clearly illustrated by pastor Baker of Wire Hill mission in Luoland in 1912, who reported that:

For furthering of the same, we couple the educational and industrial line. The educational so far the native may be fitted to help in evangelising his people. (Sic) the industrial because we believe gospel of work” hand in hand with the “gospel of salvation”¹⁹⁸.

The Catholic Mission at Nyabururu was the first centre of European education in Gusiiland. From the centre, missionaries travelled across the rural areas, assisted by chiefs and headmen, as they propagated their religion and sought for pupils. By 29th June, 1912, there were 14 male regular attendants at Nyabururu School, besides those tutored during the safaris¹⁹⁹. Around this time, the first five boys at Nyabururu were baptised, thus becoming the first Christians in Gusiiland. The names were Isaboke

¹⁹⁷KNA DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports, 1933-1939.

¹⁹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹⁹KNA/DC/KSI/1/1, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports, 1908-1912.

Ongori, Otero Mairura, Kitembe Nyamosi, Ochumi Nyamosi and Otieno Ositu.²⁰⁰ The Schools that the missionaries brought aimed at isolating pupils and young converts from the general community so that they could not be contaminated with what the missionaries identified as ‘ungodly’. Missionaries used these early Abagusii converts and the press to propagate their church. Magazines were published and also New Testament and gospel hymns. The pupils in schools were taught the basic principles of Christianity as well as rudiments of writing, reading and arithmetic. Missionaries felt that knowing how to read, write and to do sums in arithmetic was part and parcel not only for the evangelising task, but also for their civilizing mission. Hence, education went hand in hand with religion with effect that in due course, every aspect of Abagusii life was considerably affected.

European gospel songs were translated into Ekegusii. This translation was the work of Beavon (the then Nyanchwa station head) assisted by two Abagusii early Christians converts namely; Pastor Nathaniel Nyanusi and Abel Nyakundi.²⁰¹ The few converts were trained in order to have a base for preaching salvation. They taught the early converts Christian songs and dances. During Christian gatherings, songs and dances with sacred texts were performed in praise of God. They were also performed to attract a large crowd since they had very interesting and admirable melodies. Such songs functioned to give the early converts encouragement and hope in their Christian lives. The songs were also used as vehicles to preach the gospel, since they were good to listen to and won the souls of many. In the denominational schools, pupils were taught and encouraged to sing sacred songs mainly from religious hymns. Such songs made the young converts to realize the relationship between God and His people. For example, the

²⁰⁰Fr. A. Wall, Writing to R.W. Hempstead, in “Nyabururu Diary” 30th March 1912.

²⁰¹S.N. Bogonko, Christian Missionaries Education and its impact on the Abagusii of western Kenya; Ph D Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1977, p. 171.

Seventh Day Adventist church had a songbook, Ogotera Kwa Nyasae which was a hymn book for all church services. These were gospel songs. In the Seventh Day Adventist School, pupils had to master most of the songs as this was mandatory. In this way the, songs were used as a source of inspiration.

The early Christian education greatly affected songs and dances among the Abagusii around this period. In their schools and missions they discouraged African children from singing and performing traditional songs and dances. The Abagusii children were taught church hymns and choruses which they sang daily in their mission stations and schools. Such songs were usually simple with very interesting European melodies which attracted the majority of Africans to singing them.

Regarding the gospel songs, some SDA missionaries distorted the message of the gospel by implying to some Abagusii converts that there was “commercial” connection between the divine blessings one received and the amount of money “he surrendered” to Jesus. Such songs have remained so up to this day²⁰². The implication of such songs is that one’s loyalty to the Christian faith is largely determined by how much money one gives during each church service. The local people were made to believe that whatever they gave as offering would be equated to the blessings that they would receive from God. Such songs encouraged people to give substantial offerings in order to receive much blessings. An example of such songs is given below.

Song No.26 Karwe aye (You give)

Karwe aye karwe bono
Karwe aye karwe bono
Omonene nakoroche ase

Give you now
Give you now
God sees you unto

²⁰²See for example Ogotera kwa Nyasae (Gospel Hymns), Kendu Bay, 1984, song No 298.

Omobukooo
 Gosesenie kegima
 Karwe aye esadaka
 Karwe ase esadaka
 Omonene nakoroche ase
 Omobuko oo
 Gosesenie kegima²⁰³.

your pocket
 Can bless you big
 Give now so that offering
 Give now your offering
 God sees you unto
 Your pocket
 Can bless you big.

Ka - rwe - a - ye - ka - rwe - bo - no Ka - rwe - a - ye - ka - rwe - bo - no o - mo - ne - ne -
 na - ko - ro - che a - se - o - mo - bu - ko - o go - se - se - nie ke - gi - ma - ka - rwe - a - ye -
 e - sa - da - ka ka - rwe - a - ye - e - sa - da - ka - o - mo - ne - ne - na - ko - ro - che a - se - o - mo -
 bu - ko - o go - se - se - nie ke - gi - ma.

3.5 The Impact of the First World War (1914 - 1918) on the Abagusii Music and Dance

The smooth running of British administration in Gusiiland was interrupted by the war when the Germans, wanting to capture the strategic Uganda railway, advanced in Gusiiland. With the declaration of war in August 1914, the Kisii District Commissioner put into effect a scheme for the security of the district by commencing patrols along the Anglo-German border. Early in September 1914, a German force entered the British territory in the neighbourhood of Isebania. Caught unawareness, the DC and his police

²⁰³M.N.S. Getu, 'The Historical establishment and activities of SDA church among the Abagusii of Western Kenya', MA Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1987.

withdrew and the Germans entered the station at dawn on the 11th of September 1914 without any resistance.

With the reinforcements, the British returned to rescue the station. After an exchange of fire lasting the whole day, neither side made any appreciable progress and at dusk, unknown to the other, each withdrew²⁰⁴. The following day, 13th September, the British force which had taken up a defensive position in the north of Kisii, waited for the expected German advance. When this did not occur, it re-entered the town on the 14th September after being reinforced. As the British repulsed the Germans from Gusiiland, the Abagusii staged anti-British campaigns with the aim of driving them out of their land. The Abagusii adopted the cult of Mumbo from the Luo and used it effectively to continue their struggle against the British²⁰⁵. Mumboism rejected European customs and advocated a return to the old prophets of old ways. According to the teaching of Mumbo cult, the white man was destined to go and Africans would be left alone. In addition to this Sakawa, the renowned Omogusii prophet had promised that one-day the white man would go.

The Abagusii thus embraced the prophecy of Sakawa and Mumboism in their revolt against the British, when they saw the forces withdrawing to the north and south. They felt assured that the prophecy was fulfilled and that the Europeans had gone forever. Their works, their offices and the missions had therefore to be cast out. They were plundered, ransacked and burnt²⁰⁶. However, their stance prompted British punitive

²⁰⁴C.J.O. Choti, op.cit., p.90.

²⁰⁵Ibid. P.91.

²⁰⁶P.M. Gordon op. cit., p.42.

expeditions. As a result, a total of 3000 heads of cattle were seized and many Abagusii men were captured and dispatched to work outside the district²⁰⁷.

The Germans from the Northern Tanzania kept up a series of small raids along the boundary with southern Kavirondo. However, this came to an end with time. The effects of the First World War on the Abagusii were fundamental. Other than being sent outside the district for work for their rebellious conduct, more workers were needed in the war against the Germans as carrier corps. Between 1914 and 1916, 21,684 men were sent out of district to work within a period of 18 months, an average of 1,215 men per month for 18 consecutive months²⁰⁸.

The table below shows the numbers of Abagusii involved in the war in relation to other types of labour.

Table 3: Labour recruitment during World War I

Year	Carrier corps labour	Other labour	Total
1914/15	8,915	5,055	13,970
1915/16	6,822	1,070	7,892
1916/17	9,558	1,658	11,216
1917/18	8,758	1,052	9,810

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/2 South Kavirondo

A total of 42,888 men were recruited for labour between 1914 and 1918 from the district. Most of them were recruited through coercion. Young men were rounded up during sport meetings. Others were taken from their huts at night. The chiefs and headmen used all

²⁰⁷Ibid, P. 42.

²⁰⁸KNA DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports 1913-1923.

manners of force and tricks to avail the required labour under strict orders from the district commissioner.

The World War 1 affected the Abagusii songs and dances in a number of ways. First, absence of men from various Gusii homesteads caused fear and despondence among women and children. Women and children used to sing songs of sorrows to express their bitterness and suffering from loneliness. Such songs relieved them of their anger as they remembered their men who usually suffered outside the district. Absence of men from Gusii homesteads also meant loss of male labour. Division of labour was upset to a great extent as men were recruited. Abagusii women were overburdened by both agricultural and domestic activities. They often sang various songs to not only relieve themselves from their daily fatigue but also to console their souls as they remembered the kind of experience they had undergone during the war. Second, men who had gone to participate in the war sang various war songs as they fought with the Europeans. This was to give them encouragement and determination as they hoped to be successful.

The war ended with the streaming back of the war veterans. These veterans returned home with better education and skills. They came with knowledge of the various war songs and dances. The songs, which were mainly in European and other languages, were adopted and later translated to suit the various themes of the Abagusii war songs. Since the war period was relatively short and busy, the Abagusii veterans who participated in the war only managed to adapt a few songs, which changed the style and delivery of some Abagusii songs and dances in terms of rhythm arrangements and delivery²⁰⁹. An example of such a song is “Otenyo the warrior” as discussed earlier on.

²⁰⁹J. Onkaga op. cit.

3.6 The Famine of 1918 – 1919

Famine or lack of food normally affects all members of society indiscriminately. It is a fact that parents as seekers and providers of food in the family suffer most during times of famine. Children, the youth and the elderly turn their “begging eyes” towards their mothers or wives for food whenever they are hungry. Such parents suffer much psychological pain and frustration during periods of famine²¹⁰. The 1918/19 famine in Gusiiland though thought to have been caused by drought was also believed to have been caused by the war. Tired with the war, a mumbo cult emerged in Gusii land this was a direct influence from the Luo. The Mumboism was reflected as the opposite of Christian way of life. Adherents disregarded missionary education, they kept long hair, sang traditional songs and dances, offered sacrifices to ancestral spirits and were strongly opposed to what the missionaries called “progressive’ which took the form of Western civilization²¹¹.

They also clung to Abagusii traditional religious values such as divination using magic and traditional medical practices. In their villages which were far away from mission stations, *Mumbo* adherents sang various songs and performed mockery dances to castigate those Gusii converts who had abandoned the Abagusii tradition and were now slaves of their “foreign masters”²¹² the followers of Mumbo cult turned to prophesy. According to Ogot and Ochieng’, the year 1917 is traditionally remembered by the Abagusii as the ‘Year of prophets’.²¹³ Many prophets of Mumbo rose and told their compatriots to keep their hoes indoors and simply wait for finger millet to come by itself

²¹⁰C.J.O. Choti, op. cit. P.93.

²¹¹O.I., with Johnson Mogire, at Chingoko Village, on 19/10/04.

²¹²KNA DC/KSI/1/19, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1957.

²¹³B.A. Ogot and W.R. Ochieng, “Mumboism - Anti-colonial Movement” in B.A. Ogot (ed.) War and Society in Africa (London, 1972), pp. 141-19.

and fill their empty pots. The days of the white people, they prophesied, were just numbered and that they would appear a long with taxes and other burdensome jobs. The Abagusii were thus advised to ignore cultivation. With unfertile fields, empty granaries and rainless days, the Abagusii suffered the worst famine ever witnessed in the history of the society.

Around this period, the British reacted by arresting the leading personalities of Mumboism. These were Ogwora, his wife and Ngiti. The three were deported to Kismayu. On learning that their cult was blamed for the famine, many of its members lost hope and abandoned the movement. Besides drought and Mumboism, the famine was as a result of colonial capitalism²¹⁴. This illustrated how the Abagusii pre-capitalist economy had been systematically destroyed. Abagusii granaries that stored food for a hungry day disappeared with the monetization of the economy. The surplus food that had been stored as security against famine was now sold to obtain tax money. The taking away of able-bodied men by the war and other labour services meant less food production. The children and the aged could not engage themselves in any meaningful food production by virtue of their nature. the production of maize and finger millet which were popular groups in Gusii land declined in production due to labour shortage . The year immediately after the war (1919) was a year of misfortune. Weakened by the famine, the Abagusii became increasingly vulnerable to the influenza epidemic that swept through the area, claiming the death of about 5,000 natives. The same year saw the emerging of a terrible disease, probably syphilis that attacked the private parts of people. Apparently, the returning porters and carrier corps brought the disease. The disease had a terrible impact on the unsuspecting and innocent Abagusii women whose reproductive

²¹⁴S.M Omwoyo op. cit., p.124.

prohress was threatened. In the words of a medical officer of Kisumu, “Now with the conclusion of hostilities, many thousands of porters have carried the infection into districts previously healthy”²¹⁵. The famine of 1918 - 1919 meant a terrible experience to the Abagusii. At times, they prepared their farms for planting without signs of rain. This was because devotion to work was highly cherished by the community. Frustrations by bad weather, climatic changes, pests and diseases and famines were braved and tolerated when one was devoted to serious work. When the rains failed to come and famine continued, the Abagusii sang to remind themselves of good days when they used to have good yields from their farms. They compared such experiences with the ones they were undergoing. These songs were usually accompanied by musical instruments such as the *ekonũ*, drum, *obokano* (lyre) and *ong’eng’o* (stringed instrument). One such a song was:

Song No. 27 Nchiama roche (They grew near the river)

<i>Nchiama roche nchiama roche</i>	They grew well near the river
<i>Nchiama roche nchiama roche</i>	They grew well near the river
<i>Nchiama roche nchiama roche,</i>	They grew well near the river,
<i>Baito chinchugu chiama roche</i>	Our groundnuts grew near the river
<i>Nchiama roche echwachwa</i>	They wonderfully grew
<i>Obanto baito, tenera nchiama</i>	Our food grew well
<i>Ngai morarusie abana baito</i>	Where will you get it our children
<i>Amarabwani abana baito</i>	Sweet potatoes our children
<i>Amaemba abana baito.</i>	Finger millet our children.
<i>Enchara yacha bono yachbono</i>	Famine has come has come
<i>Baito ngaimorarusie</i>	Our people where will you
<i>Endagera bono</i>	Get food now.
<i>Remereriao bokongumboere</i> ²¹⁶ .	Be patient life has to continue

The main concern of the above song is that it carried a message of nurturing a stable society whose members were not to be scared by such natural calamities like floods, lack

²¹⁵KNA DC KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports, 1913-1923.

²¹⁶Van Zwanenberg, Colonial capitalism and labour in Kenya 1919 - 1939 (Nairobi, 1972) P. 109.

of rainfall, drought, diseases and famine. It encouraged community members to keep on having hope in life. It reminded them of the past when the community used to be self sufficient in food production with good yields. They were expected to be patient as they waited for the calamities to be over. As they buried those who died due to the 1919 influenza epidemic the Abagusii sang and chanted poems of sorrow and consolation to the grieved.

3.7 Conclusion

As we have seen, the British were determined to occupy Gusii land by all means. They conducted series of military exploitations against the Abagusii who resisted colonialism. The Abagusii used music and dance to resist against European occupational in Gusiiland. As a result of persuasions from their chiefs and punitive measures put on them by the colonialists, the Abagusii were forced to surrender. The coming of Christian's missionaries in Gusiiland affected the Gusii music and dance in a great deal. In the first place, the early converters to Christianity were not allowed to perform traditional practices including music and dance. The Abagusii traditional musicians were not allowed to participate in Christ matters. On the positive side, missionaries taught the Abagusii how to read and write. These skills at a later period enabled the Abagusii to compose and write music. The First World War of 1914-1918 affected Gusii music in the way of the other. For instance, Abagusii veterans who participated in the war learnt a few songs, which changed the style and delivery and performance of some Abagusii songs and dances in terms of rhythm arrangements and delivery. The development of war songs in the later history of the Abagusii owes their development in the First World War.

CHAPTER FOUR

GUSII MUSIC AND DANCE IN THE INTER –WAR AND WAR PERIOD, 1919-1945

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the major developments that occurred in the war years and how these events affected the Gusii music and dance. The major activities here were, missionary education, socio-economic transformations which included wage labour, the great depression, and introduction of new farming techniques, Second World War and other events which directly or indirectly affected the life of the Abagusii.

4.2 Socio-economic Transformation and Its Impact on Music and Dance of the Abagusii, 1920 – 1945

During the interwar period, education was still in the hands of Mission churches. After the First World War, the attitudes of the Abagusii towards Christian enterprise changed so considerably that the DC noted:

During the last few months however, a noticeable change has come over them, one result being that many of them have suddenly expressed a wish to learn reading and writing. Their wish is being ace to and it is hoped that good results may be obtained in due course²¹⁷.

The latter half of 1918, saw things to settled in Kisii country and people showed anxiety to have Nyabururu Mission reopened. As Father Scheffer was incharge, he got those anxious to ‘read’ and receive baptism to go to Asumbi.²¹⁸ This change of attitude towards mission education saw a marked increase of pupils attending schools. In1920,Nyanchwa,

²¹⁷KNA DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports, 1913-1923.

²¹⁸ KNA,Nyabururu Diary,12th April,1920.

the only SDA School in Gusiiland had 20 pupils; in comparison to Nyabururu and 12 other Roman Catholic Schools in Gusii locations which had a total attendance of 150 pupils . The number kept on increasing steadily in 1920s as shown in the table below.

Table 4: Schools' Enrolment and Catechists under Nyabururu Roman Catholic Mission, 1922

Location	No. of Schools/Churches		No. of Catechist	<i>No. of Attendants</i>
	1920	1922	1921	1-8-1922
Bobasi	1	2	2	12
Bagetutu	6	3	8	31
Bogusero	1	0	1	0
Nyaribari	1	3	1	29
Bonchari	4	2	4	4
North Bogirango	3	6	6	40
Bomachoge	2	0	1	0
South Bogirango	1	6	1	121
Total	19	22	24	237

Source: KNA DC/KSI.1/20-22

Table 5: Schools and Enrolment under Nyanchwa SDA Mission, 1920-1929

Year	No. of Schools	Student Population
1920	1	20
1921	1	55
1922	11	183
1923	13	600
1924	20	1131
1925	19	1019
1926	27	1597
1927	40	2222
1928	81	3000

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/21-29

The Abagusii interest in education was as a result of increased efforts and campaigns by Christian missions and government officials. The chiefs and village headmen were

urged to stress the importance of formal education to their people. However, the Abagusii girls were excluded from formal education on the account that their work was centred in the kitchen and therefore, there was no need to accord them formal education. Women were home centered as men's new status were now beginning to be based on education, jobs and labour migration²¹⁹.

In mission schools, children were taught how to read and write, as well as industrial education. They were introduced to western songs and dances. Most of the songs were Christian oriented and were full of praises to God, the creator. One such song Song No.28 Omogoko ase ense (Joy to the world the Lord is come)

<i>Omogoko ase ense</i>	Joy to the world
<i>Monene nachiche</i>	The lord is come
<i>Omogoko ase ense</i>	Let every heart rejoice
<i>Monene nachiche</i>	Let every heart rejoice
<i>Kera oyomo aganye</i>	When he is come again
<i>Kera oyomo aganye</i>	When he is come again
<i>Ere kagochicha</i>	When he comes
<i>Kera oyomo aganye</i>	Let every heart rejoice
<i>Ere kagochicha,</i>	When he comes
<i>Ere kagochicha</i>	When he is to come again .
<i>Ere eee kagochicha.</i> ²²⁰	When he is to come again .



²¹⁹C.J.O. Choti op. cit. , Pp.117-118.

²²⁰See for example ogotera kwa Nyasae (Gospel Hymns) Kendu Bay, 1984) p. 242



Lord was always with them to protect and help them in whatever situation they were. In mission schools and churches, they also learnt various choruses and verse recital from the Bible. As they went back to their villages having completed their education, they taught their parents, sisters and brothers the kind of songs they had learnt in the mission stations. In this way, missionaries got converts. The young Christian converts completing school education were discouraged from the singing of traditional songs and performing folk dances. They viewed this as ungodly. However, some Christian songs especially those of the catholic were incorporated into the Abagusii traditional tunes and dances. The popularity of traditional songs and dances in such areas as Nyaguta, Nyaribari and North Bogirango, where the number of Abosomi (Christians) had steadily increased was fading away²²¹.

The years between 1920 and 1945 witnessed significant socio-economic changes in Gusiiland that were bound to affect the Abagusii in one way or the other. Already by 1920, the new colonial institutions of wage labour, taxation and western education had been established. The expansion of agriculture and the penetration of capitalism in the area were steadily pursued in this period. However, further penetration of capitalism was shown by two world depressions of late 1920s and early 1930s.

Significant changes and increased colonial efforts in the promotion of agriculture, trade, education, transport and other social-economic institutions thus characterized the period between 1920 and 1945. Land tenure systems, legal rights, inheritance and

²²¹O.I., with T. Bosibori, at Nyankononi market on 30/12/97.

property rights, marriage and family arrangements were all affected profoundly by the vigorous colonial policies of this period as noted early on between 1920 and 1930, the Abagusii spread further into the areas bordering Maasailand and Kipsigisland. This resulted in an increase in border conflicts and cattle raidings. Consequently, the Abagusii were moved from the Kipsigis border. This led to the creation of a buffer zone in the Sotik area, which was taken up by the colonial settlers. The creation of colonial settlement and agricultural activities increased. This called for the recruitment of labour. Various methods were employed by the chiefs and headmen under instructions from the DC to lure people into labour. These included armed raids and enticement. At times, private recruiters could often misrepresent themselves as government agents, as chiefs took the DC's requests to provide labour as an order, to forcibly seize parties of young men and dispatch them as virtual prisoners to Kisumu.

The following table shows the number of people recruited for labour between 1919 and 1929.

As shown in the below table, the number of people "registering" for work

Table 6: Labour Recruitment in South Nyanza District for Various Years

Year	Outside the district	Inside the district	On their own accord (DC's Estimate)
1919 /20	234	322	5,000
1920 /21	3,148	141	3,000
1922 *	6,837	187	1,000
1923	5,421	105	3,000
1924	2,397	550	10,000
1925		112	10,000
1926	4,010	3	N.A.
1927	8,494	6	8,500

1928	6,710	-	6,000
1929	7,910	-	N.A.

Source: KNA/DC/KSI/1/1-3

* The end of financial year was changed from 31st March to 31st December and so 1922 has 21 months.
NA. No Actual figure known.

kept increasing steadily. The table illustrates only those registered in Kisii thus not representing the actual number of those who went out of work. The majority of workers registered in this district were registered in Kisumu or Kericho, and large number of Abagusii especially went out to work in the neighbouring district on their own accord and was not registered at all. The DC's estimate for his category is also shown in the table. Employment outside the reserve increasingly became a major means through which a large number of Abagusii workers raised money for tax. The transition from Gusii resistance to labour recruitment in the colonial economy to their active seeking of wage employment outside the home district has been well-explained by Sharon Stichter (1982). She observes that immediately after the First World War the Abagusii still showed a "marked inclination to be harnessed to labour market"²²². Around this time Mumbo cult reached its climax as a last phase of resistance to colonial rule, taxation and wage labour. By the 1922 depression with the reduction of the produce, trade and continued taxation pressure, the Abagusii went out to work in large numbers²²³. They went to Magadi Soda works, which by 1925 was drawing most of its labour force from Gusiiland. The trend of outward labour migration continued into the late 1920s, when the nearby Kericho tea estates became an important new source of employment.

²²²Ibid.

²²³KNA DclKSI\1\13 South Nyanza District Annual Report 1957.

Tea growing required a lot of labour as its activities required labour all the year round. Therefore, for adequate supply of labour to Kericho tea estates, a European officer was stationed in Gusiiland to recruit and forward labour to estates. By 1928, the African Highland Produce (AHP) company boasted that “10,000 boys could be obtained from Gusiiland whenever required. The introduction of tea estates in Kericho attracted the Abagusii who went there to sell their labour to raise money for paying taxes and for meeting the day to day cost of living. In the estates, they interacted with several communities with whom they exchanged ideas. Such communities included the Luo, the Luhya, Kipsigis and the Abakuria. The Abagusii songs and dances were enriched from the new dances like Mayenga, techniques and dancing styles they adapted from these communities who they worked with. They also acquired some musical instruments such as the horn, and the flute in tea estates as a result of these interaction styles like Mayenga dance.

According to Omari, one of the eye witnesses at Kericho tea estates, women used to make beer in Gusiiland to transport to tea estates where they sold it to make profits. Tea workers, who now had income from their wages and salaries usually assembled at specific quarters in the tea estates where they would drink the local, brew after work to relief their fatigue. Singing and dancing usually accompanied such occasions. At times the colonial administration through the police could arrest those involved in beer drinking and could be tried and judged in local courts. Around this period the drinking of local brew was abolished. Whoever was found engaging in beer drinking faced severe penalties after being proved guilty. However, the Abagusii elders and other people from among the communities who worked in tea estates could drink secretly in bushes and

other private places during odd hours. Traditional songs and dances connected to beer drinking were performed but secretly and quietly in low tones. Because of such restriction such songs as siberia onge mosaiga (sip beer and give me age-mate) and Mosaiga Oiye oiye Mosaiga (age mate oiye age mate) to denounce this kind of restriction imposed on them. These two songs were the key songs, which dominated all the beer party ceremonies among the Abagusii through their history. In the estates, such songs were losing popularity as they could not be rehearsed by beer drinkers since they feared the risk of being arrested and tried in the local courts or fined heavily or even losing their jobs²²⁴.

In the tea estates wrestling and other entertainment competitions were organised by tea workers as a source of pleasure and exercises which relieved workers from their daily fatigue. Songs and dances from various communities in the estates had climaxed these occasions. These provided an arena for socialisation of tea workers. This enhanced a sense of nationalism and patriotism, which removed any form of community biases or prejudice²²⁵.

Employment outside the reserve increasingly became a major means through which large number of Gusii men raised money for tax. The Abagusii migrated to Magadi Soda works and Kericho estates in 1930s.²²⁶ All these became an important source of employment. Songs and dances continued to play an integral role as agents of socialization and also to keep the workers in the high spirits of working.

²²⁴O.I, Thomas Nyang'au at Ichuni, on 18/08/04.

²²⁵Ibid.

²²⁶ Arap Korir, K.M., "The Tea Plantation Economy in Kericho and related phenomena to circa 1960". B.A. Dissertation, History Department, University of Nairobi, 1976 p.52.

The great depression which was experienced in the 1930s affected the Gusii economy as was the case in many parts of the world. However, after the years of great depression agricultural produce once again flourished and all crops produced found ready market. The major impact of the 1929-1932 world economic crisis was the realization within the colonial officialdom of the need to increase and diversify the income earning capacity and opportunities respectively for Africans. This could ensure uninterrupted payment of taxes and thus the boosting of the colony's revenues. This became a major governmental and imperial concern as from 1933 onwards. An agricultural school was inaugurated at Kisii and an agricultural officer posted in 1933. The same year also saw the appointment of a produce inspector in trading centres. His responsibility was to assess the suitability of a crop for sale. A local nature farm was started at Kisii to grow all crops for demonstration purposes. Such crops included maize, linseed, coffee, Canadian wonder beans, marrow fat peas, Irish potatoes and guavas. The local native council distributed improved seeds of various crops throughout the district. In addition, 700 orange seedlings were issued²²⁷. In 1936, the first agricultural show was organized in Kisii. Traditional dancers and school choirs were invited to present their songs and dances to entertain the show goers. Here, songs and dances played an important role not only for entertainment but also for bringing people of various races and origins for better socialization and understanding. From then agricultural shows were organized at Kisii town annually. Songs and dances continued to be a source of pleasure and socializing agent in such shows.

Around 1937, the colonial settlers had allowed the growing of coffee to the Abagusii growers. 25 growers in the Gusii highlands, with chief Musa alone had cultivated a

²²⁷ KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports 1933-1938.

total of 50 acres of the crop. By the end of 1937, the attitude of most of the Abagusii peasants had changed in favour of coffee growing and, writing in the same year, the agricultural officer remarked. "It is no longer a question of persuading people to plant, but of selecting the most suitable applicants and allowing them to plant small areas only."²²⁸ The introduction of coffee as a cash crop in Gusiiland played a role in changing patterns of accumulation and status. Abagusii musicians composed songs to encourage farmers to grow coffee since the crop fetched good market prices.

The following is one of such songs:

Song No.29 Abaremi baito (Our farmers)

<i>Abaremi baminto</i>	Our esteemed farmers
<i>Moinyoirero</i>	Remember today
<i>Tosimeke chikagwa</i>	Let us Plant coffee
<i>Tonyore Chibesa,</i>	To get money,
<i>Abaremi baminto</i>	Our esteemed farmers
<i>Toreme chikagwa</i>	Let us cultivate coffee
<i>Intwe*Mwanyangetinge</i>	Us *Mwanyangetinge
<i>Tonyore chibesa.</i>	To get money
<i>Tonyore chibesa.</i> ²²⁹	To get money.

The singer of the above song aimed at urging his or her hearers to improve their living standards by exploiting the agricultural resource which has been introduced to Gusiiland as opposed to other parts of Kenya, where the growing of such a crop was forbidden.

In the early 1940s, the Abagusii women, children and men were the most hardworking population in the whole of western Kenya. They were faced with great burdens in the transition towards an increasingly commercialized agriculture²³⁰. Songs

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ A song sung by N. Mogere, at Bondaracha village, on 3/1/2004.

* Mwanyangetinge is a term which is used to date to refer to the members of the Abagusii origin.

²³⁰ KNA DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports.

and dances inspired their spirits while working on farms. During work sessions, especially land preparation and harvesting, a singer could remind his hearers of the past droughts, famines, and plagues. The major aim was to teach the people on the importance of food preservation for future use to guard against such natural calamities which could occur any time. In that respect, the following song was sung:

Song No.30 Ekebwe giakura (The fox is crying)

<i>Ekebwe giakura manga nse</i>	The fox is crying Manga down
<i>Ee manga nse ekebwe ngia kura</i>	Ee Manga down mother fox cried
<i>Ekebwe giakura manga nse</i>	The fox is crying Manga down
<i>E Manga nse mother</i>	Manga down mother
<i>Motegerenyangweso</i>	Keep watching the locusts
<i>Obori bwa babe keande Ee keande</i>	My mothers' millet has grown well
<i>Obori bwa baba</i>	My mothers' millet
<i>Obori bwa babe keande Ee keande</i>	My mothers' millet grown nicely
<i>Baba motegere nyangweso</i>	Keep watch of locust
<i>Ee nyangweso yacha</i>	The locust came and ate it- ate it
<i>Enyangweso yacha yaboria, ee yaboria,</i>	Locust came ate it- ate it ,ee ate it,
<i>Eyaboria Baba motegere nyangwesoo²³¹</i>	Ate it Please keep watch of locust.

²³¹ O.I., with Buyaki, at Bonyamoyio, on 16/1/2005.

15
so o - bo - ri - bwa - ba - be - ke - a - nde - e - ke - a -

20
ndo - bo - ri - bwa - ba - ba o - bo - ri - bwa - ba - be - ke - a - nde -

25
e - ke - a - nde - e - ke - a - nde - ba - ba - mo - te - nge - re nya - ngwe -

30
so

The above song was sung to remind the Abagusii of the locust invasion in Gusiiland during this period that resulted in a disastrous famine. It was believed that the ancestral spirits sent wild animals such as foxes to warn people of the danger of locust invasion but people didn't take it seriously.²³² The locusts had invaded Gusii land and consumed all the farm produce such as finger millet, maize and beans. This situation led to enchara enene, great famine, which entered in the record of the Abagusii history. The song was thus performed to warn against careless spending of food since locusts or any other natural calamity could face people unexpectedly. Proper utilisation of the available resources was seen by the Abagusii to be vital for stable development of the community. In this respect therefore, performers of the above song taught the youth on the importance economic planning and future food preservation²³³.

The other type of songs and dances that were developed and enriched at independence period were esimbore, entabanana, egoro or esita, erieri or eburu, esubo or

²³² O.I., with T. Bosibori at Nyangononi market on 30/12/2004.

²³³ M.M. Okeng'o, Op. Cit., p.90.

enyabububu, chingero, among others. Esimbore were songs that were performed in this period, like it used to be, to praise the initiates for being brave and facing the circumcision knife without panicking. These songs were slightly different from those of the past periods in that they had additional words and messages to the initiates to reflect the changing times. A company of the male initiates to the seclusion place singers could sing:

<i>Obeire momura obeire momura ee</i>	Has become a man become a man ee
<i>Ise amosike ise amosike ee</i>	Let his father respect him
<i>Omoisia omoke obororo bwareire</i>	This small lad has undergone pain
<i>Omoisia omoke obororo bwamorire</i>	This small lad has undergone pain
<i>Oremereirie, oremereirie.</i>	Has proved to be brave, brave enough

In the above male circumcision song, boys were advised to keep out of their mother's rooms and parents were advised to respect the initiates hence forth since he had now undergone the rite of becoming a man and he had now graduated into a man. The initiates received praise through the above songs. Esimbore songs continued to shed light on the future role of the initiates and division of labour in the family. Esimbore songs were predominantly vocal, that is, they were performed without instruments except for the obokano. Esimbore songs were performed in August, December and January so as to allow initiates to first attend school for their basic education²³⁴. These songs also carried themes such as nationalism, community relations and division of labour among the Abagusii.

Entabanana songs and their jumping style of dancing called ekebenenia, were performed to entertain people at social gathering such as community meetings to solve disputes, chiefs' baraza, meetings and community worship through ancestors' spirits. They were also performed when opening new markets, marriages, harvesting, naming

²³⁴ O.I., with E. Nyarang'o at Nyakongo village, on 28/10/2004.

celebrations and at post- burial celebrations to comfort the bereaved. A marriage or wedding celebration when all the in-laws of the couple met to feast and drink, amarwa, beer made from maize, an obokano player led the group in singing and dancing all day. After harvesting crops, Gusii men and women used to meet on a special date, slaughter a goat or a cow and organised for a drum music, which began in the evening and continued till the morning hours. The naming entabanana song was performed. The ekebenania dance was basically a horseshoe shaped spectacle involving an obokano player and chorus. The dancers and the obokano player performed in an arch formation then the performance reached the climax²³⁵.

Egoro were war songs, which were performed during this period after a successful battle with an enemy in which some of the enemies were killed. These songs when performed before going to war were called esita. Since tribal wars declined in the 1930s, egoro songs were used to celebrate the recovery of stolen cattle. These songs were also performed after a successful hunt of wild animals such as buffaloes, lions, elephants and other wild beasts, which harassed the community²³⁶.

4.3 Gusii Music and Dance during the Second World War (1939-1945)

The Second World War, just like the First World War had far-reaching effects on the Abagusii society. Its outbreak caused panic among the Abagusii. Many ran away into the bush to hide, and those outside the district started streaming back home, apparently fearing conscription for the war as carrier corps²³⁷. In an attempt to explaining this fear, the DC remarked:

²³⁵ G.S. Were and D. Nyamwaya, Op. Cit., pp. 185-186.

²³⁶ Ibid. p.186.

²³⁷ O.I., with Mogire Sakawa, at Mache-Achumbi village, on 28/12/97.

It appears in the last war the young men were caught and sent wholesale to carrier corps, where overwork, undernourishment and disease killed a large proportion of them, and they now greatly dread a possible repetition of this experience²³⁸.

This fear, however, did not last long as nearly all returned to their jobs while others were forcibly recruited to the army. The district was affected by the war in many ways. First, conscription of manpower started through force and propaganda. In 1940 conscription for the East African Military Labour Service (EAMLS) started followed in 1941 by “assisted recruiting” for essential civil undertakings. This put a strain on labour resources of the district as the workload and responsibilities on the Abagusii women increased. While a total of 98,000 Kenyans participated in the Second World War, Gordon puts the final contribution of the Abagusii at 10,000 askaris and a slightly greater number of compulsory civil labourers²³⁹. There was also loss of cattle in Gusiiland. Elderly informants who witnessed the war complained bitterly about their animals being taken away at very low prices. This practice of taking away cattle, coupled with expanding agricultural production was in keeping with the wider colonial policy of producing enough food for the war effort. The profound effect of the war was that a great deal of money got into Gusiiland affecting a large portion of the population. By 1945, much money had entered the district through family remittances, gratuities and profitable farming.

The prosperity of the war, perhaps coupled with the great consciousness of the outside world, induced demand for more educational facilities. Before the war, missionaries ran most of the schools in the district and only Kisii Government African

²³⁸KNA DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo, District Annual Report 1933-1939.

²³⁹P.M. Gordon, op cit., p.56.

School gave non-denominational education. Due to increased demand, the Local Native Council decided in 1944 to built non-denominational schools. There was likewise a rapid increase of candidates for the common entrance examination from 65 in 1942 to 202 in 1944²⁴⁰.

The Second World War affected the Abagusii in a number of ways. When the young and energetic Gusii men were taken as carrier corps, they left women, the aged and children at home. In remembrance of the relatives who were absent from home, family members sang songs like the following:

Song No.31 Kianyambega (The cunning hare)

<i>Kianyambega e Kianyambega e</i>	The cunning animal the
<i>Kianyambega e kianyambega</i>	The cunning animal
<i>Gesusu kianyambega e</i>	Hare cunning animal
<i>Nekeng'aini e nekeng'aini e</i>	It is cleaver e it is cleaver
<i>Ing'a nekeng'aini e</i>	That it is cleaver the cunning
<i>Nekeng'aini egesusu nekeng'aini e</i>	A clever hare a cleaver
<i>Negechancha ng'a e</i>	The cunning animal ee
<i>Negechancha e</i>	The hare is a cunning
<i>Negechancha ng'a e</i>	The hare is a cunning
<i>Negechancha e</i>	Hare is cunning
<i>Omosongo negesusu</i>	Whiteman is hare
<i>Negesusu kianyambega e.</i>	Cunning animal
<i>Omosongo negesusu</i>	Whiteman is hare
<i>Negesusu kianyambega eee</i> ²⁴¹ .	Cunning animal



²⁴⁰Ibid, p. 56.

²⁴¹O.I., with Paul Ombaka, at Metamwaya Village, on 29/08/04.

11
ga - e kia - nya - mbe - ga - e - ge - su - su - kia - nya - mbe - ga - e ne -

16
ke - ngai - ni - nga - e - ne - ke - ngai - ni - e ne - ke - ngai - ni - nga - e

21
ne - ke - ngai - ni - e ne - ke - ngai - ni - e - ge - su - su - ne - ke - ngai - ni - e

26
ne - ke - ngai - ni - e - ge - su - su - ne - ke - ngai - ni - e ne - ge - cha - ncha - nga - e -

31
ne - ge - cha - ncha - a - ne - ge - cha - ncha - nga - e - ne - ge - cha - ncha -

36
e - - - o - mo - so - ngo - ne - ge - su - su - kia - nya - mbe - ge - e

Like the case of the First World War, soldiers who had been taken to participate in the Second World War encountered many experiences which they later brought back home.

In the war they had heard songs some of which carried patriotic themes like:

March forward together we win ,together we win divided we fall
Forward forwards march soldiers, together we win fight on fight
With determination we shall win,forward marching, forward march
Soldiers,forward match solders,forward,forward match solders forward.

Such songs encouraged the soldiers to fight on.They were indeed inspired by the rythms of such songs which kept their fighting spirits in tune.They fought hard to see into

it that they were successful. In the war, the Abagusii men saw advanced and sophisticated musical instruments which accompanied patriotic songs that were designed to elicit a feeling of national pride. Such songs stimulated the citizens during the war. Later, they adapted some of these musical instruments which they used in their music composition and performance. When the Abagusii war “veterans” returned home, they were welcomed with song and dance. One such a song was:

Song No.32 *Mbono twachirewe* (We have come now)

<i>Bono bachire Nyansaiga</i>	They have come well our men
<i>Bachire abamura Nyansaiga oiye oiye</i>	They have come our young men oiye
<i>Nyansaiga korwa ase esegi Nyansaiga</i>	Our men from the war
<i>Nyansaiga oiye oiye Nyansaiga</i>	Our Men Oiye oiye our men
<i>Barwanirie abasongo Nyansaiga</i> ²⁴² .	They fought the Europeans our men

As the Abagusii men who had participated in the Second World War settled in their villages, they shared their experiences with their people. From then on, the Abagusii were able to compose songs and dances of nationalism to elicit that element of national pride besides community pride²⁴³.

After the Second World War, the number of Abagusii children going to school increased. The influence of Western culture was felt further through formal education. A reasonable number of children were registered in both primary and secondary schools. Children were taught songs and dances of western culture. Since they were fully enrolled in schools they had little time to stay with their parents to learn tradition songs and dances. The following table shows full figures of school attendance in Nyanza Province by 1947.

²⁴²Ibid.

²⁴³O.I., with Sarah Monchari of Bogirango location, on 9/08/04.

Table7: School Attendance in Nyanza Province (1947)

PRIMARY STANDARD	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
BOY	43,673	18,873	12,521	7,314	6,090	1,714
GIRLS	16,279	7,841	3,705	1,749	815	224
SECONDARY SCHOOLS	1	2	3	4	5	6
BOYS	682	532	60	71	-	-
GIRLS	86	40	-	-	-	-

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/14, South Nyanza District Annual Reports, 1952

Note: Nyanza Province was constituted By the Abagusii, the Luo and Kuria

The figures above show that the importance of education had started gaining popularity by 1947. This was as a result of efforts by colonial government officials, through chiefs and with the help of Mission Churches. All these made great efforts through propaganda, articles and barazas.²⁴⁴ It was around this period that music education started to be offered as a basic course in both primary and secondary schools although it was not tested at examination levels. Western songs and dances were used as a means of realising togetherness and a sense of belonging by school children.

In the post-war period, Gusii traditional music including emeino, poems were also developed. For example, after an organized communal labour, Gusii men performed them in a narrative style (in free rhythm) at beer parties and at home for entertainment. Emeino, poems were also sung and performed at weddings and when men were drinking,

²⁴⁴KNA DC/KSI/1/14, South Nyanza District Annual Reports, 1952.

feasting and really enjoying themselves. With the songs they praised each other for their achievements during their youthful days. The emeino contained many wise sayings which were meant to guide the youths and the community in general in their day to day transactions²⁴⁵

Esubo or enyabububu were songs by circumcised boys and their teachers' when their wounds had healed and were now ready to come out of the seclusion 'den' to join in the tasks performed by other members of the family and the community. Chingero songs were also performed in this period. when the Abagusii performed certain tasks, for example building, weeding and domestic activities such as looking after babies. In this category were the grains grinding songs to praise farmers who cultivated the various crops such as finger millet, maize and potatoes. Esubo and chingero songs were mainly performed as work songs to keep the workers in good working spirits. They were also performed when members of the Abagusii community celebrated over the proceeds from their labour, which they considered rewarding after hard labour. These songs carried the message that hard labour and patience in performing work tasks always pays. The dance styles that accompanied these songs were okwareria, where dancing involved the use of arms and the trunk, alternatively moving towards the ground.

In the above discussion, it can be realized that the post-war period was characterized by a variety of songs and dances which were developed in form and function to a point of specialisation where each song and dance had a function in the social, economic and political spheres of the Abagusii way of life. Such songs were handed over from one generation to another to remind the descendants of Mogusii about their past history. In

²⁴⁵ O.I. with N. Mogire, at Bondaracha, on 3/1/2005.

this way, then songs and dances played an important role as a record of the Abagusii's cultural history.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that the Abagusii employed song and dance to resist against colonial invasion. We have also seen that further colonial administration and Western policies in Gusiiland had significant influences on Gusii music and dance. Songs and dance continued to dominate in the traditional Gusii life. The abolition of some of the African practices such as beer drinking, cattle villages among others had far reaching effects on the Gusii traditional music .Furthermore, Christian missionaries discouraged the early Gusii converts from performing traditional music and dance .We have also seen that the First world War of 1914-1918 had prolonged effect on Gusii music and dance and finally the famine of 1918 and 1919 made the Abagusii to compose songs and chorus in these events .

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DYNAMICS OF MUSIC AND DANCE AMONG THE ABAGUSII IN THE POST WAR PERIOD, 1945-1963

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the dynamism of Gusii music and dance in the post war period covering 1945 to 1963 is discussed. Further, the various socio-economic developments initiated by both the Abagusii and the Europeans and their influence in the Gusii music and dance is surveyed. Such developments were witnessed in the field of education, technology and the Swynneton plan among others. It is in this chapter that the other forms of recreation among the Abagusii is discussed. In all these, music and dance played a major role.

After the first and second world wars, Western commodities started flowing smoothly to Kenyan markets. Agricultural shows were introduced. In these shows, school choirs, club choirs and traditional dancers competed as they at the same time entertained people in the show grounds. Groups of people from foreign countries such as Germany, France, America and China had direct influence on songs and dances among the Africans. Europeans introduced foreign musical instruments such as the guitar, electrical drums, piano, accordion, trumpet and flutes. The use of synthesizers created new variables in sound, which could not be produced by string or rhythm instruments. Exotic lighting system such as electricity gave the era a new aura. Unlike the African instruments, exotic instruments produced high sounds; they had a variety of tunes, at the same time were easily played without much effort and modulated sounds, which easily enabled voice harmonisation. The dances which evolved around this time were very

physical compared to the proceeding era. They were a mixture of foreign and African cultures. Dancers required the art of stamina. The dances which evolved around this time were twist, (shaking of the waist), rumba, (slow swing), kumfu, (limb movement) and marshed, (hand holding). These dances were mainly popular among the youth. The elders also to some good extent used to enjoy dancing or watching these dances as they gave them the feeling of youth²⁴⁶. People came to know more about all the sorts of music that could be produced by particular instruments. This renaissance period in the field of songs and dances produced a great profusion of compositions, particularly in the orchestral repertoire that exploited the unique sonorities of instruments; control of volume was, in itself, a rich source of music colour.

During this period, the Abagusii songs and dances were influenced in one way or another. Their traditional dances such as ribina, okoiyeria amareko and sungusia were changing gradually as they were partially or fully overtaken by the Western dances which became common in especially Kisii town and other urban centres in this period²⁴⁷. The popularity of traditional folk songs among the Abagusii was dimming gradually with a replacement of published music scores of Western songs.

The prosperity of first and second world wars periods, perhaps coupled with the greater consciousness of the outside world, induced the Abagusii for more legal system of government, education facilities and improved standards of living by the end of 1945. The intensification of agricultural production was great²⁴⁸. As far as educational facilities were concerned, a state whereby before the wars most of the schools were owned by denominations who barred some children from other denominations, to get access to

²⁴⁶O.I., with N. Ongaga at Kisii town, on 30/11/04.

²⁴⁷O. I., with Birongo Obundi at keroka market, on 6/6/04.

²⁴⁸ KNA/DC/KSI/1/7, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports, 1945.

education was rectified. Due to increased demand, the Local Native Council decided in 1944 to built non-denominational schools. There was likewise a rapid increase of candidates for the common entrance examination from 65 in 1942 to 202 and 320 in 1944 and 1946 respectively²⁴⁹. Songs and dances were encouraged in schools to promote a sense of belonging.

The colonial government and native council schools had a broad curriculum, which accommodated or permitted the performance of secular songs and dances as well as local drama. All these creative arts in one way or another acted as a socializing agent and also a record of the preservation of personal identity and African culture. The following table shows major intermediate and secondary institutions in Gusiiland by 1955.

Table 8: Major Post Primary Institutions in Gusiiland by 1955

Type	Name of School	Sponsor	Location
Secondary	Government African School Kisii	Colonial Government	Kisii
Intermediate	Kereri	District Education Board	Nyaribari
Intermediate	Gionseri	District Education Board	Bassi
Intermediate	Nyabururu	Roman Catholic Church	Kitutu
Intermediate	Amasago	Roman Catholic Church	Nyaribari
Intermediate	Itibo	Pentecostal Assemblies of God	Kitutu
Intermediate	Iterio	Swedish Lutheran Mission	Wanjare
Intermediate	Nyanchwa	Seventh day Adventist	Nyaribari
Intermediate	Gesusu	Seventh Day Adventist	Nyaribari

²⁴⁹ O.I. with M. Nyaboke, at Bochoria Village, Nyamira, on 16/12/2005.

Intermediate	Magena	Seventh Day Adventist	Machoge
Intermediate	Motagara	Seventh Day Adventist	North Mugirango

Source: KNA DC/KSI/5/3 South Nyanza Gazetteer, 1943-1955.

Around 1959, education system in Gusiiland had gained a lot of prominence. In 1960, South Nyanza council spent about 44% of the councils' expenditure on education. This shows the importance and level of commitment the colonial government attached to education of Africans.

The following table shows school attendance statistics for the Abagusii in 1961.

Table 9: School Attendance for Only Gusii Children

SCHOOLS	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
Aided primary	25,640	9,065	34,705
Aided intermediate	6,209	727	6,936
Aided total	31,849	9,792	41,641
Unaided primary	3,627	1,803	5,351
Unaided intermediate	577	309	886
Unaided total	4,204	2,112	6,237

Source: KNA DC/ KSI/1/14 South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1962

The influence of Western education affected the Gusii songs and dances in that, Western songs and dances stimulated misgivings about the integrity of the Abagusii traditional culture, songs and dances in particular. Teachers in these schools most of which had been westernised by the European culture stressed the need to imitate foreign arts rather than originality. In this way, most of the Abagusii young people were brain washed by European culture thus abandoning the Abagusii traditional songs and dances.

With the introduction of new and advanced musical instruments by the Europeans in Gusiiland, recording industry came alive. With the expansion of instrumentation,

arrangers had great latitude in the orchestration. A number of artists formed their own companies for performing and recording music. At the initial stages, many of the songs written and performed by the artists were never published as score music. With time, drummers took an advantage of the newly introduced electric drums to expand their drum sets to give them greater latitude of sound for mere emotionally explosive effect. The major Gusii musicians reknown for their song and dance artists' talents were Onyagore, Nyakerita, Ooga bwa Angwenyi, Oirere, Arati and Mosiori²⁵⁰. The lyrics of the songs they composed encompassed a variety of subjects ranging from romance to patriotism. Instruments were used to accompany the songs. Either solo guitar or small instrumental ensembles, of rhythm section accompanied the early recordings of Gusii songs. In around 1962 piano, brass guitars and drums were introduced in Gusiiland. Later in 1963, electric guitars and drums were introduced in Gusiiland. Occasionally, the rhythm sections were augmented with smothering of wind instruments. These new trends provided an opportunity among the Abagusii to attain a high level of creativity, competitiveness and to continue developing improvisation skills and musical techniques. It further allowed the Abagusii musicians an opportunity to extend improvisation skills over several choruses instead of only short passages. Group bands, which had earlier on, started as village clubs in the early 1960 arranged, performed and recorded their songs. The earliest of such elaborate groups was Nyamwari band, Christopher Monyoncho's brainchild. The band consisted of four members. However, the bands activities were limited by lack of finance. As time went by, it gained popularity²⁵¹.

²⁵⁰O.I., with I simba, Music teacher at Nyanturago Secondary School, Kisii. On 1/12/04

²⁵¹O.I., with Mary Ratemo, at Nyamasibi market Village, on 26/08/04.

In general, the early bands were comparatively small and lacked public address system. A band expanded as financial conditions improved and more personnel could be recruited, trained and retained in the band. This kind of skill development enabled the composition of many songs, which touched on political, social and economic conditions that surrounded the Abagusii. In this period, co-operatives musical bands were formed with an aim of realising huge profits. In this case, several Abagusii musicians could pool their skills and resources together to form competitive music bands, which could not only feature in Gusiiland but also in the “outside world”. Basically, most bands were under a single leader musically and financially. The best example was Nyamwari Jazz Band under the leadership of Christopher Monyoncho. For recording and rehearsing purposes, a leader had to hire an arranger to write down all the music in the style the arranger wanted. The personnel and the arranger were to be paid for their services.

The general public usually promoted the early bands in the post-war period in Gusiiland especially when they entertained them in public places. For example, Nyamwari jazz band in the early period of 1970 used to entertain the public in such places as Keroka market, Kisii town, Nyamira and Ogembo town centres. Booking agencies that often required performances staged by the various bands could make arrangements to finance them, provided that the bands could allow them to become their agents.

Early musical instruments artists around this period in Gusiiland were, for most part, untrained in music fundamentals and therefore “played by hear”. They memorised a theme and then extemporized upon it. Many themes were copyright or matches played by military band. One player would teach a melody to another that in turn improvised the

melody so that, in time, the melody became vastly removed from its original form. The young musicians probably did not know the original title of the melody so they would rename it. Soon they began composing their own melodies since most of the early Gusii musicians like Nyako, Makone and Bosibori could neither read nor write music, they relied very much on memorisation²⁵². As a band worked on a melody and its harmonies, the selection became their particular composition and arrangement.

Much of the Abagusii gospel music evolved from early European church music.

Christian missionaries introduced gospel hymns, which were written in music language. In their schools, missionaries taught the early converts how to sight-read and write music. In essence, it was the Christian missionaries who introduced written music in Gusiiland. Church musicians, choirmasters spent a great amount of their time writing original hymns for their church. The songs in such hymns basically preached salvation. The songs were written in major keys with predominant eight measure phrases utilising a two-theme format (theme A and B). The lyrics often spoke of the wonder of heaven. With time the Abagusii early converts came to know how to sight, read and write music, they became music teachers in schools²⁵³. Film technology, radio and television affected the style and performance of Gusii songs and dances. Many young people adopted Western singing and dancing styles. From the above discussion, it is evident that Gusii songs and dances were dynamic, that's to say, they kept on changing from time to time as they came into contact with other cultures. Western policies such as education, labour recruitment, colonial administration among others, affected the traditional songs and dances of the Abagusii by the introduction of the various colonial policies, which turned Kenya into a

²⁵²O.I., with J. Mikae, at Mwamoviango village on 21/1/98.

²⁵³O.I., with S. Barongo, a music teacher, at Ramasha, on 9/10/97.

capitalist country, Gusiiland inclusive. The European adopted theories of modernisation, which were aimed at improving the standards of living of the Africans. They introduced the various musical ideas and instruments that gave then Abagusii a new direction.

5.2 The Effect of the Swynneton Plan on Gusii Music and Dance up to 1963.

The concept of communal ownership of land in the Gusiiland tenure system was altered by the British colonial land policy. The Swynneton plan of 1954 had the greatest and most fundamental impact on the African communal ownership of land²⁵⁴. The plan was drawn up by R.J.M Swynnerton, the Assistant Director of Agriculture. It recommended the abolition of traditional system of land tenure. It also aimed at the promotion of agriculture through land reform in the shape of land consolidation programmes and the registration of individual titles. The plan also provided for increased extension services, processing and marketing services and the provision of some credit to African farmers. It encouraged the increase of output of cash crops among African farmers, notably coffee, pyrethrum and tea, the seeds were availed to thousands of farmers in 1950s and the co-operatives urged for their marketing. Tea was introduced in Gusiiland in 1957. It was first planted at Mokomoni and later at Magombo in East Kitutu location. The introduction of crops such as coffee, pyrethrum, sisal and tea in Gusiiland undoubtedly altered production and labour processes in food crop production. Households that expanded acreage of cash crops were forced to change their traditional labour patterns.

In 1950s when Robert and Barbara Levine carried out their study in Kisii, women were reported to be doing almost all the cultivation - from breaking ground with hoes to

²⁵⁴R.M. Maxon, 'Agriculture' in W.R. Ochieng, (ed.) Themes in Kenyan History Nairobi, 1990) p.12.

harvesting. They milked the cows. They also kept an eye on the herding which preadolescent boys who had replaced young men in this job did²⁵⁵. Women were also involved in the production of cash crops as labourers.

While Abagusii women managed the production of food crops and the provision of food to family members, men became increasingly dominant in the management of cash crop production and the controls of its income. All the colonial agricultural field officers were men who, customarily, targeted male members of the household²⁵⁶. The men were the first recipients of education on modern agricultural techniques and technology, men usually collected cash derived from sale of coffee, pyrethrum and tea. The main areas of these financial responsibilities were clearly defined as school fees, school funds, uniforms, books, tools and seeds. Most men also clothed their family members. They also bought prestigious family items such as radios, lamps and comfortable furniture. The provision of food for the family was the obligation of women, though men admitted that sometimes they contributed money for food as their wives could not manage on their own²⁵⁷.

The period affected songs and dances among the Abagusii in a number of ways. First, as a result of intensive cultivation of such crops as finger millet and maize, the Abagusii were able to prepare local beer easily. These crops were ground, fermented and processed to produce local beer. During beer drinking, traditional songs and dances were performed.

Second, land preparation for the growing of various crops was usually done by hand and was a slow and tedious process. The use of tradition working groups was expanded

²⁵⁵R.A. Levine and B.B. Levine, *op. cit.*, pp.18-24.

²⁵⁶O.I with Otworu Monyimbo Obiri at Rigena Market, on 28/07/04.

²⁵⁷C.J.O Choti *op cit.*, p. 149.

and strengthened. Such working group was referred to as egesangio, of which members of the neighbourhood voluntarily co-operated and worked for each other in turns. The various work songs, most of which have already been discussed were performed to give workers morale and also to speed up the work. As noted earlier on when this group worked in the morning sessions, it was referred to as egesangio, and evening session as ekebosane²⁵⁸. After working tasks had been accomplished, there was always a merry-making occasion where food and drinks were served. Entertainment, which involved songs and dances, lasted until late in the evening.

During work sessions, laziness and idling were highly discouraged. In celebrating for the good work done, lazy men and loiters were discouraged from participating in the celebration. They were often criticized using songs so that they could change and be active and organised members in the society. The Abagusii were always committed and perfected their work of any kind.

Further development of work songs during this period involved the use of imagery. In performing work songs, the performers could castigate the tendency of borrowing a neighbour's property or item for a long time without returning it. An item once borrowed was supposed to be returned to the owner for use. The following song serves as an example:

Song No.33 *Omokungu oisiko moino* (Woman of neighbourhood)

<i>Omokungu oisiko moino</i>	Woman of the neighbourhood
<i>Kae Bosibori</i>	Return to Bosibori
<i>Ensio yaye</i>	Her grinding stone
<i>Omokungu</i>	Woman of the
<i>Oisiko moino</i>	Neighbourhood

²⁵⁸O.I., with O. Gesaka Nyamache, at Nyamache Market, at South Kisii on 16/12/04.

<i>Kae Bosibori</i>	Return to Bosibori
<i>Ensio yaye</i>	Her grinding stone.
<i>Kae bosibori ensio yaye</i>	It is the one she
<i>Nero akona goseramwaye</i>	Uses to grind in her house
<i>Omaiya</i>	O' perfect person, O
<i>Omaiya</i>	Perfect person
<i>Omaiya Chingero</i>	O' perfect person songs
<i>Bonyangero.</i>	And songs

The above song, besides motivating the workers to perform their duties perfectly, communicated an additional message about the Abagusii community and their material relations. Repetition again played a vital role in communicating the intended message in work songs. This was a very important development as several themes were communicated in performing work songs. In such songs ambiguity was avoided to achieve accuracy in communication.

Two Gusii elders, Monyancha and Monyange, met privately and hatched out plans for the Abagusii to escape from Luoland. Monyancha prepared plenty of 'native liquor' and invited a large section of elders, the heads of various Abagusii groups living in Luoland.

No Luo elders were invited as well. Monyancha addressed them saying:

My brethren, you are all aware that the Abagusii are mal-treated in Luo land. What can we do? it is to find out a concerted action that I have collected you here today²⁵⁹.

Later, Gusii beer party songs developed a lot of symbolic complexities. Artists among the Abagusii created their symbols basically from their understanding of physical and natural environment. For instance, beer was often referred to as 'the long water grasses'. At beer party, one could hear an artist singing:

²⁵⁹.Experiences in the 'foreign land'. One day, a Gusii medicineman called Maeri of south Mugirango²⁵⁹Quoted in W.R. Ochieng Ibid., p.147.

Song No.34 *Ning’o Oywo Ondetereire* (Who has brought this for me)

<i>Ning’o Oyio ondetereire</i>	Who has brought this for me
<i>Ning’o Oyio ondetereire</i>	Who has brought this for me
<i>Ning’o Oyio ondetereire</i>	Who has brought it for me
<i>Amache enunda</i>	It is the waters of the long water
<i>Andatereire.</i>	Grass that has brought me this.
<i>Ning’o Oyio ondetereire</i>	Who has brought this for me
<i>Ning’o Oyio ondetereire</i>	Who has brought this for me
<i>Ning’o Oyio ondetereire</i>	Who has brought it for me
<i>Amache enunda</i>	It is the waters of the long water
<i>Andatereire.</i>	Grass that has brought me this.

The ‘long water grass’ in its actual meaning is the plants (reeds) that grow at the riverbanks. The Abagusii used it as medicine. In the old days, when somebody suffered from stomach upset, the reeds (enunda) were squeezed and the water that came out was mixed with rainwater to form a precipitate that could cure the stomach upset. Therefore, in referring to beer as the water of long water grass (amache enunda), the above beer party songs communicated the message that beer was a good thing. It was thought to be a medicine of the souls as it treated some diseases. For example, when one ate meat of dead cattle and suffered constipation he was advised to take a little beer. But one was not required to take too much of it as it could lead to problems such as loss of vision, breaking of marriages, accidents and poor decision making²⁶⁰. Repetition was invoked in beer party songs to facilitate memorisation and cramming. Participants of such songs were inspired by repetition involved in the singing and dancing of such songs. At Nyamagesa village, it was observed that participants in a beer party were inspired by repetition in the following beer party song:

Song No.35 *Siberia ong’e*(Sip and give me)

<i>Siberia onge Mosaiga</i>	Sip and give me age mate
<i>Siberia onge Mosaiga</i>	Sip and give me age mate

²⁶⁰M.M. Okengo, op. cit., p.98.

Ae ae ae Mosaiga
Toa monto mosaiga
Toa monto okobayabaya
Ae ae Mosaiga
Siberia onge Mosaiga
Siberia onge Mosaiga ae
Toa monto nonde
Toa nonde okobayabaya
*Aae ae ae Mosaiga*²⁶¹.

Ae ae ae age mate
 Do not give, do not give
 To anybody who loiters
 Ae ae ae age mate
 You sip and give me,
 Sip and give me my
 Not give anybody
 Not give anybody who loiters
 Aae ae ae agemate.

Such a song had also developed both in rhythm, themes, costuming, and relevance to numerous issues besides the enjoyment in beer drinking. They touched on community relations, preservation of the Abagusii culture, and the past history of the Abagusii and the importance of work among community members. Such songs had high musical quality and good beats.

After the entertainment, women left earlier than men to attend to the children and other domestic matters such as milking, fetching of water, firewood, and cooking. Men left at their own pleasure after discussing matters that concerned the community's history and their lives in general.

At times, the Abagusii men who usually had a lot of money from the sale of their agricultural produce, wage labour and cattle, socialised a lot with other men. They drank local beer, which included busaa and changaa. Some spent large amounts of money in drinking. There were those who spent virtually all they earned on beer and then came home drunk while singing beer party songs and took their wives savings by force to go and drink the following day.²⁶²In Gusiiland, like many other British Colonial Africa the Principle of indirect rule required that colonial officials administer through local chiefs,

²⁶¹A song sang by Nyakoe, of Bonyagatang'i village, son 16/12/04.

²⁶²O.I.with Hezron Obiri, at Gieseembe village, on 27/07/04.

abagambi (omogambi – singular). Colonial officials used the chiefs and elders to reach the rest of the people and even in interpreting certain traditions and customs that the colonialists did not comprehend.²⁶³ Such colonial chiefs in Gusiiland included Mathayo Ratemo of Bobasi, Asa Onyiego of BomaChoge and Musa Nyandusi of Nyaribari. Colonial officials also sought to handle conflicts through the application of customary law, with justice meted out through “native” courts. Chiefs and headmen in Gusiiland in the post-war period organized village and local Baraza, that is, Public meetings to educate the Abagusii. During such meetings, songs and dances were performed for entertainment purposes before serious issues could be discussed.²⁶⁴

On the eve of independence, the Abagusii music and dance was distinguished in three main categories: Ceremonial music which was performed during special occasion such as birth, initiation rites and marriage, music for pure entertainment performed over a drink or at a party and school music which was mainly for education purposes. However, these categories of music and dance tended to be restrictive rather than liberative. The church played a major role in shaping the trends of music development. This was particularly so with liturgical music which was practised under very stringent constitution. In Gusiiland, the major religions which dominated the area were the Roman Catholic and the Seventh Day Adventist church (S.D.A.). Like in the other various Kenyan communities, the Abagusii translated music into the word *Ogotera*, song. Most people in the community from children to adults, learned and unlearned, administrators and educators thought of music only as song and singing even in the school

²⁶³ KNA DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports.

²⁶⁴ KNA DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports.

²⁶⁴ O.I. with M. Nyaboke, at Bochoria Village, Nyamira, on 16/12/2004.

settings.²⁶⁵ Formal education, which was introduced by missionaries continued to influence music and dance performance among the Abagusi. School music was religious based. Converts and missionary teachers who taught in mission schools, discouraged the singing of secular songs, which were considered demonic. The report of Phelp-Strokes commission of 1923-24 on village school curricula concerning music was still in force and reads as follows:

The music you hear will not be a native song but the parody of a familiar European Hymn..... the chorus of unintelligible sounds is the sing song of the syllable as they follow one another in a meaningless succession.²⁶⁶

The singing aspect was paramount as this education system discouraged the learning and playing of indigenous musical instruments. The Abagusii were not allowed by Christian missionaries to play their obokano lyre, a popular musical instrument. Neither, were they allowed to sing their traditional music.²⁶⁷ They were to sing European songs. This colonial attitude was experienced elsewhere in Africa. The speech made by the late Tanzanian founding President, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, on 10th December 1962, when parliament decided to start a ministry of culture and youth testifies to this fact:

When we were at school, we were taught to sing the those songs of Europeans. How many of us were taught the songs of Wanyamwezi or Wahehe.....? most of us learnt to play the guitar, the piano and other European musical instruments. How many Africans in our Tanganyika particularly among the educated can play the drums? How many can play the Nagana, the Marimba, the Kilamzi, Ligo-mbo or Imangala?²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Agak, H.A.O. "Towards a New Definition of Music: Its Implication to the teaching and learning of Music in Schools" A Paper Presented at National Music Symposium at Egerton University in April, 2001.

²⁶⁶ Quoted in Agak H.A.O. Ibid., p.2.

²⁶⁷ O.I., with Rogito Osiemo, at Raisena village, on 30/8/2004.

²⁶⁸ Quoted in Agak, H. A. op.cit. p.2.

Thus, the concept that Abagusii developed from the missionary educators is that music in schools during this period was singing religious songs. As the first teachers graduated from the mission schools, they perpetuated this concept in theory and practice since this is all they had learnt. Some of these graduates become very influential in decision making as to what constitutes the music curriculum.

According to Ngala, colonization and its concomitant retrogressive politico-culture stifled music creativity having vilified and demonized African music as primitive and evil. The colonial period in Kenya witnessed the stagnation of the development of Kenyan music in general. In the meantime, the Kenyan communities, Abagusii inclusive embraced Western music albeit through the “master” forces of coercion.²⁶⁹ Indeed, we should consider embracing Western music a blessing in disguise. A blessing because it lent us the tools to study and a disguise because it eroded our traditional music which may be hard to recapture.

5.3 Abagusii Music and Dance in Recreation Activities

There were recreational activities and games among the Abagusii that called for the use of song and dance. For example, various clans competed in wrestling of which the winners were rewarded. If a cow or bull was slaughtered, parts of the meat called ritana and esukubi were given to the winner. The defeated person was nicknamed omokungu, ‘woman’ and the feet, ebirenge, of the cow slaughtered were given to him. In celebrating for the victory song and dance was the order of the day. Enyamumu/enyagugu, a game played by boys at home or when looking after livestock in the field. Enyamumu was a

²⁶⁹ Ngala .B.J., “A survey of Compositional and arrangement Techniques preferently used in Kenya”, a paper presented at maseno University, March, 2001.

thunders tick and a wooden salt that produced a roaring sound when whirled around one's head on the end of a stirring or thong. As the boys played this game, they sang various Gusii traditional songs. Oboche bworotuba (bao) a pebble, or seed was a popular game played by two persons or two groups of men, young and old alike. The rectangular wooden board, orotuba, or soapstone in which 16 holes are carved in two rows may be available. The game usually started with three pebbles, chinkunakuna, in each hole, and it was played in an anti-clockwise direction. The player who removed or 'captured' all or most of his opponent's pebbles or seeds won the game. The winner could burst into song and dance.

Enyange/Okoruta enyange, was a hoop and stick game for children. Children stood in two groups with some distance between them. One group threw the hoop (made with a flexible stick) to the other group who tried to stop it with a long stick called orotange. The orange was supposed to pass through the hoop to stop it from passing them. If stopped, the team scored a point, and they in turn threw it to the other team. This went on for a couple of times before the second round of the game commenced. This time, the hoop was thrown into the air and each of the two teams tried to pass orotange through the hoop before it fell to the ground. If the chitange from both teams went through the hoop in the air, children sang 'Matinga', a song which meant that 'you have been deprived of a wife, implying that the opponents had been defeated.

Enyoyo, a ball and stick game was played by boys when grazing cattle. Two boys stood some distance apart, and one of them hit a ball made of leaves or a round fruit obtained from the omonyaigena or omongoi tree to the other with a stick. The other boy did not allow the ball to stop but hits back to his friend. This went on for as long as they

wished. Again, song and dance provided a supplementary form of entertainment. Chinsara/Okorasa was a game that involved shooting arrows at a fixed object in the distance during herding and, at times, during eburu, the post-burial ceremony. Okoruta ritimo, a spear-throwing game was meant to prepare boys to be good hunters and good fighters at war. In the traditional Gusii society, the spear was always aimed at a specific target especially the enemy at war. Oboche bwa baiseke was a girls' stone throwing game. The player threw a small stone up into the air and then collected a set of ten small stones in a shallow hole in front of her before catching the falling stone. At first, the stones were collected one at a time, then the player went on to collect them two at a time, then three, and so on until all the stones were collected in the hole at once. The second round of this game involved throwing all ten stones into the air and trying to collect all ten with the back of the hand. Then all of the stones were thrown on the ground, and only one was thrown up in the air again.

When it was about to come down, the player tried to collect all the stones at once before catching the falling stone. Failure to collect all the stones at once marked the player lose her turn. Seven small stones could be used in this game instead of ten. At times, no shallow hole was dug in the ground for the stones; they were just spread on the ground. Only one throwing and collecting earn a win the game. Oboche bwebite, a stick game for girls. They used of 10 to 20 small sticks which were collected and held upright on the ground, and then allowed to fall in different directions. A girl used one stick to separate the fallen sticks from one another without making any move. If in the process one or more of the sticks moved, the player lost her turn, but she won the sticks collected. The girl who collected most sticks won, to starts the next round of the game. Three to

five girls played at a time. Winners of such games graced their victory with song and dance. Chindwani was a game of a set of grass stalks or stems of any flower is collected and one of them knotted at the centre. It was mixed in with the rest, and then the stalks or stems were concealed in the palm of the hand of one of the players. The rest picked in turn, and they are not supposed to pick the one with the knot. The one, who picked this one, lost his or her turn.

Okobiserena Egento, hide and search game was a game for girls in which song and dance featured. An object such as a stone or stick was hidden in the homestead or in the field by a group of girls. A girl who was away when the object was hidden was asked to search for it. While the search was on, the rest sang a song called ‘agiri niya’. The singing became louder as the search approached the spot where the object was hidden, and this gave her the clue to search carefully where she stood. If she found it, she received applause through song and dance. Ogotuma was a game which involves both boys and girls. They lined up with one of them in front who jumped and mentioned names of domesticated and wild animals. The others behind him also jumped but only at the mention of the name of a domesticated animal. If one jumped when the name of a wild animal, like hyena, enyang’au, or leopard, engo, was mentioned by the boy in front of the line, that person was branded as a witch. He left the line and joined the one in front. This went on till only one of them was left in the line. He or she was considered the king or queen of them all. The various children’s praise songs were performed. Obiro was a game whereby one girl in a group ran after the others and tried to touch one of them on the back. If a girl was touched, she then took a turn in chasing the others.

iOgotaburania egento, snatching, was a game of two groups of boys and/or girls who played by standing in two opposing lines. A rag or a stone was put in between them at an equal distance from both groups. An umpire shouted to start the game which involved one person from each group running to pick up the rag and then running back to his group or team. The one who picked up the rag made sure that he returned 'home' safely with the rag. If he was touched by any member of the opposing team, he lost a point to that team. Prizes such as bananas, oranges and sugarcane were given to the winners.

Various victory songs and dances were performed as the winners received their awards. Kasulu was an interesting game which involved three girls. Two of these held the ends of the rope and whirled it round and round while the third girl skipped over the rope. The girls took turns skipping. Obiti was the name of a 'house-building' game played by girls. It is also a contemporary game in which a set of eight or more rectangles and once circle at the 'head' of the rectangles drawn in sand or in any open space on the ground. A twig or a wet piece of rag was thrown into a the first rectangle at the base of the 'housing-complex'. The player jumped over the rag into the second rectangle and hopped into the rest of the rectangles till she reached, and stood with both legs in rectangles seven and eight adjacent to each other. The player turned at this point and hopped back, stepping with both legs in any adjacent rectangles. She, again, hopped over the first rectangle which contained the small wet rag. She continued throwing the rag into each rectangle, successively, and hopping over the rectangle containing the rag without stepping on any of the lines. After a successful completion, she stood in the circle at the 'head' of the complex with her back to the drawn rectangles. She then threw the rag over

her head into any of the rectangles. A successful throw without the rag falling on a line won the player that rectangle, a 'house' she had built. The next player took her turn. The game went on until the last player performed the game. At the end of the game, the girls sang various Gusii traditional songs that were usually performed by the Abagusii women during leisure time.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the dynamism of Gusii music and dance in the post war period covering 1945 to 1963 has been discussed. Further, we have seen that the various socio-economic developments initiated by both the Abagusii and the Europeans and their influenced the Gusii music and dance in a number of ways. First, the Abagusii musicians took advantage of new technology to improve their traditional music. Second, developments in the field of education, technology and the swynneton plan among others affected the nature and use of music and dance among the Abagusii. It is in this chapter that the other forms of recreation among the Abagusii have been discussed. Generally, all these activities contributed to the revolutionalising of Gusii music and dance as discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

GUSII MUSIC AND DANCE IN THE POST COLONIAL PERIOD, 1963-2002

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the various socio- economic and cultural developments that occurred in the post-colonial Kenya and how they influenced the state of Gusii music and dance. It covers the period extending from 1963 -2002. In this period, there were two democratic governments that saw the development of traditional music and dance among the Kenyan communities of which the Abagusii were parcel part. These were the Kenyatta era (1963-1978) and the Moi era which extended from 1978 to 2002. Further, the various institutions and individuals who contributed to the shaping of Gusii music and dance in this period are discussed. The period witnessed the attainment of the right for self-determination under two democratic governments of two visionary presidents to whom we owe virtually everything to do with provision, development and promotion of music and other creative and performing arts activities.

The attainment of Kenya's independence on 12th December 1963 marked the culmination of 68 years of anti-colonial struggle waged by the Kenya Africans to free themselves from British domination, oppression and exploitation. As well, it marked the beginning of the process of nation building. This was understood by many to imply elimination of poverty, disease and ignorance and the emergence of a relatively egalitarian and participatory society.

6.2 Kenyatta Era and the Development of Music and Dance 1963 – 1978

The concept of self-help ideal which had originated in the pre –colonial period was given a new impetus and meaning at the time of the achievement of self-government. It received particularly strong backing from Mzee Jomo Kenyatta the then first president of the republic of Kenya. He first proposed it together with *harambee* spirit to Kenyans. *Harambee* was clarion call for dedication, hard work and unity. To him hard work was the only way to achieve prosperity and nationhood. It was the way to political stability. He hoped that this would express the mood we want to create; in May 1963, he used the word again in his *Madaraka* Day speech.

In the first two years after independence, Kenyans positively responded to the call of *harambee*. In addition to the building of roads and the construction of dams and water pipelines, construction of health centres, dispensaries and schools, more than 2500 such facilities were built during that period . According to Bosibori , the Abagusii also participated actively in this call . Songs and dances which carried messages of the spirit of togetherness were performed in work places by the Abagusii. Through *harambee* spirit, several secondary and primary schools were built in Gusiiland ²⁷⁰. During *harambee* meetings and fund raising drives , music and dance were used to entertain and educate the public on various political , social and economic issues . The songs performed would praise the guests of honour for accepting to preside over the function. Most of such songs would be composed by fitting words into the existing melodies of African tunes. The music was so dynamic that performers would find themselves fitting new messages into already existing tunes at the same time performing the music.

²⁷⁰ O.I., With T.Bosibori on 13/4/04 at Keroka market.

Despite criticisms, the *harambee* movement was and remained a shining example of successful self-help effort in independent Kenya. For example, through song and dance, the Abagusii worked together for social and economic progress. With the achievement of *Uhuru*, came the recognition that as an independent nation, Kenya needed to develop a national culture as a means of enhancing national unity, pride and patriotism. Music and dance again played an important role towards achieving this end. Mzee Jomo Kenyatta looked forward to reviving and enhancing the dignity and relevance of Kenya's cultural heritage. Music, dance and literature were seen as avenues through which Kenya's culture could be preserved. Although music, dance theatre, in theory been promoted before independence by the Kenya cultural centre in Nairobi, the latter had catered almost exclusively for the interest of Kenya's Asian and European populations. As Dr. Ndeti has argued, the constituent members excluded Africans so that there was no way in which the centre would project African culture.

Even some years after independence, the Kenya cultural centre and the adjacent national theatre strongly catered for expatriate interests and included non - Africans in positions of influence and control. Nevertheless African music and dance received a strong boost after independence. Literally, hundreds of traditional music and dance groups came into being. This owed much to the personal initiative of President Kenyatta. He insisted on the inclusion of African music and dance in all national celebrations and he was regularly entertained by groups of such performers from all over the nation. The Abagusii cultural group dancers were included in this arrangement. Music and drama

festivals increasingly came to reflect African culture through songs and plays in Swahili or ethnic languages.²⁷¹

Independence saw the elevation of national service of newly christened voice of Kenya (VoK) to pride of place in comparison with English – language radio service in terms of hours of broadcasting. Public notices and signs were altered so that the Swahili version came first and English second. In the years that followed, VoK Television broadcasting increased. Mzee Jomo Kenyatta on more than one occasion criticized the nature of foreign programmes that were being broadcast by the media. Subsequently, the number of programmes in Swahili and those that fostered an African identity and projected African rather than Western values in radio programme were designed in such a way that African music and dance were equally given more time in air broadcasting.²⁷²

Whatever the reason, Kenya unlike a number of African states had not established a ministry of culture by 1978 under which music and dance could be developed. Viewed in strictly economic terms, this was perhaps not surprising; Mzee Jomo Kenyatta gave greater priority to economic development and the expansion of educational and health facilities. Only in 1972 did the government decide to set up a national body to coordinate cultural activities. This was the Kenya National Council of Arts and Culture. The body was charged with the responsibility of enhancing national pride and to sponsor cultural activities. The council was placed under the Ministry of Co-operatives and Social Services. The latter gave far greater attention to those aspects of its charge rather than to culture where music and dance would be adequately catered for. Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, filled with anti-colonial views, quickly encouraged the performance of Africa traditional

²⁷¹ O.I., With Naftal Ongaga, a music teacher at Kioge girls secondary school, at Nyaribari Chache Cultural Festivals on 3/12/04.

²⁷² O.I., With James Amhale, Executive secretary Kenya music festivals foundation, on 6/3/05.

music. He enjoyed traditional music. Thus, the 43 communities witnessed the revival and performance of their cherished music. Abagusii took advantage of this freedom to develop their folk music²⁷³. Several clans among the Abagusii now organized the various songs and dances which were performed at ceremonial occasions.

The attainment of the right for self-determination for the Abagusii in 1963 as it happened to the many communities, gave way to further developments of their music and dance. At independence the, Abagusii sang to celebrate the freedom they had now after a long period of colonial yoke as in the following song.

Song No.36 *Abwo Na Basongo Bakong'anya*(Those Whites Vacating)

<i>Abwo na basongo bakon'ganya</i>	Those whites have gone
<i>Bakong'anya nebisore biabo</i>	They have gone with goods
<i>Abwo nabasongo bakong'anya</i>	Those whites have gone
<i>Bakong'anya nehimama biabo</i>	Have gone with their wonders

In the above song, performers celebrated the freedom they got after the departure of their colonial masters who had interfered with their independence and traditional life. The song was performed by both the Gusii men and women. Most of the Abagusii musicians attained high level of creativity when new and advanced musical instruments, such as electric guitars, pianos and modern drums were introduced by 1970. Songs and dances were composed to encompass a number of subjects such as nationalism, romance and sacredness. The Abagusii songs and dances were greatly enriched by creativity and instrumentalization. Such artistic values continued to play a vital role in economic, social and economic spheres of the Abagusii culture.

6.3 Gender, Music and Dance in Gusiland, 1963-1978

Among the Abagusii, there was the element of gender roles in music and dance

²⁷³ O.I., with Osiemo Rogito, at Manga market, on 30/02/05.

performance, there were songs and dances for women which men could not perform at any given time. Neither could the women perform specific songs and dances which were reserved for men. For example, men could not sing female circumcision songs. Likewise, women could not sing male circumcision songs. At the same time, there were certain traditional instruments such as Obokano which women could not play. Men were also restricted from playing certain drums. Due to the articulation of gender balance in the early 1880s, this kind of restriction was relaxed. Women were seen as equally capable in playing traditional instruments such as the Obokano. Likewise, men, could play all sorts of traditional drums. However, the singing and performance of female songs and dances by men, and male songs by women, still remains a taboo unto this day, as far as the Abagusii are concerned. Another observation that was made in the field during research is that, young children of renowned musicians and their friends can also imitate their parents in the learning and playing of certain musical instruments such as Obokano. Unlike in the past when parents could not allow their children to venture into music world, as it was a general belief by the Abagusii elders that if children were exposed to the field of music, they would equate themselves to adults and lack respect towards the elders, a thing which was punishable according to the Abagusii customary law.

6.4 The Development of Music and Dance in the Moi Era, 1978 – 2002

After the death of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta on 22nd August 1978, in Mombasa, Daniel Arap Moi who was then the vice – president took over the office of presidency on an acting capacity. After a period of ninety days, Moi was confirmed as the second president after Kenyatta. On ascending to power, Moi initiated a philosophy which he called Nyayo which symbolized continuity, love, peace and stability. The succession was thus

portrayed as a continuation of Kenyatta's legacy. Using ministers for a period of one year, he preferred to wait for the 1979 general elections to make more comprehensive changes in government.

In an effort to develop music and dance, Moi appointed a high powered Presidential National Music Commission. In November 1982, the commission was to prepare detailed plans and recommendations on the preservation and development of music and dance in the republic of Kenya. The commission was chaired by Professor Washington Omondi. The members of the committee were top musicologists in the country, these were Peter Kibukosya, Gerishom Manani, Boniface Mganaga, George Kakoma and Senoga Zake. This was the first time that ahead of state in Kenya had taken deep and personal interest in traditional music and dance.

The commission spent five months in the field and about a year in analysis and writing. More than 10,000 people submitted their views either orally or in writing to the commission. The most widespread demands from all sections and geographical areas of Kenya were; the need for an institution where musicians of various kinds could learn and pursue their trade. In other words, the people were demanding a national institute of music and dance with country-wide outlets, need to incorporate the teaching of traditional music in all school levels, just as oral literature and drama were beginning to be part of the curriculum and the need for a national organization representing all the people involved in music development. The commission presented a 214 – page report on the music situation in the country to the president in January 1984. This was also the time when the president made the commission a permanent body and appointed it to implement the recommendations of its report. The report included among other things,

how best to improve and develop the nature and character of the performance of the traditional and non-traditional music and dance. The commission produced 367 recommendations on research, dissemination and development of music and dance, music education music and dance performance for both educational and non-educational institutions. According to Ngala, a few hallmarks of musical development under Moi's era deserve a mention. For one he adopted and supported the constitutional changes which awarded the citizens the right to free expression and that of worship²⁷⁴. This encouraged creativity among the youth leading to compositions of religious patriotic, political and ever as his predecessor, encouraged the performance of traditional music.

Second, music presentations became an integral part of all presidential, state and national functions. Composers were encouraged to write relevant pieces of music for such occasions. Meanwhile, music composers wrote music that touched on all spheres of life. The leading composers of patriotic music included; George Mwiruki as in *Heko Baba Moi* (1985), *Tumshangilie Baba Moi* (1988), *Kenya Nchi yangu*, (1989). Others were; David Zalo as in *Endelea Moi* and *Moi Astahili sifa*, Thomas Wasonga as in *Tawala Kenya*, *Tumshangilie*, *Heko Jamuhuri* among others. Mr. Ngala Fred also composed *Mzee Jomo Kenyatta*, and *Maana ya uzalendo* in 1998.²⁷⁵

In Gusiiland, the story was the same. Local musicians such as Christopher Monyoncho, John Stolla and Arisi O. Sababu composed patriotic songs which praised both the president and local members of parliament and leaders. Such songs included *Nyachae naisane*, *Nyachae is able*, *Ababunge baito Abaya*, our members of parliament. Several local bands and music emerged in Gusiiland. These included *Maendeleo ya*

²⁷⁴ Nngala B.J A., op.cit., p.3

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p.3

Wanawake, youth groups, band groups, church music groups, school music clubs all of which cultivated their musical talents.

Certain key composers influence composition and arrangement of Gusii music Naftal Ongaga composed Ritutu, foolish bird, Ekebwe, the fox, Etengo, dance, Nyachoka Mogesironi, wife of Hezron, Ntwana gotongia etaya, we have never lit a lamp, Nyasae Konya, God help, among other Gusii music compositions using traditional tunes, rhythms and melodies. Other composers and arrangers among the Abagusii in the post-colonial era were: Zachary Ochoi who arranged Obori bwa baba, mother's finger millet, William Obaga who arranged Ekeru narenge Omwana, when I was a child and King'oina Ogamba's arrangement of amache Nyamiriato, unique waters.²⁷⁶

In all these arrangements, composers and arrangers were interested in pleasant melodies, rhythms, harmonies, dynamics, ornaments and counterpoints in their composition. They wanted their music to be sweet so as to effectively entertain their listeners. Such musicians also used tonal variation aspects and humming.

In schools, learners were given such basic knowledge of music as origin and history of Western music and music composers, sight reading of music, definition of melody construction, scales, writing music in solfa and staff notation, time signatures and note values in music, music scales and their construction among others. Music learners were also taught the various terms and signs of which are mainly developed from Italian language. Examples of such terms included *accelerando* which means gradually getting faster, *pianissimo* meaning very soft *crescendo*, and meaning getting gradually louder.

²⁷⁶ O.I., with Naftal Ongaga, a Music teacher at Kioge Girls Secondary school, on 3/12/04 at Nyaribari Chache Music Cultural Festival

The learners also had a chance to learn more about African musical instruments from other communities especially in Kenya apart from the Gusii traditional instruments. As well, learners were now taught how to play the various Western musical instruments including guitar and piano.

At advanced levels, students taking music as a subject in form three and four at KCSE level learnt advanced techniques which included harmony of Western music, harmonic intervals, transposition, aural which included melodic dictation rhythm and cadences among other things. At advanced level, music candidates could sit for two papers. One which was theoretical in nature and paper 2 which was aural. Since there were very few schools in Gusiiland which enrolled for music at KCSE in early 1990s, candidates for the subject used to conduct their aural at Kereri Girls Secondary School near Kisii town.²⁷⁷ Music in Gusiiland grew to be a big industry. It could be performed in such places as markets, ceremonial places, music competition as well as music festivals among other places. As far as dance was concerned, choreographers that is, arrangers of dances also emerged. With the advent of greater use of electronic media that is, television and audiovisual facilities, there is an increase in number of live music performance either in open air, theatres, social places, churches among others. With the growing competition of musicians to outdo one another for economic gains and fame, musicians added new dimensions of musical performances.

When the former President Daniel Arap Moi took over leadership in 1978, he afterwards became the patron of Kenya Music Festivals Foundation which was divided into two main festivals. These were; the Kenya Music Festivals Foundation, accommodating educational institutions and Kenya Music and Cultural festivals for non-educational

²⁷⁷ O.I. with Charles Nyabayo, a music trainer at Birongo Secondary school on, 6/4/2004.

institutions. Participants competed in these festivals annually whose adjudication went through zones, divisional, district, provincial and national levels. There also existed other hundreds of such other festivals mainly under the management of church organisations. At the management of church organisations at the end of such festivals, the president would host state concerts for the winners. Composers and producers therefore strived to present competitive works. Winners of such festivals were also presented with awards and certificates.

Between 1998 and 1992, the Permanent Presidential Music Commission organised and hosted numerous seminars workshops and international symposia to educate Kenyan musicians. Composition, arrangement and preservation of music became topical issues during such fora. In 1992, such fora were numerous in Gusiiland. These included churches, primary schools, secondary schools, universities (private and state), corporations, companies, organisations and clubs. As a leading educator, the president further established six universities. Two of these, that is, Kenyatta and Maseno universities started offering music as a subject.

Music education in both primary and secondary schools took root. In primary schools, the subject became compulsory inS the sxchool curriculum. In Gusiiland, secondary schools such as Kereri Girls, Kioge Girls, Nyabururu Girls, Itierio High school, Masimba Mixed, Sironga, Ibacho, Marani, Nyanturago, and Ibacho secondary schools among others started offering music as an examinable subject at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) level. Music committees were formed both at local and national levels to run music matters. The scope of music became wider. The subject was then clearly

distinguished using both Western and local terms. It was easy to discriminate music from dance, drama and other forms of artistic and theatrical performances.

As a popular subject, music was classified as set pieces in prescribed, set of aesthetical performance by Kenya Music Festival Secretariat, folk songs which were mainly local music reflecting the cultural tradition of the people, folk dance reflecting cultural dance of the people which were performed in traditional regalia. Singing games and dances for children, solo music performances, which emphasized the development of individual talents, of individuals, instrumental music, specially composed music, which touched on contemporary issues such as children's rights, HIV/AIDS pandemic, environmental issues among other things. Other classes included popular tunes, popularly known as *Zilizopedwa* oldies drawn from music pieces such as *Msichana mrembo*, *Fundi konde's* pieces *Taxi driver* and *malaika* among others. In all these performances, language, total quality presentations, relevance of themes, harmony, delivery elegance and overall achievements were looked at while adjudicating. It should be noted that these classifications were and still common in Gusii. It should be noted that these classifications were and still common in Gusii land especially in the Music Festivals Foundation organized by the Kenya music festival foundation.²⁷⁸ Gusii land especially in the Music Festivals Foundation organised by the Kenya music festival foundation.²⁷⁹

The Abagusii developed a dictionary that guided their performance in music and dance.

The following terms are an extract of the Abagusii music dictionary.

Ekeiriaricato/okoiririate
Eriogi rigiya

Ululation
A good voice

²⁷⁸ O.I., with James Amukhale, Executive secretary, KMF, Nairobi on 6/3/2005.

²⁷⁹ O.I., with James Amukhale, Executive secretary, KMF, Nairobi on 6/3/2005.

<i>Omoteria omuya</i>	A very good and experienced singer
<i>Omotengi omuya</i>	A very good/experienced dancer
<i>Omobugia obokano</i>	Aa good obokano player
<i>Etengo</i>	Dance
<i>Okorangeria</i>	A call, used to animate a performance
<i>Gotinera amogoro inse</i>	Foot-stamping in a dance
<i>Gitenga buya</i>	To shake the body well during dancing
<i>Konyegeria emekono</i>	Shaking of arms
<i>Koiyeria amareko</i>	To make shoulders fall sideways

6.5 Institutional management of Gusii music and dance (1992-2002)

Between 1992 and 2002, there existed two institutions that preserved Gusii music and dance. These were; Nyaribari Chache Cultural Festival Foundation and the Ribina *night*”as discussed below.

Nyaribari Chache Cultural Festival is a yearly event that brings together Gusii artisits and performers residing in Nyaribari Chache Constituency of Central Kisii District. The Festival is conducted in the Month of November of every year. The event is organized and administered by a team of professional Gusii artisits and teachers who include music teachers, drama directors and other administrators of creative arts activities in the district.

The history of Nyaribari Chache Cultural Festival dates back to 1992, when a group of Professional Gusii leaders and lovers of creative and cerforming arts activities met and drew a proposal to start the event as a way of reflecting the cultural history of the Abagusii people. Led by Mr. Christopher Matoke who was then a teacher and a teachers' union leader, Central Kisii district sub-branch, the group succeeded in coming up with a workable proposal of the event. Simeon Nyachae, the then Minister for Energy, was given the proposal for possible funding of the project, which he granted. The organisers went ahead and organised the event in the same year, which was very successful.

The initiators of this event had the following objectives:

- (i) To bring together all the talented artists and performers to display their artistic talents as a way of preserving the Gusii culture.
- (ii) To recapture the past cultural history of the Abagusii through creative and performing arts activities.
- (iii) To guard against the extinction of Gusii traditions and cultural practices through sharing together the past Gusii cultural experiences.
- (iv) To revisit the Gusii past traditions, visual, creative and performing arts.
- (v) To keep a record of past Gusii history using modern media, video and electronic system for future generations.

The organisers then drew an elaborate constitution, which would govern the foundation. A committee of ten members was constituted to run the affairs of the event. As noted earlier on, the 1992 cultural festival that was organised achieved most of the set objectives for the event. Among the major activities that featured were as follows:

A variety of Gusii dances that ranged from ribina, rainmaking dance, entaburuta (forward and backward jumping) dance, music of all kinds which were displayed in the original Gusii styles. They ranged from own compositions, traditional sacred songs, folk songs, among others. It is important to note that most of these songs were performed in free style using traditional Gusii traditional musical instruments.

African drama activities which mainly consisted of wrestling, story-telling, and poetry, acting of oral narratives, riddles, concerts and comedies covering all aspects of Gusii community's traditional life were displayed. A variety of themes ranging from

HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty eradication of society morals, violence against women and the oppressed, girl child education, child abuse and environmental conservation were covered. Besides creative and performing arts shows a variety of sporting activities were displayed. These ranged from chimbero, athletics, and emebira, ball games including football, handball, volleyball and netball mainly. Others included okong'usa engori, rope pulling and korundia chinyange, bicycle racing.

The guests and participants also had a chance of viewing the various material culture of the Gusii community. In the Nyaribari Chacha Cultural festivals, such material culture included, wood carvings, soap stone carvings of the famous tabaka, chisonoi, traditional beads, ebitinge, leg rings from which the name Mwanyagetinge is derived, which is a nick name for Gusii people, amatimo, spears, ebisiria, traditional hoes chingore chia marwa, beer drinking straws, ebisanda, calabash, ebiee, traditional sisal plates; Ebiton small, chindurucha, cooking pots slings, among others.

Since the festival was one of its unique nature, participants and invited guests had a chance of biting such Gusii traditional foodstuff like meat from chingabi, antelopes, chinsaga, spider weed milk mixed with omokora, blood, ebiu, raw intestinal meat believed to be having medicinal value when mixed with, ochuri ,bitter intestinal fluid). They were also served with ugali made from obokima bwobori, finger millet flour, porridge, made from finger millet flour erongori yobori sweet potatoes amarabwani among other foods. Gusii traditional industrial displays such as the manufacturing of korosia emeyio, traditional knives, orogena, traditional flour grinding stone and ensio, the grinder, improvised shoes made from animal skins and hides ebirato, locally

manufactured musical instruments such as obokano, rhyre, ekon drum were also featured in the festival.

Indeed, two peculiar cultural practices climaxed the display shows that were put up in the Nyaribari Chache cultural festival. These were the presence of male initiates and beer party drinking session in the festival. These events were given their traditional and natural environment. The initiation of male participants was done right in the venue and circumcision songs performed. Thereafter, initiates were housed in their chinsaga, traditional huts. Another interesting scenario was an event where abagaka, traditional Gusiimen and abang'ina women could be seen drinking traditional beer and singing traditional songs:

The major song that featured in this occasion was as follows:

Song No.37 Siberia *Ong'e* (Sip and Give Me)

<i>Siberia Ong'e obe</i>	Sip give me oh
<i>Siberia onge mosaiga</i>	Sip give me agemate
<i>Aae aae Mosaiga</i>	Aae aae my age mate
<i>Toa nonde, aye toa nonde</i>	Give not to anyone; give not
<i>Okobayabaya</i>	To any one loitering
<i>Aaa aae Mosaiga</i>	Aae aae agemate
<i>Siberia onge</i>	Sip and give me
<i>Aye siberia onge</i>	You sip and give me
<i>Bamura baito</i>	Our sons
<i>Aae aae Mosaiga</i>	Aae aae my age mate
<i>Aaa aae Mosaiga</i>	Aae aae my age mate
<i>Toa nonde, aye toa nonde</i>	Give not any one, you give not to
<i>Okobayabbaya</i>	Any one loitering
<i>Aae Aae Mosaiga.</i> ²⁸⁰	Aae Aae Mosaiga.

After the ceremony, the Chief Guest, who was honourable Simeon Nyachae, gave various awards and presents to the winners of the various categories of the cultural festival. This festival coincided with the campaign period for the 1992 general elections. Various

²⁸⁰ A song performed by Mokeira Osiemo, on 5/10/2004.

politicians, who aspired to be elected as members of parliament, had a chance to address *Wananchi* from various parts of Gusiiland. They indeed used the forum as a platform for campaign. The Nyaribari Chache Cultural Festival for this reason played a major role in the 1992 general election campaign. The Guest of Honour, other distinguished guests and participants left the venue happy well knowing that they had achieved their set goals. Since then, the festivals have always been conducted on a yearly basis.

The education institutions that took part in such festivals include Ibacho High School Gesabakwa, Nyanturago, Ichuni, Nyabururu, Kereri, Kisii, Masimba, Gesusu among others in the secondary category, St. Pauls Teachers College and Nyanchwa Teachers College. As well, numerous primary schools participated in the event.

A good fraction of the Abagusii had migrated from Gusiiland to other places in the 1990s for various reasons. These were: search for job opportunities, population pressure necessitating especially farmers to look for more land to cultivate, family or clan quarrels, spirit of adventure among other factors. These people, however far they stayed from Gusiiland, did not forget their traditional life. They gathered themselves especially during weekends when they were free from their various businesses. They could share experiences in the "foreign land". They could reflect their past through community discussions, drama music and dance.

The major areas where most Gusii people migrated to included Kericho Tea Estates which Abagusii call Amasamba, large farms Kitale, Molo, and Bahati in Nakuru, Narok and other places. Here, the Abagusii bought land and settled. They established their culture in terms of language, the style of building houses, marriage ceremonies and beer parties as was in the case of Gusiiland. The Abagusii who had gone to live and work in

Nairobi organised themselves into a cultural institution which they called “Ribina night”. This can literally be translated as rain-making night. What this meant was that the Abagusii musicians could come together to perform songs and dances of the community, eat traditional foodstuffs of the Abagusii and generally enjoy talks of the past, present and the future of Mwanyagetinge Abagusii people.

Members of parliament and other people from the community working in Nairobi managed to secure a stand in the Panafic Hotel in Nairobi to co-ordinate the affairs of “Ribina night”. The managers of the institution chose Friday night as “Ribina night”; it should be noted that this particular institution survives unto this day. The Abagusii women traditional dancers and youth groups especially from Kibera slums of Nairobi could be invited to entertain guests in the Ribina night forum. Musicians and dancers could even be invited all the way from Gusiiland to go and perform their musical works in the Ribina night Veteran musicians such as Christopher Monyoncho bwa Araka popularly known as Riyo rie basweti, a pythons' skin, of the Nyamwari original band, Arisi Omwana Osabau (now late) of Kirwanda Jazz band, John Stolla of Kegogi jazz band were among the leading musicians from the Abagusii community who geared up to perform their music in the Ribina night at the Panafic Hotel. Monyoncho, who is known for his inspirational lyrics, should be seen with his team rehearsing vigorous three or so days before the actual event. Among his popular songs included: Yobensia, Moraa and Amasamba, meaning Rift Valley large farms.

As well, those who attended the festival were treated to the taste of the king Obokano (*kamba nane*). Gusii traditional obokano players such as Onyoni Sakawa and Itungu mwwancha alongside others now known as Abana ba sungusia, beats could

entertain guests in the festival. Veteran broadcaster, Fred Obachi Machoka, who is also one of the founders and sponsor of the "Ribina night" could be in most cases the organiser and master of ceremony of the event. This event usually started at around 7.30 pm on Friday night. By this time, most of the Abagusii people living in Nairobi would have come from the various places of work and turned for the event.

This event would not only feature great traditional music but craved delicacies from the Abagusii community. This included the serving of traditional meals such as; Erongori yobori (porridge made of wimbi), Obokima bwobori (Ugali made of wimbi), Chinsaga, (spider weed vegetables), Rinagu (Blacknight shade vegetables), Amarwa (traditional beer) among other foods. These foods could be sold to the participants at very high prices since they were rare to get and prepare. For one to participate in the "Ribina night", he or she had to part with between Kshs 400 and Kshs 1500 as entrance fee. The couples and their families were free to participate. At the end of the ceremony, the master of ceremony could open the floor for people to talk freely about the Omogusii and what the future had for the Abagusii community. In such a foray, issues of development projects, education standards, preservation of Gusii culture and the way forward for the future survival of the community were discussed. Music and dance continued thereafter and people left at their pleasure. Ribina night, is a unique institution which has ensured the preservation of traditional music and dance of the Abagusii. This institution has of late influenced the emergence of other similar institutions such as Kamba night, Kalenjin night, Kikuyu night, among others.

6.6 Analysis of Selected Musicians and their Contribution to the Development of Gusii Music and Dance

In this section, short histories of the renowned Gusii musicians are given. Their musical and theatrical performances are analysed both structurally and thematically as well as their teachings. Selection of these musicians was done on the basis of their popularity and artistic contributions to Gusii music and dance. John Arisi Osababu was born in December in 1951 at Bonyakoni's Kirwanda village, Ikonge location in Nyamira District. He had his early education at Bonyakoni primary school. While in school, he realised his musical talent. Occasionally, he could pluck an Obokano (lyre) both at his grandfather's home and subsequently at school.

Arisi joined secondary school for higher education between 1965 and 1968 at Makura secondary. Between 1972 and 1974, Arisi trained as a primary school teacher. He left teaching after sometime and ventured in the world of music.

Right from school, Arisi had a talent in music. He used to play Obokano, lyre so well that he was admired by many both in school and the village. He could repeatedly sing Gusii folk songs until he mastered them. Occasionally, he could be invited to entertain guests in official forums. Upon realising that music was well paying as compared to teaching, Arisi left the teaching profession and went to Kericho tea estates to join his friend Christopher Monyoncho who had gone there to entertain town dwellers at Kericho and tea pluckers, most of whom were from the Gusii community. Monyoncho and Arisi ventured in the training and playing guitars which had been introduced by the Europeans. After some time, Arisi became an expert both as a guitarist and dramatist. He parted ways with Monyoncho and started a local band which he named "Kirwanda Jazz band". Between

1977 and 1978, the band performed so well that it managed to compose and record pieces of music which could now be played using Ekenanda, (record player). The early members of Kirwanda Jazz Band who were recruited by Arisi were, Mong'are, who played rhythm guitar, Mogaka who played a solo guitar and Ocharo who mainly specialised in playing of drum *chikonu*. Arisi was mainly a singer, a director and arranger of music but could also play the entire instrument very well.

Arisi's music was normally performed with musical instruments. The songs were repetitive with short phrases full of Gusii tunes and rhythms; whistling and humming climaxed his music. Using the knowledge gained from school and in a teacher training college, Arisi could harmonise his music. He could be invited to night clubs, market places and in special gatherings to entertain the public. His music was quite appealing. His songs dealt with a wide range of subjects including economic development, love, education, wealth and the agonies of death. Later on, Arisi developed his music to accommodate the latest electronic technology. The music could now be stored in compact discs [CDs] and could be played in national radio stations such as Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), both in Nairobi and Kisumu stations. Unfortunately, Arisi fell ill and passed away in 1998. His original band and members of the group continued with their business soon after. Although the band has been transformed, it still acknowledges Arisi's original music work. His tunes are still played by various radio stations which have emerged such as Radio Ramogi, citizen Radio, Nation FM, among others.

Christopher Monyoncho was born in 1948. He attended Kegogi School for both his basic and intermediate education. While in school, Monyoncho participated in music and drama, both in school and outside school festivals. He used to sing and recite Gusii

poems. His teachers liked him and promoted him to be a student leader. Monyoncho capitalised on this opportunity to cultivate his music talent. In school, he used to organise small choirs that entertained guests who attended school functions. Monyoncho got special award and prizes during his school life and for excelling in music, dance and drama performances.

Upon completing his education, Monyoncho ventured into the world of music. He formed his own local band, which he named Monyoncho Band, after his name. The band had limited musical instruments and more so it was confined within its village. Slowly the band gained experience and could now produce some music which pleased and entertained his fans who usually gathered at night clubs, village festivals, markets and various *barazas* organised by local chiefs (Abagambi). Monyoncho started gaining popularity in the world of popular culture. To make his band even more popular, he recruited a number of talented young men to strengthen his band. The young men include such people like; John Stolla, who was a drummer, Andrew Gitenyi, who played bass guitar, Moses Oyaró Mamba who was a soloist and Charles Omweri who was a solo guitarist. Christopher Monyoncho and his band did so well until they earned numerous local awards. Monyoncho and his group could be invited to entertain guests in village festivals and ceremonies, and even night clubs at an agreed fee. This band now came to be known as Kegogi New Jazz Band. Monyoncho started his music by singing Acapella songs that is, songs performed without using musical instruments. When he learnt how to play the various musical instruments such as the drum and guitar, he could now perform his music using these instruments. Like Arisi and other Gusii musicians, Monyoncho climaxed his music by whistling, feet thumbing and humming. His music was mainly

centred on the subject of love, acquisition of basic education, business, environmental conservation, preservation of culture and political freedom. Later on, he covered the subject of death. In this case, he incorporated traditional funeral dirges in his music. In such music, Monyoncho definitely comforted the bereaved. Some of Monyoncho's music was now recorded in music compact discs (CD s), played from Kisumu radio station for local languages and from numerous radio stations, which emerged during that period.

John Stolla was a renowned Gusii musician who was born in 1949. After attaining his basic education, he opted to venture into the world of music. Stolla was influenced by his friends such as Christopher Monyoncho, Charles Omweri, and Arisi O Sababu to venture into the world of music. He started as a dramatist with Nyamwari Band in 1975. He would be hired on contract basis to play the drum for several other bands such as; Nyamwari and Kegogi Jazz bands. He could be invited to nightclubs and other social places such as community celebrations and markets to entertain the public like his predecessors. Like other Gusii musicians, Stolla performed his music using musical instruments, which were mainly western. His music was mainly repetitive with short phrases and had one main theme to communicate. A among his first musical works was the agony the Abagusii and people from Nyanza underwent when they worked in tea estates with low pay, which could not sustain their families owing to, increased cost of living. The kind of music he performed was mainly based on development projects in Gusiiland. Stolla's music had rhythms and melodies which mainly appealed to the youth who formed the majority of the society. For instance he recorded the famous love song of “Queen na Buyaki Bwounga” (Queen and Buyaki the Daughter of Onuong’a” which appealed to the youth, who enjoyed dancing to its lyrics.

Isaac Otworu was born in the late 1940s. He attended a local primary school where he got his basic primary education before proceeding to intermediate schools in Kisii District. Otworu like many musicians was motivated to enter into the world of music by the huge proceeds other musicians were getting for pay after playing their music. He worked for various local music bands until 1975 when he started a new band in Keumbu which he called Kerage Success Jazz Band. Otworu was accompanied by such musicians as Masembe from Rajahs. Like other musicians, Otworu developed his talent while in school. Here, he took an advantage of being a student leader to organise school choirs. He participated in churches, public meetings and other social places where he led his group in performing music. He learnt the art of playing music instrument and singing from other musicians like Monyoncho and Stolla with whom he had worked. Otworu started his music career by playing instruments such as African drums and percussions before training to play solo, rhythm and bass guitars. Otworu's music was usually of short repetitive phrases sung with music instruments such as the drum, percussions, and guitar. His songs covered a wide number of topical issues including death, love, agriculture and culture. Most of his music dealt with love affairs.

Dismas Nyang'au Onsoti is the latest sensational Obokano player of the contemporary period. He was born in 1973 at Nyamataro Village, in Kisii Central District. He got his early education at Nyamataro primary school. After his primary education, he proceeded for his secondary education. While in school, Nyang'au was an outstanding performer in creative arts activities. He participated in both music and drama festivals. He specialised in the playing Obokano, which he nicknamed "*kamba nane*" eight stringed instruments.

Nyang'au started his music works while at school. His uncle who had some knowledge in the playing of musical instruments supported him. Nyang'au's musical talents were identified during the Kisii central District music festival where he scooped several awards for being the best performer especially in the playing of African musical instruments. Thereafter, he could be invited to play music in ceremonial places and chiefs *Barazas*. Using Obokano, He could attract people to come and attend to the chief's meetings. His friends Bikondo and Ensagara joined him to form Kamba nane performing troupe. He became so popular in Gusiiland and could be invited to villages and markets to entertain people. People knew him by his nickname Enyang'au Yegetonto, 'A hyena of its own time'. He could be sponsored by politicians from Gusiiland to entertain people at political meetings and campaign forums such as that of 1992. Nyang'au and his group recorded their first music using Obokano as their only instrument. Their songs gained popularity since they had the Gusii traditional rhythms and melodies which were traditional in nature. Nyang'au in his composition dealt with a wide range of subjects ranging from love, death, education, poverty, HIV AIDS, road safety and morality in the society. He became very vocal during election periods. The chief Gusii politicians such as Nyachae and Jimmy Angwenyi sponsored him to exploit his music talents. They assisted him to record his new version of music which incorporated the western musical instruments such as the piano and electronic drums with his Obokano, lyre. Unfortunately, Nyang'au passed away in February, 2008 but his music survives unto this day.

Otungu Mwancha was a renowned Gusii traditional musician. He was born during polio (Enyamoko) outbreak in Gusiiland. This period was about 1885 -1890. He was a premature child (Omorekerwa) who was reared tenderly. As a young man, Mwancha was

actively involved in community activities. Here, he had an opportunity to interact with the rest of the community members freely. He married two wives. Since he distinguished himself as a born leader, he was elevated to the status of a village elder (Omotureti). During the Second World War (War with the Germans) according to the Gusii understanding, he was conscripted to the force and camped at Kendu bay, he had only one son at that period. He could not cope with hard conditions in the camp so he had to escape at odd hours and walked all the way to his home. He is known as being one of the obokano players and an Abagusii musician of his time. He learnt to play Obokano at a tender age of eight years. He learnt his skill by imitating his father who was also a specialist in playing the instrument. He developed his talent and could entertain guests at political meetings, market places, and chief's barazas. Various researchers who were interested in Kisii culture used to contact him. He covered several subjects in his music, which ranged from the importance of preserving the traditional beliefs among the Abagusii, respect in the society, the importance of education and knowledge, public relations among other subjects. This particular musician played his music for local consumption. He never recorded his music for public consumption. However, he is remembered for his excellent skills of playing obokano, lyre.

The above selected musicians whose works have been analysed, along with many others, added value to the existing indigenous knowledge on Gusii music and dance. Their music carried educative messages ranging from the need to live in peace and harmony with each other, being development conscious, environmental conservation and local resource management, preservation of the community's indigenous values and customs and how to eradicate diseases, ignorance, poverty, famine in the society and the

role of religion in personal development among other themes .Their music also had entertainment value. After performing their domestic chores, the Abagusii could gather in public places such as markets and clubs to enjoy the good music displayed by the musicians. It was indeed a form of relaxing their minds to be ready for the next task in their various professional areas. These musicians also influenced the youth who learnt some musical skills from them and later became musicians as well. Reknown musicians such as Christopher Monyocho, John Arisi Osababu and John Stolla could be invited to schools as resource persons to share their music experiences with teachers and pupils. In this way, they contributed to the learning of indigeneous music in schools.

During political rallies, politicians could make use of musicians to attract the crowd. In this way, they (politicians) could get a forum through which they could articulate their political endeavours. At times, they could join in the dance as a way of appreciating the role that music plays in the achievement of their political ends. Some of these politicians could hire the best Gusii musicians to perform music and dance in their public rallies as a campaign tool. Generally, the Abagusii musicians have managed to preserve the Gusii culture through the recording of Gusii music which will be useful to the future generations.

6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the various socio- economic and cultural developments that occurred in the post-colonial Kenya and how they influenced the state of Gusii music and dance has been discussed. It covered the period extending from 1963 -2002. In this period, we have seen the reign of two democratic governments that saw the development of traditional music and dance among the Kenyan communities of which the Abagusii were part and

parcel were the Kenyatta era (1963-1978) and the Moi era which extended from 1978 to 2002. Further, the various institutions and individuals who contributed to the shaping of Gusii music and dance in this period have been discussed. The major institutions that have been discussed are; the Nyaribari chache cultural festivals and '*The Ribina Night*'. The individuals whose contribution to the development of Gusii music and dance and their various works have been surveyed. They include, John Arisi, Christopher Monyoncho, John Stolla, Isaac Otworu, Dismas Nyang'au and Otungu Mwanja. Post independence period witnessed emergent cultures among the Abagusii and Kenyan society in general which had far reaching effects on Gusii music and dance. The period witnessed the attainment of self-determination under the above discussed democratic governments of two visionary presidents to whom we owe virtually everything to do with provision, development and promotion of music, dance and other creative and performing arts activities. This was witnessed in schools and colleges, cultural festivals, public functions, and markets among other places. We have seen that Abagusii musicians took advantage of such developments to enrich and preserve their music and dance for future generations.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This study was an incisive and purposive historical study of the dynamism of music and dance among the Abagusii of south western Kenya. From the study, it was realized that music and dance could probably be the latest in arsenal tools of analysis which can be called upon in the study of African history, especially in parts of the continent, with no written historical records. In the past, as Merriam observes, music has been part of culture which moves through time. And therefore, through music, we can approach certain kinds of history²⁸¹. The study, in its quest to investigate the dynamism for Gusii music and dance in the colonial and Post colonial period, adopted diffusion, structural functionalism, theories of dance, musical change and syncretism theories. These theories assisted us in our conclusion that the changing nature of Gusii music and dance was mainly as a result of both internal and external interactions, especially with their neighbours and the Europeans upon colonialism. We have argued that the social changes that took place in Gusiiland during the colonial and Post colonial period, occasioned the dynamism evident in Gusii music and dance cultures. As Merriam points out, the European brought many currents which crisscrossed the musical scenes of Africans. New idioms of music and dance were introduced which increasingly gained popularity. The changing songs and dances among the Abagusii, were external indicators of the changing social institutions, and hence need to create new forms suited, in spirit and mannerisms, to new conditions that the community found

²⁸¹ Merriam ,A.P.,The Anthropology of Music (North Western University press,1964) pp.188,280,281,290,300.

themselves in. It was then found out that Gusii music and dance reflect the various changes that were taking place in the many spheres of life among the Abagusii.

The history of music and musical instruments seem to contribute to our knowledge of cultural history. Among the Abagusii, traditional songs and dances were functional. They were closely integrated in social life. They accompanied many activities such as herding cattle, harvesting, building soapstone quarry works, grinding grains and when soothing babies to sleep. Gusii women and girls mixed pleasure with work in their ebisangio, daily cooperative work groups. At tea plantations and farms, tea pickers sang to inspire themselves. Birth, naming, circumcision, marriage, and funeral ceremonies were all momentous events among the Abagusii which incorporated singing and dancing. It was found out that rituals were performed in times of stress such as prolonged drought, illness and impending disasters and certain disorders caused by certain diseases. Emergencies in the traditional life of the Abagusii such as cattle raids, crop destruction by pests or attacks by wild animals and warning for an invading enemy, were all marked with songs and dance which were functional and dynamic in nature.

Christian missionaries in Gusiiland affected Gusii music and dance greatly. For example, the western education introduced through mission schools encouraged the performance of western songs and dances in learning institutions. Early Gusii Christian converts were discouraged from performing traditional songs and dances. This was because African traditions were looked down upon by the white men as they were believed to be barbaric. Christian missionaries tried by all means to confine early converts in mission stations to prevent them from getting back into African traditional life. Various western policies and practices influenced Gusii music and dance in many ways. First, the

introduction of forced labour made the Abagusii to compose various work songs and dances. Some of these songs condemned the harsh measures imposed on them by the colonial masters. The first and second world wars, sparked by the Europeans themselves, contributed to the shaping of the Gusii music and dance in terms of content, themes, and performance. The Abagusii war participants in these wars borrowed a lot of musical techniques which improved their music and dance traditions. Women performed songs and played instruments meant for men, thus defying entrenched gender roles. After the war years, western commodities flowed into Gusii markets, including musical instruments which the Abagusii easily integrated into their music. Exotic music cultures greatly influenced the Gusii traditional music. The new art of writing music enabled leading Gusii musicians to compose master pieces and also to arrange Gusii traditional folk songs into staff and sol-fa notations. Diffusion and syncretism theories which emphasize adaptation and borrowing seem to have worked well here. After independence, Gusii music and dance received a boost when the Kenyatta government emphasized the need to preserve African traditional music and dance. Further developments came during Moi era. The introduction of the permanent presidential music commission and the strengthening of the Kenya music festival foundation enabled the Abagusii to develop their music and dance. In performing music and dance, the Abagusii used both traditional and western musical instruments.

Kasba music, a fairly recent popular creation, was a type of music meant for pleasure and sheer enjoyment on ceremonial occasions. The music was introduced to Muslim school going children and later to Gusii children. Ensemble from the Nubia neighborhood, popularly called 'Madrassati Noor', trained Gusii musicians how to

perform the music. This music tradition was performed during national music celebrations such as Jamhuri Day. The ensemble consisted of six kasba flutes and four-imported side and snare -drums played with sticks. One of the drums was large while the remaining three were relatively smaller.

Gusii contact with emerging cultures led to the assimilation of various aspects of western culture into mainstream Gusii ways of life. The introduction of new (foreign) games, and other recreational activities in schools and colleges, incorporated the use of music and dance in their programs. Popular games played included soccer, athletics, hockey, tennis, volleyball, cards, ludo, draughts, and many more. The cinema, radio and television helped to make popular and dancing moves such as break-dancing, more so among urban dwellers. Children in most rural areas, however, continued to play the traditional Music and dance as well as games in which they found satisfaction and also those recreational activities they might have been taught in school and elsewhere. The social changes taking place in this century have brought about many currents which criss- cross the musical scene and sometimes present a blurred picture. But some broad outlines appear. New idioms of music and dance are being introduced into the country, and they are increasingly gaining popularity. These contemporary idioms of music, song, dance and other forms of entertainment can be heard in schools, hotels, cinema halls, and at other public places, as well as at home on the radio and television and at social functions. In chapels and other places of worship, new religious songs, in addition to the imported western Christian songs, can be heard. Many musical groups performing a variety of popular music and employing various combinations of western musical instruments, like guitars, flutes, percussion and voice, are found all over the country.

7.2 Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, the research arrived at the following conclusions. First, Gusii music and dance was integrated in all their social events whereby there were programmes with careful regulations that governed the performances of music and dance. Secondly, music and dance among the Abagusii was functional in accompanying such activities as herding cattle, harvesting among others.

Third, colonial period and post independence years witnessed rapid changes and expansion of musical resources. The language of music and dance was indeed enriched by new conceptions brought about by new policies and practices. For example Western education introduced through missionaries encouraged the performance of Western Music and dances in African schools. The early Gusii christen converts were not allowed to perform traditional songs and dances neither were they allowed to play traditional musical instruments.

Fourth, the introduction of new art of writing music and Western musical instruments enabled Gusii musicians to compose, arrange and transcribe music in Western language. After independence, Gusii music and dance received a boost when the Kenyatta Government promoted the preservation of African traditional music and dance. Further developments were witnessed during the Moi era. This is when the permanent presidential music commission was established to practically promote African music and dance. The strengthening of Kenyan music festivals enabled the Abagusii to develop and promote their music and dance traditions. Fifth, the introduction of cinema, radio, television and imported film shows, dancing styles and other forms of entertainment in Gusiiland influenced traditional music and dance of the Abagusii.

Even though external sources are important contributors to the growth of the performing arts in the country, steps need to be taken to ensure that things of value inherited from the past are preserved and promoted. We should also ensure that the knowledge of the country's heritage is transferred to present and future generations. Serious teaching of the traditional arts in schools and colleges needs to be emphasized to ensure the continuity of traditional music and dance practices. The performing arts can only live through performances. Traditional music and dance should, therefore, be made part of any active programme designed to promote cultural life. The new music and dance traditions from Europe, America and elsewhere, which we have embraced, should be considered as additions rather than substitutes for our indigenous music and dance. Our music and dance traditions still serve very useful purposes in the ceremonies and activities of the communities which practice them.

7.3 Recommendations

What the Ministry of Education needs to do in order to encourage the performance and continuation of traditional arts and recreation is to emphasize the serious teaching of cultural values in preparatory and primary schools and in colleges and other institutions of higher learning. Steps need to be taken to ensure that things of value inherited from the past are preserved and promoted. We should also ensure that the knowledge of the country's heritage is transferred to present and future generations. Serious teaching of the traditional arts in schools and colleges needs to be emphasized to ensure the continuity of traditional music and dance practices. The performing arts can only live through performances. Traditional music and dance should, therefore, be made part of any active programmed designed to promote cultural life. The new music and dance traditions from

Europe, America and elsewhere, which we have embraced, should be considered as additions rather than substitutes for our indigenous music and dance. Our music and dance traditions still serve very useful purposes in the ceremonies and activities of the communities which practice them. Further research should be carried out on the changes that have taken place in the Gusii music and dance since 2002 to the present day.

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b) Primary Sources

i) Archival Sources

The following is a list of Kenya National Archieves' files available at the Kenya National Archieves in Nairobi. They provide vital information of the life of the Abagusii during the colonial period. They form a source of Archieval materials at the understanding of the traditional life of the Abagusii. Before independence, Gusiiland was part of the South Kavirondo District in which the report comes from.

KNA/DC/KSI/1/1 South Kavirondo District annual Reports, 1908-1912

KNA/DC/KSI/1/2	South Kavirondo District annual Reports, 1913-1923
KNA/DC/KSI/1/3	South Kavirondo District annual Reports, 1924-1932
KNA/DC/KSI/1/4	South Kavirondo District annual Reports, 1933-1939
KNA/DC/KSI/1/5	South Kavirondo District annual Reports, 1943
KNA/DC/KSI/1/6	South Kavirondo District annual Reports, 1944
KNA/DC/KSI/1/7	South Kavirondo District annual Reports, 1945
KNA/DC/KSI/1/8	South Kavirondo District annual Reports, 1946
KNA/DC/KSI/1/9	South Kavirondo District annual Reports, 1947
KNA/DC/KSI/1/10	South Kavirondo District annual Reports, 1948
KNA/DC/KSI/1/11	South Nyanza District annual Reports, 1949
KNA/DC/KSI/1/12	South Nyanza District annual Reports, 1950
KNA/DC/KSI/1/13	South Nyanza District annual Reports, 1951
KNA/DC/KSI/1/14	South Nyanza District annual Reports, 1952
KNA/DC/KSI/1/15	South Nyanza District annual Reports, 1953
KNA/DC/KSI/1/16	South Nyanza District annual Reports, 1954
KNA/DC/KSI/1/17	South Nyanza District annual Reports, 1955
KNA/DC/KSI/1/18	South Nyanza District annual Reports, 1956
KNA/DC/KSI/1/19	South Nyanza District annual Reports, 1957
KNA/DC/KSI/1/20	South Nyanza District annual Reports, 1958
KNA/DC/KSI/1/21	South Nyanza District annual Reports, 1959
KNA/DC/KSI/1/22	South Nyanza District annual Reports, 1960
KNA/DC/KSI/1/23	South Nyanza District annual Reports, 1961
KNA/DC/KSI/1/24	South Nyanza province annual Reports, 1942

KNA/DC/KSI/3/2 South Kavirondo Histories and customs of Kisii
and Luo between 1911-1924

KNA/DC/KSI/5/3 South Nyanza Gazetteer, 1943-1955

KNA/PC/NZA/3/2/2 Provincial Commissioner Nyanza, 1936-1943

KNA/PC/NZA/3/2/3 Provincial Commissioner Nyanza, 1943-1946

KNA/PC/NZA/3/2/4 Provincial Commissioner Nyanza, 1945-1952

KNA, Education Department Annual Report, Colony and Protectorate of Kenya 1945

KNA, Education Department Annual Report, Colony and Protectorate of Kenya 1947

KNA, Education Department Annual Report, Colony and Protectorate of Kenya 1949

ii) Field Interviews

The following information provides the list of informants who were interviewed during the field research. The information tabulated in terms of name, age, sex, Dates of interview and nature type of information covered by each informant.

Name	Age	Sex	Date of interview	Major area Covered
Charles Hassavana	67	M	17/8/2004	Migration
Hezekiah Monda	64	M	17/8/2004	Settlement
Franviscah Kemunto	49	F	17/8/2004	Customs
Zablon Monda	63	M	17/8/2004	Marriage
Esther Nyamburi	54	F	17/8/2004	Co-operatives Groups
Nicholas matoke	78	M	17/8/2004	Circumcision
Richard Obindi	41	M	18/8/2004	Customs
Paul Mbaka	70	M	18/8/2004	Birth rites
Nyarangi Misinga	68	M	20/8/2004	Food storage
Denis oira	53	M	21/8/2004	Creative arts
Marry ratemo	83	F	23/8/2004	Recreation
Agens Nyabwengi	60	F	26/8/2004	Sagality and Philosophy
Rogita Osieno	40	M	29/8/2004	Songs
Agnes Otwiri	60	F	30/8/2004	Dances
Silvanus Kebu	58	M	3/8/2004	Peer party sessions
Obiri Oigoro	66	M	4/9/2004	Proverbs

Keremensia Moraa	90	M	10/9/2004	Riddles
Gesare Omweri	62	F	11/9/2004	Oral literature
Pacifica Mokeira	64	F	11/9/2004	Creative arts
Leah Mongina	64	F	27/9/2004	Colonialism
Sibiah kwamboka	66	F	5/10/2004	Economic activities
Johnson Mogire	78	M	19/10/2004	General history
Charles Mogaka	45	M	20/10/2004	Traditional law
Samwel Nyamwaka	73	M	16/11/2004	Festivities
Naftal Ongaga	45	M	3/12/2004	Ethnic interations
Paul Gori Nyakoe	73	M	16/12/2004	Proverbs
Yohana Maeba Nyamwaka	45	M	18/12/2004	Traditional games
Wilson Kenyenga	65	M	23/12/2004	History
Wilfred Magato	31	M	24/22/2004	Burial rites
George Bosire	53	M	4/2/2005	Religious arts
Charles Nyabayo	33	M	4/4/2005	Sacrifices
Nyangweso Omboro	76	M	2/7/2004	Ancestral spirits
Mokeira Nyakerandi	66	F	2/7/2004	Cultural festivals
Simion Ongo	61	M	6/7/2004	Rain making Ceremonies
Annah Moraa Obiri	60	F	8/7/2004	Hunting
Yuvinalis Gichaba	77	M	9/7/2004	Cattle herding
Tabitha Nchoro	68	F	10/7/2004	General history
Chweya Nyakerandi	77	M	13/7/2004	Colonialisms
Paul Oboi Kibindi	74	M	21/7/2004	Ethnic interactions
Hezron Obiri	65	M	27/7/2004	General history
John Ogero	64	M	27/7/2004	War periods
Otwori Monyimbo Obiri	78	M	28/7/2004	Post war periods
Bathsebah Mateva	76	F	21/8/2004	Independent Gusii
Agnes Motuka	60	F	3/8/2004	Indigenous knowledge
Christopher Abincha	48	M	3/8/2004	Circumcision
Machanda Oigoro	78	M	3/8/2004	Religion
Peter Matoke	56	M	4/8/2004	Cultural practices
Agnes Nyasani	61	F	6/8/2004	Missionary work
Birongo Obondi	68	M	6/8/2004	Music education
Daniel Mang'wani	59	M	8/8/2004	Western influence
Hellen Nyamoita	66	F	8/8/2004	Dynamisms of music and dance
Sarah Monchari	46	F	9/8/2004	Folksongs
Augustino Mong'are	59	M	9/8/2004	Poetry
Pacificah Tai	54	F	9/8/2004	Oral literature
Jared Osiemo	53	M	10/8/2004	Sagality
Teresa Nyabate	70	F	10/8/2004	Material culture
Esther Savange	62	F	11/8/2004	General history

Nyarinda Machanda	68	F	11/8/2004	Contemporary Gusii
Otwori Engoncho	63	M	12/8/2004	Songs and dances
James Obwocha	65	M	16/8/2004	Western influence
Bedictor Obae	60	M	16/8/2004	Circumcision rites

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

THE POPULAR GUSII MUSICIANS

a) **Ababugia obokano** (Lyrists)

Gori Maemba

Basweti Aruba

Ogigi Ombisi

Mochama Omwerorombi

John Boruna

Ontama Onchuru

Otungu Mwancha

b) **Ababugia chikonu** (Drumists)

Moke Ondieki

Sarange Omare

Otusi Mageto

Makairo Morimbori

Moraa Momanyi

c) **Abatengi** (Dancers)

Nyamwange Orwenyo

Nyatichi Aruba

Moke Ondieki

Makairo Morimbori

Nyamwaka Mogere

d) **Abagugia egita** (Guitarists)

Kirera Movimbori

Momanyi Nyaundi

Samson Nyamwaka

Yusuf Gwoki

e) **Abateri Abaya** (Leading musicians)

John Arisi Osababu

Christopher Monyoncho

Moses Oyaro Memba

Osiemo Bwa Ayunga

John Stolla

John Omweri

Charles Omare

John Nyagwoka

Justus Ongeru

Andrew Gitenyi

Dismas Nyang'au

John Mesa

f) **Abariki ba Amatera** (Music Arrangers)

Naffali Ongaga

Moranga Simba

Evans Nyamwari

g) **Chibandi**, (Band Groups)

Kegogi Jazz band

Kirwand Junior Band

Ekegogi Songa

Machoge Jazz band

Banana Sungusia Band

Masimba Jazz band

Keroka New Jazz

Kitutu Jazz band

Kerage success

Nyamwari Jazz band

Nyamecheo Music makers

Mache-Achumbi band singers.

APPENDIX II

THE GUSII SONGS AND DANCES EXPRESSIONS

a) Dances

Ribina - a dance performed by the Abagusii women to welcome rains.

Okoiyeria amareko - a dance which involved the shaking of shoulders.

Entaburuta – a move forward and backward dance

Entabanana – a dance that involves jumping, shaking as dancing.

b) Songs

Esimbore – A circumcision song performed after the exercise.

Enyangweso – A song introduced in Gusiiland in 1930s.

Egoro/esita – these are war songs performed after a successful defeat of the enemy.

Erieri/eburu – these are songs performed in remembrance of the departed relative.

Emeino - Set of poems sung in narrative style (in free rhythm) by Gusiimen at
beer drinking parties at home after organised communal labour.

Esubo/enyabububu – these songs are sung by circumcised boys and their teachers when
their wounds are healed and they are about to be released from the
cottages to join the community.

Chingero – these were songs performed when performing tasks such as grinding grains
and building.

c) Musical Instruments

Chindege – legs or ankle bells used as musical instruments.

Egetureri – This is an instrument made of a horn of wild animal and was also used as
signal during the war to alert the warriors.

Ekororia - This was a flute used as a wind instrument.

APPENDIX III
SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. General information

Names.....Sex.....Age.....

Status in the society

Clan.....Date of interview.....

Place of interview.....Address.....

EARLY HISTORY OF THE ABAGUSII

2. Who were the original inhabitants of present day Gusiiland?
3. From your knowledge of the Abagusii's past comment on the origin, migration and the settlement of the present day Gusiiland.
4. How did the Abagusii people relate socially, politically and economically with the following communities?
 - (I) The Luo
 - (ii) The Nandi
 - (iii) The Maasai
 - (iv) The Kipsigis
 - (v) The Kuria
5. Describe the
 - (a) Social
 - (b) Political and
 - (c) Economic organisation of the Abagusii.
6. Describe the cultural values that the Abagusii cherished.

7. How did the song and dance among the Abagusii evolve prior to the coming of the Europeans?
8. Do you enjoy songs and dances? If yes,
9. Name the kinds of songs and dances, which are your favourite.
10. Briefly comment on the performance of songs and dances among the Abagusii in the pre-colonial period.
11. What have I not asked you on pre-colonial Abagusii songs and dances that you think I should know?

THE COMING OF THE EUROPEANS

12. What was the nature of songs and dances among the Abagusii at the time of contact with the Europeans?
13. Comment briefly on the period of collaboration and resistance and the nature of songs and dances that the Abagusii had.
14. Name the type of musical instruments that prevailed in Gusiiland during the colonial era.
15. What else have I forgotten concerning the coming of the European in Gusiiland you would wish to comment on?

DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

16. Were the Abagusii people involved in the war with the Germany?
17. What was the position of song and dance in Gusiiland during the war with the Germans?

18. Describe the songs that were sung during the war with the Germans. Give the reasons, which brought about these songs.
19. Name the known music composers during the war with the Germans.
20. Describe the type of dances that the Abagusii had during the war with Germans.
21. Can you comment generally on the importance of songs and dances in the war?

DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

22. Comment briefly on the Abagusii music and dance during the war with the Italians.
23. What dances did the Abagusii have during the war with the Italians? Why did they perform these dances?
24. Describe the themes of the songs that were sung during the war with the Italians. Who composed these?
25. What have I forgotten that you can remind me concerning the war with the Italians?

POST WAR PERIOD

26. Describe the nature of the Abagusii songs and dances during the post-war period.
27. Name the areas in Gusiiland that were rooted in traditional songs and dances in the post-war period. Give reasons why this was so.
28. In which areas of the Gusiiland did western songs and dance concentrate? Why is this so?
29. Name the known Gusii musicians in Gusiiland during the post-war period.
30. What were the popular themes contained in the songs and dances during this period? Who composed the songs?

31. Please, what I have not asked you that you feel is relevant to what we have just discussed?

POST INDEPENDENCE

32. What was the nature of the Abagusii songs and dances after independence?
33. How did the Abagusii compose, arrange and perform songs and dances after independence?
34. What is the role of traditional folksongs and dances in the cultural history of the Abagusii today?
35. Comment on the place of songs and dances among the Abagusii of today.
36. Which categories of songs and dances do you enjoy? Please briefly comment on this and whatever else I have not asked you and you consider relevant to what we have been talking about.

APPENDIX IV

THE ABAGUSII LUNAR CALENDAR AND ITS INFLUENCE IN MUSIC AND DANCE

1. *Omogumo Obarema*, January, this was usually the period of land tilling. There were special songs and dances for filtering the land.
2. *Egatamo*, February, around this time of the year, people had just cultivated and planted and work songs and dances featured.
3. *Eng'atiato*, March, when rain was expected and women performed ribina songs and dances to ask God to bring rain soon. God would soon answer their prayers. Sacrifices were offered to please God and the ancestral spirits.
4. *Rigwata Nyambura Nyinge*, April, this was a period when rain fell in plenty. Abagusii men and women performed various songs and dances to thank God for responding to their call for rainfall. A variety of musical instruments were used to accompany the songs.
5. *Amaumuntia*, May, this was a period when rainfall subsided. The abagusii engaged in such activities as weeding, herding and domestic duties. Music and dances played a important role.
6. *Ebwagi*, June, Around this time of the month, the dry spell set in and food was scarce, so the Abagusii could go to hunt in the forests where they hunted for game to supplement the little food available. Cattle rustlers from aggressive neighboring communities such as the Maasai, the Kuria, and the Kipsigis could attack Gusiiland and and drive away with large flocks of cattle. The Gusii would then

launch a bid to recover the stolen animals, and if successful they would return singing songs of victory.

7. *Enkoromomi*, July, this was the period when the crops were ready for harvest. Work songs became quite relevant here.
8. *Rieta*, August, this was the period of harvest and people could gather together to thank God for providing good harvest. During such periods, sacrifices and thanksgiving ceremonies were organized. Various praise songs and dances were performed.
9. *Tureti Akebaki*, September. This was another dry spell that necessitated the performance of ribina dances were performed again to request God for rain.
10. *Esagati*, October, there were no major activities that accompanied this month.
11. *Egesunte gia Chache*, November, this was the month when boys and girls were preparing for circumcision ceremonies. Gusii men and women could gather together drink beer and eat food in preparation for the initiation of their sons and daughters. Music and dances played a major role here.
12. *Egesunte Kia Masaba*, December. This was the time for actual initiation ceremonies. It should be noted that circumcision songs were not performed any other period a other than this period the reason being the songs contained vulgar language which could only be allowed at the appointed time only.

APPENDIX V

POPULAR GUSII RIDDLES AND PROVERBS

The following are some of the popular Gusii riddles and proverbs which were normally used by the elderly men and women to teach young people among the Gusii community on how to live and relate well with other community members and the larger society.

a) Riddles

Riddles were normally administered to test the intelligence level of the listeners

1. *Tata ogure roche negoti*

My father has fallen in the river with a coat

Answer: *Ritoke* (banana)

2. *Ninda aa ninda aaria*

I am here and there

Answer: *Ebirengererio* (thoughts)

3. *Enyomba yane nyagesigisa kemo*

My house has one post

Answer: *oboba* (mushrooms)

4. *Ndigererie nkotebie*

Look at me I tell you

Answer: *egetabu* (a book)

5. *Sabiri tirimboka omotienyi nomorabu*

Sabiri roll down there is moonlight

Answer: *Obokima na mabere* (ugali and milk)

6. *Enyomba yane tebwati morangwa*

My house is without a door

Answer: *Rigena rienkoko* (an egg)

7. *Ase nkoriera nao nkosokeria*

Where I feed from is where I came out

Answer: *Ebara* (a road)

8. *Nyamagoro matambe otachire mogondo kwa bande*

The long legged personallity has stepped in somebody's *shamba*

Answer: *embura* (rain)

9. *Tata omoke oita tata omonene*

My young father beats my elderly father

Answer: *enchoke* (a bee)

10. *Kaa gento ki kegotara botuko na mogaso?*

What is this thing that walks at night and day?

Answer: *Amache aroche* (water in the river)

11. *Igora nkotebie*

Open I tell you

Answer: *eredio* (a radio)

12. *Nchabe nchabe nchigoteba*

Beat beat me so that I can go and report

Answer: *Rirube* (a letter)

13. *Nimbwate egari yane enke ekobogoria abanto abange*

I have a small vehicle which carries many people

Answer: *Enyongo yekibiriti* (a match box)

b) Proverbs

1. *Sese mbe teri bogeni*

A bad dog has no bounds.

This means that a person of bad character can not behave well even in a foreign land or before distinguished guests.

2. *Ensinyo egokwanwa bobo mbamura etabwati*

A region which is talked ill of does not have strong men

A community which is disorganised implies that there are no wise men or good leaders

3. *Ekiao mbonkunyunkunyu ekiabande songora igoti*

You keep yours selfishly but you stretch your neck for what others have

There are some people who are fond of begging but when they are asked to give out what they have they are willing to donate. Such people are selfish.

4. *Nguba emo tiyana kaira ngombe roche*

One shield can not take cows to the river.

This proverb is equivalent to a *Kiswahili* proverb which states that '*kidole kimoja hakivunji chawa*'. The implication here is that one person can not manage to do many things alone. There is need for co-operation in order to succeed in our day today activities.

5. *Bwanchi mbwa mweri ko mioyo etamanyaini*

Love may be expressed outwardly even when it does not originate in the heart

This proverb implies that not all people who pretend to be our friends can be our friends. Some people may want to befriend others for material gain. When such materials are not constantly provided, such love ceases to be.

6. *Tosanerea mokamomura otaramorora*

You should not admire your son's wife before seeing her.

This implies that people should not celebrate over empty promises because such promises are fulfilled. The English equivalent of such proverb is, "do not count chicks before they hatch".

7. *Eyabande mbotuko ekoosia*

Somebody sneezes at night.

This proverb informs people that they should not fully depend on borrowed items. Owners of such items can come any time even at odd hours to demand them.

8. *Bororo mbwa monyene ko eamate echana bosaigo*

Bitterness is for the bereaved family neighbours only come in to give comfort to the affected family. Here people are encouraged to take their own tasks seriously.

9. *Kina obirore tokaga mbinde*

Grow and see them for you do not think they are others

This is equivalent to (experience is the best teacher). Community members are encouraged here to learn through experience. As one interacts with the environment and other people, he or she learns a lot which enables him or her to face the day today challenges.

10. *Eki ogosimeka naki okegesa*

What you plant is what you harvest

Whatever one does will be reflected by the outcome of such course of action

11. A matuko yomoibi nemerengo ene

The days for a thief are forty

The implication here is that when one does a wrong deed and assumes that nobody knows there will reach a time when such a person will be caught red handed and firm legal action will be taken against such a person.

12. Enyoba nero emenyete

A coward lives longer

This proverb suggests that a person who does not exalts himself or herself is respected and lives longer. One who is trouble some and nuisance to the community may no live long enough on earth. People should humble themselves in whatever they engage in.

13. Eyekwana nero ekoegwa emori

The one that moos is given a calf.

The meaning here is that the one asks for his or her needs will always received .It can be favorable compare with that verse in the Bible which states that the one who asks will always receive.

14. Ekiao nakio kegokoria

Yours is the one that eats you

The *Kiswahili* equivalent of this proverb is that the “*Kikulacho ki nguoni mwako*” Implying that the one who betrays you is your close friend .People are encouraged not to put their trust on friends fully. Friend can always turn against you any time if they wish to do so.

15. Gambera omuya togambera omobe

You can rectify a fair person but not a very bad person.

This implies that there are people of bad behaviour who can not be rectified.

Rectifying the mistakes done by such people may be a waste of time.

APPENDIX VI

PLATES



PLATE 1: A typical Gusii Traditional Homestead. Photo by Vincent Arama



PLATE 2: Keumbu Traditional Dancers Performing Entaburata Gusii Dance. Photo by Sammy Matara



PLATE 3: Rigoma Women Group Performing a Gusii Sacred Folk Song.
Photo by Nyakoe Tencha

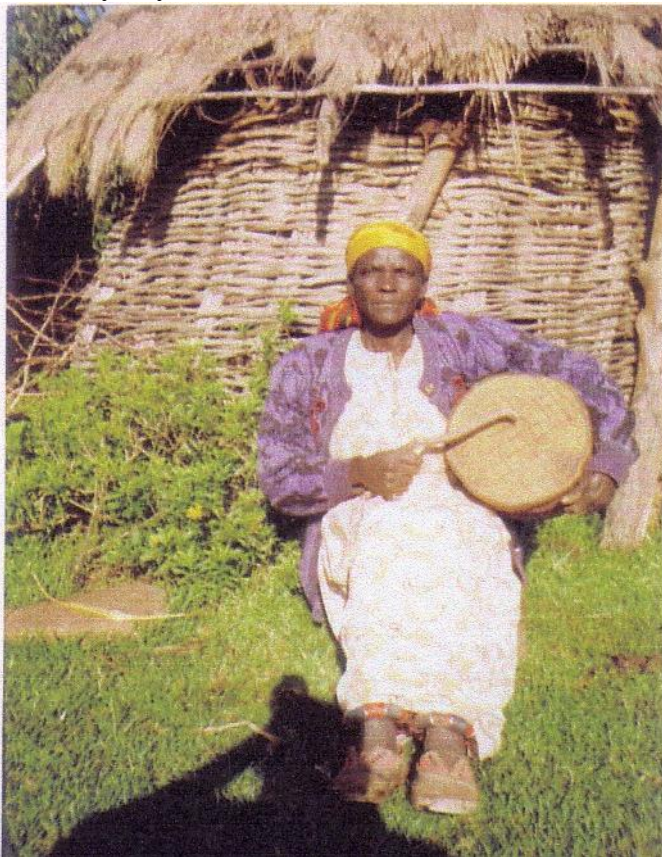


PLATE 4: Sarange Nyamoita Wearing Ebitinge Leg Rings, plays a Drum in her Traditional Home. Photo by Evans O.Nyamwaka.

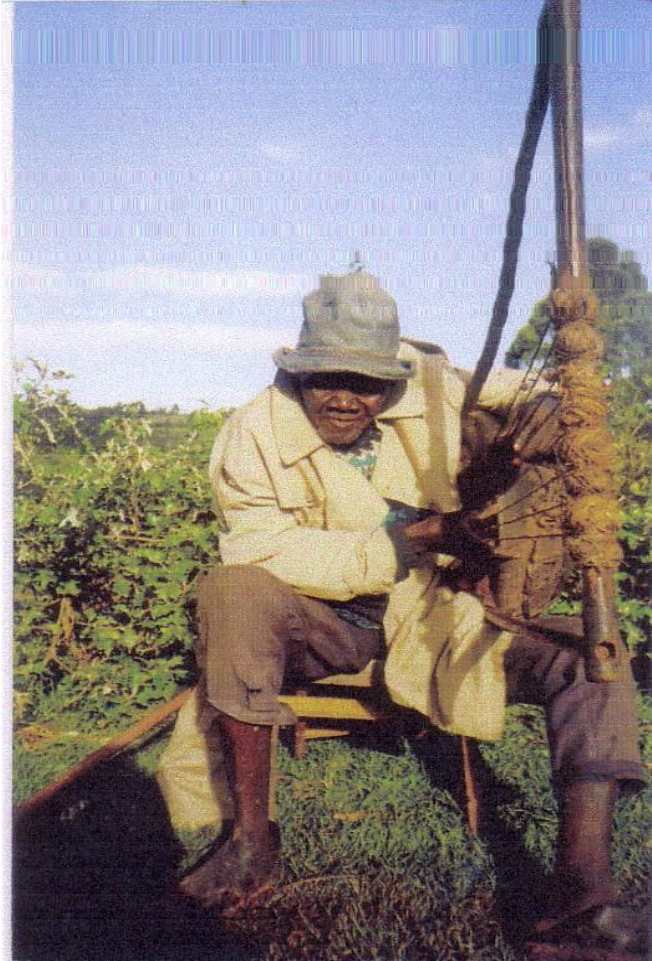


PLATE 5: Gori Maemba, a renown Gusii Obokano Player demonstrates the uniqueness of playing the instrument. Photo by Evans O.Nyamwaka



PLATE 6: Gusii Women, in their Traditional Regalia Chingobo, Animal Skins, perform Ribina Dance. Photo by Sammy Matara.

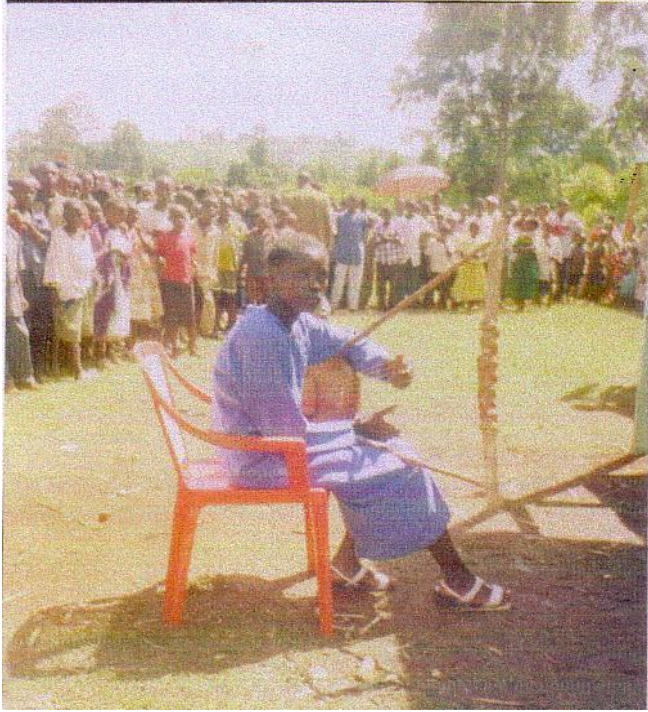


PLATE 7: Music and Gender: A Young Lady Playing Obokano to entertain Guests at Nyaribari Chache Cultural Festival. Wome now can play the instrument unlike the past. Photo by Evans O.Nyamwaka

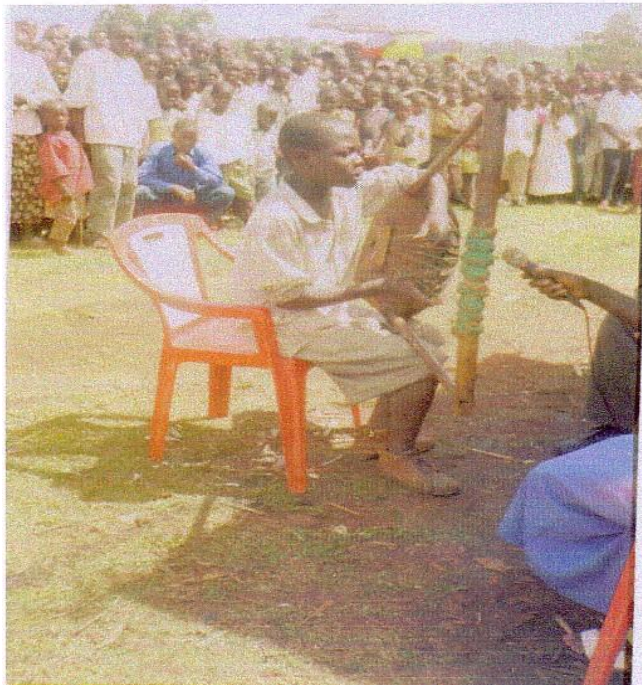


PLATE 8: Like father like son. A young boy of a talented renown Gusi Lyrist, playing Obokano at Nyaribari Gusi Folk Music Cultural Show in Gusiiland, while other children watch these wonderful display. Photo by Sammy Matara.

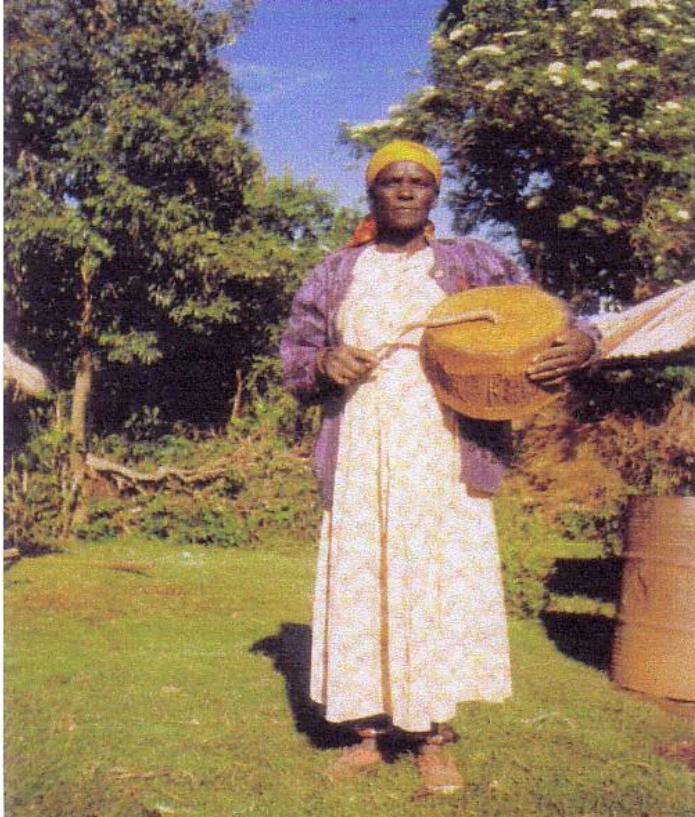


PLATE 9: Sarange Nyamoita playing a Drum to summon Women to a meeting. The drum had other functions besides its role in music. Photo by Sammy Matara.



PLATE 10: Nyamasibi Christian Singers, rehearsing for a performance of Church Music in their Local Church. Photo by Evans O.Nyamwaka



PLATE 11: Nyanturago Youth Choir, Tuning Africa-Western Musical Instruments, in readiness for a cultural music competition in Gusiiland. Photo by Nyakoe Tencha.

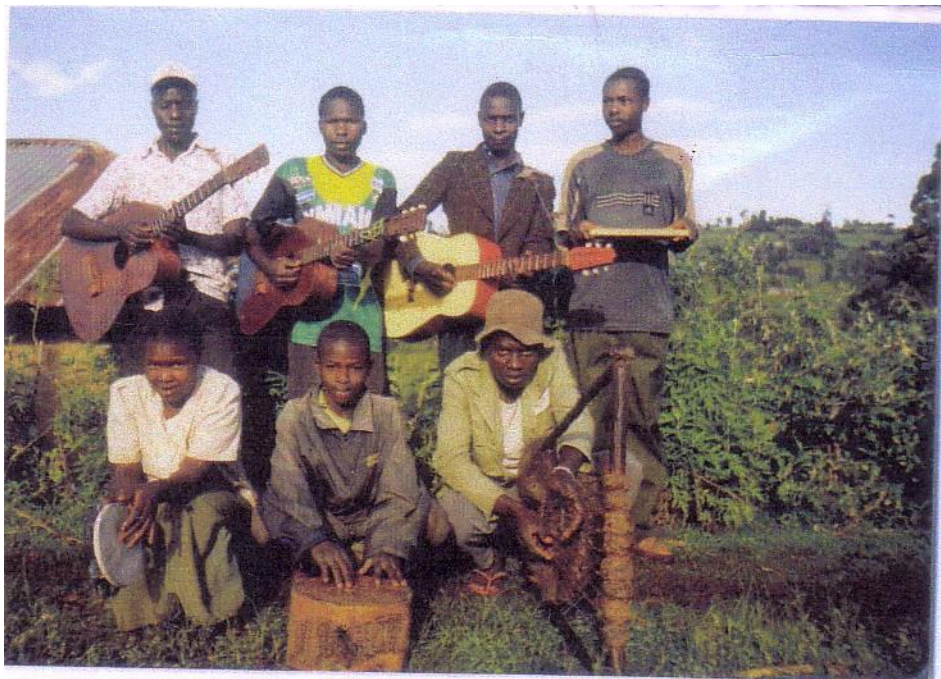


PLATE 12: Nyanturago Youth Choir performing Gusii Music to Educate the Youth on the Dangers of Irresponsible Sex Behaviour and how to protect themselves Against HIV/AIDS pandemic. Photo by Sammy Matara.



PLATE 13: Polycap Omanga, one of the Research Assistants displaying some of the African-Western Instruments during the Field Research. Photo by Sammy Matara.

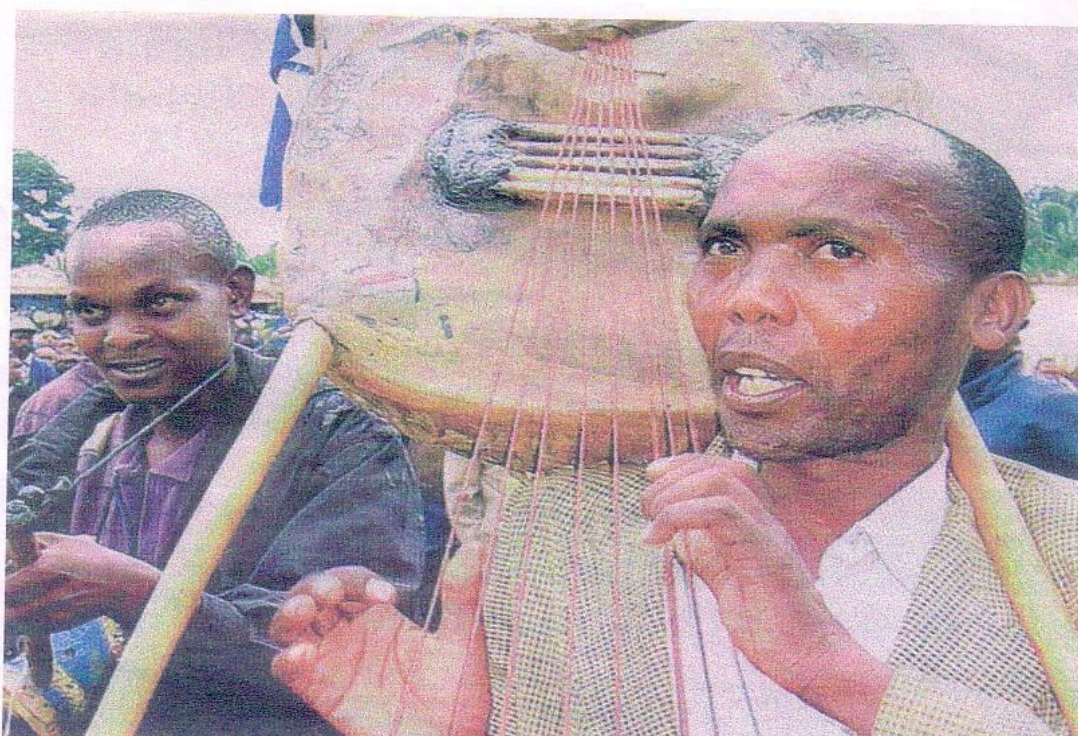


PLATE 14: Reknown Abagusii Traditional Dancers Entertaining the Public at a Political Rally organized by Honorable Simeon Nyachae, a local leader in his Nyaribari Chache. Photo by Peter Angwenyi.