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Music Performance Aesthetics in

Historical and Contemporary

Traditions: The Bukusu of

Western Kenya.

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in Historical and Contemporary Traditions

The Bukusu of Western Kenya

Contents

Preface

Aesthetics remains a largely under-researched area in African musicology. Whereas few scholars in the West and from Southern African nations have delved into the subject, there is still a considerable lack of published knowledge on aesthetics of African music performance. Drewal (1991:2) confirms this fact when he points out that the embodied practices and actions of performers as human agents situated in time and place in Africa – both constituting and as constituents of the ongoing social process – remain largely under-researched.

In the same breath, Agawu (2004) and Bohannan (1966) acknowledge that students of Western music aesthetics have at their disposal a large body of writings by philosophers and musicologists from which they can learn. In contrast, a similar comparable body of philosophical, critical or documentary work is not yet available to students of African music aesthetics.

Inspired by this deficiency and the need to contribute to this subject, the author carried out a research to find out what entails aesthetics of music performance in the Bukusu community of Western Kenya. The premise of the research was that the changing contexts within which Bukusu music is performed impacts on the resultant aesthetics. These resultant aesthetics are the ones that give the music meaning.

The aim of the study was also to find out how aesthetics are manifested in historical as well as contemporary contexts. Historical contexts are the ones where the music was meant to be performed, while contemporary contexts are the alternatives to the initial intent, where performance has become a norm. Consequently, the inquiry took a comparative approach due to the changing social circumstances.

The research therefore focussed on a community that still exhibits performance of music in historical and contemporary contexts. Unlike some Kenyan communities, the Bukusu still hold onto varied traditional practices in which music plays a fundamental role. Besides the traditional contexts, the same music is also performed in alternative contexts. Bukusu music, therefore, provided a befitting field for a comparative research of this nature.

Whereas the Bukusu have a fair sense of continuity in their cultural practices, there is no assurance about how long such practices can be sustained. Notably, most of the traditional knowledge is oral and, therefore, at the risk of being eroded due to the dynamics of the current society. Such factors motivated the need to research and archive knowledge on

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Bukusu music because it is an intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of the community. Without documenting, the knowledge about music faces erosion.

Moreover, there is need for a better re-presentation of Bukusu music, given that its aesthetics and knowledge systems are necessary for informing, educating and enriching the society. Arguably, when researching on African communities, their oral nature is subject to differing approaches, perceptions and interpretations. This happens especially in instances where there is no consistency between the transmitter and recipients of information.

Through a systematic approach, the research attempted to piece together this valuable knowledge for the benefit of present and future generations. Nzewi & Omollo-Ongati (2014:57) affirm the foregoing position to the effect that indigenous intellectual "fountains" remain valid in the contemporary context and are crucial for re-strengthening humanity's conscience as well as consciousness in the global milieu.

MAP OF BUNGOMA COUNTY

Introduction

Music performance is an integral part of the day-to-day life experiences of most people in African societies. In general, music performance as a composite art is used to commemorate important events in a people's social facets – from birth to death. Since music is very important in the life of an African, it becomes a way of life of all the people. As a day-to-day life experience, the aesthetic embodiment of music is critical to its functional fulfilment and meaning in any given society. These aesthetics include dance, visual aids, singing, costumes, body decor and painting, panegyrics, and the inherent indigenous knowledge systems (IKS)

Over time, new approaches to music making have come up because the music is performed in alternative contexts. These alternative contexts include competitive and cultural music festivals, cultural exhibitions, demonstrations (political), cultural revival centres and enterprise development environments. The new contexts continue to host music performances that use expressions derived from diverse cultural systems not akin to African cultures.

Therefore, a transformational process is inevitable given that the music is being performed in contexts that are outside the initial context-specific or utilitarian intention and philosophy of the music. This transformational process presents an intriguing phenomenon because it is not clear to what extent aesthetics of music performance (AMP) and the inherent indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are reproduced, misrepresented or worse still presented as neo-indigenous creative products. The music culture of the Bukusu has not been spared from this phenomenon.

In light of this intriguing music phenomenon among the Bukusu, I carried out a research based on the premise that a contextual change in music performance impacts on the content, performance, practice and style. In addition, it affects the resultant aesthetic appeal of a music performance and the inherent IKS. It follows, therefore, that this impact is likely to dictate a new musical meaning and its importance to the audience.

Bukusu music is predominantly ritual-based and is intertwined with Bukusu socio-cultural fabric. This book discusses the impact of performing the music in alternative contexts. It

brings out the remarkable differences between performance in the new contexts and the philosophy of Bukusu cultural expressions.

The aim of the research was to find out how aesthetics of Bukusu music performance are manifested in varied contexts. The research method used was the ethnographic approach, which focuses on interactive strategies in human life and analytical descriptions of social scenes and practices, guided by cultural theories. Performance of music among the Bukusu can be viewed as a strategy in human life, worth qualitative inquiry.

An interesting aspect of African life strategies is its oral nature, which necessitated a qualitative approach. This design was, therefore, appropriate because of the fact that sizeable data sought focused on the behaviour of the Bukusu in relation to music performance. In this case, manifestation of aesthetics of Bukusu music could only be observed through its performance or talking to the people.

Consequently, the researcher interacted with ordinary members of the Bukusu community, musicians, opinion leaders, resource persons and other interested parties. Besides, the researcher was also involved in the music making process as a means of understanding the aspects of performance as opposed to relying solely on respondents. Such corroboration ensured better understanding, freer music making and volunteering of information by the respondents.

The fieldwork was largely carried out in Bungoma County (Appendix I), where the Bukusu people are the predominant inhabitants. Given the fact that the Bukusu are mainly found in Bungoma County, the location was chosen so as to engage most of their music makers, and resource persons who have a proper understanding of the Bukusu culture and music. For a fair representative sample, I visited all the six sub-counties where the research was carried out in Bungoma County, namely; Bungoma North, Bungoma West, Bungoma East, Bungoma South, Kimilili and Mt. Elgon.

In Bungoma County, I also interacted with the locals in order to understand the Bukusu community. Of particular interest were their history and culture, musical practice and what entailed aesthetics of music performance in the traditional contexts. In instances where there were no on-going rituals in which the music was performed, I requested the informants to demonstrate how the rituals were performed. After carrying out research in the traditional contexts, I then moved to the relocated contexts, mainly in urban areas within Bungoma County. These included restaurants where bands play, social gatherings and political

functions. Still in Bungoma, churches were the only cultural revival sites that I visited in order to determine how Bukusu music was practiced.

Given that a sizeable population of the Bukusu are also found in Bungoma's neighbouring counties such as Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu and Kakamega, I also interviewed people in these neighbouring counties. For example, while visiting Ndalu Village (Bungoma North), I interviewed musicians from neighbouring Likuyani Village in Kakamega County, and some from Kitale (in Trans Nzoia County). They were all treated as respondents from Bungoma, given the slim border-proximity between the counties and the fact that they practice Bukusu music.

The research then explored contemporary contexts outside Bungoma County. Notably, the cosmopolitan city of Nairobi hosts many cultural festivals, exhibitions and cultural nights where music is one of the main arts presented. This is a significant location that is outside the main one (Bungoma County) in terms of cultural exhibitions and enterprise development centres. I attended various functions where Bukusu music was being performed, such as weddings and cultural nights. Of particular interest were *mulembe* nights held at The Carnivore Restaurant in Nairobi, with the aim of showcasing Luhya (and by extension Bukusu) music.

The Bomas of Kenya in Nairobi, a cultural revival site, which hosts cultural dancers, was also visited. The *Kamabeka* dance of the Bukusu is one of the many Kenyan dances that are performed there. I engaged the dancers in order to understand the different aspects of performance practice that they exhibited at the Bomas of Kenya.

Nairobi is also known for high-end hotels and tourist attraction sites where traditional Kenyan music is performed as a form of entertainment. I visited Samba Restaurant located along Moi Avenue. This is one of the favoured centres where Luhya and Luo music is performed. Bukusu musicians perform there every Wednesday night.

Additionally, I visited Lwanya Girls Secondary School in Busia County and Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) in Kakamega County. These two venues were hosting the Western Regional Music Festival and the National Kenya Music Festival (KMF), respectively. The music performance at these two venues provided a befitting experience with regard to music competitions, as an alternative context. This was important because this music festival is known to be one of the largest in the world. Some entrants

performed Bukusu music. This provided a unique opportunity for me to experience a new and creative context of Bukusu music performance. In terms of participation, KMF brings together performers from as young as three (3) years in pre-school, to university students, lecturers and teachers' singing clubs.

This book is divided into three parts;

Part 1, Historical Illuminations, discusses the foundation of aesthetics, contexts and change. The purpose is to provide a clear understanding of the terms and concepts because these are the basis on which the research was carried out. Additionally, it highlights the historical, social, economic and cultural background of the Bukusu community so that the reader can relate the socio-economic context to their music making.

Part II, Musical Practice and Aesthetics, examines how aesthetics of music performance are manifested in both historical and contemporary contexts and the resultant aesthetics. The differences are a well brought out without making comparisons so that the reader can understand.

Part III Novelties, discusses the new artistic and aesthetic principles, as well as how Bukusu music continues to play a consistent role in creating new meaning in the wake of changing social milieu.

In terms of presentation, this book attributes some sentiments to individual respondents. This does not mean that they are views on only one person. Incorporating the voice of some respondents is a strategy to qualify the source of information. In essence, the views were supported by a majority of the respondents through consensus, but voiced through one of them.

This book also has pictures, images, recordings (both audio and visual), and transcriptions of works from a selected bibliography. These illustrations validate and support the arguments. The supporting material was incorporated with permission from the concerned respondents. This and any other ethical considerations were made with a keen adherence to several prejudices such as culture, gender and age. The purpose was to ensure fairness and due respect to the concerned parties.

The use of illustrations is guided by the assertion by Hamid (2010) and Katyl (2011) that ethics are similar to accepted wisdom of privacy and confidentiality, which are culture specific. Different cultures, therefore, have divergent views on the separation between privacy and confidentiality. It follows then that the relationship between an individual and others is also a culturally defined principle, something that this book respects in totality.

In this book, the terms Bukusu and Babukusu have extensively been used. The term Bukusu is used to refer to the community and culture (Bukusu community and Bukusu culture). On the other hand, the term Babukusu is used to refer to the people (Bukusu people). To avoid monotony, especially in a given paragraph, there are instances where the terms 'Babukusu' and 'Bukusu people' have been used interchangeably. Both terms have the same meaning.

While this work is mainly written in English, it also incorporates sizeable Bukusu terminologies. It is important that Bukusu words, which were learnt during the research for the book, be retained in their original form for posterity. Of importance, I found numerous Bukusu terms that are used to refer to musical jargon, objects, artefacts and contexts that entail performance. These terms have been clearly explained in the context in which they are used.

Notably, Bukusu words are used both literally and contextually. One word may thus have diverse meanings depending on the situations or context. The meaning of Bukusu words used in this book should, therefore, be interpreted based on the context in which they were used. These contexts here refer to the occasions, rituals or ceremonies where the music was performed. For the sake of clarity, all proper nouns start with uppercase letters, while verbs start with lowercase letters.

The appendices include a comprehensive glossary of all the Bukusu words that are used in the book. An English translation is also provided to aid the reader in understanding their meanings. Some of the translations were done by the researcher who understands the Bukusu language, and also consulted respondents who helped with clarification.

Part I

Historical Illuminations

1

Music Aesthetics, Performance Contexts and Change

The Aesthetics of Bukusu music have, like in many other non-Western cultures, been interchangeably referred to by scholars as comparative, ethno-cultural, intercultural and lately trans-cultural aesthetics (Elliot 1975, Tanchio 2014). Originating from a Greek word *aisthetikos,* whether in reference to art, music or whatever discipline, *aesthetics* is a term that has been defined and applied in many ways. The addition of the prefixes "ethno", "intercultural", "comparative" and "trans" to the term *aesthetics* has largely been necessitated by the need to achieve its better understanding with regard to the uniqueness of the diverse musical cultures of the world, and as a means of unravelling its many and challenging definitions. In many instances, however, the tendency to refer to Western (European) concepts has never evaded research in the aesthetics of other cultures, a situation that perhaps points to its initial definition as comparative aesthetics.

This comparative definition is true for Ozumba (2007) who defines aesthetics from a philosophical stand-point as the perception of reality, a universal concept that is culturally and ideologically partitioned. In essence, Ozumba confirms that whereas it is a phenomenon that exists globally, it does not have generic approaches across all cultures. Cultural diversity is responsible for differences in the way people perceive reality hence, the need for uniqueness in the way individual entities regard their aesthetics.

As discernment of realism, aesthetics of music may be regarded as a way of perceiving, appreciating, appraising and applying values and knowledge in a given musical universe. In reference to Ozumba's assertion about cultural and ideological partitioning, it can be argued that Babukusu are unique because of their environmental, social, political, cultural, historical, religious, economic and educational influences and experiences. Their attitudes and thinking are largely conditioned by the above factors. In a different part of the world, the same factors would influence them differently, resulting in a dissimilar thinking and perception of reality. Whereas aesthetics is a common phenomenon, the afore-mentioned factors account for the uniqueness of the nature of the music aesthetics of the Bukusu compared to other cultures of the world.

These various factors influence their perception and thought that aesthetics is an integral part of society that is lived by the people. Tanchio (2014:14) supports the assertion when he maintains that;

> "Aesthetics is not simply something to be known and perceived; aesthetics is something lived and experienced by a particular culture and society… Human beings are participants and observers, appreciators as well as practitioners, and all of these aspects are critical artistic considerations of aesthetical knowledge and consciousness."

Based on the above, the Bukusu as a distinctive cultural entity ascribe to conditioned aesthetic attitudes that are influenced by the experiences of their society. Aesthetics among Babukusu in this case are perceived from a wholistic view of phenomenological aspects to their nature as a lived heritage.

Seemingly, as a revelation of reality and lived heritage, aesthetics have a significant bearing in a people's musical universe. That is why perhaps, in advocating for scholarly inquiry into African music performance, Mans (2005) opines that aesthetics and inherent indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are essential for better appreciation of the nature of African music, its meaning, as well as its governing principles. Nketia (1984:24) agrees with Mans emphasizing that;

> "No matter how much one gets to know about a musical culture in terms of its organization and use in culture, or details of its structure, one cannot relate fully to it in its own terms until one is thoroughly familiar with its aesthetic principles."

These assertions by Mans and Nketia underscore the significance of aesthetics in understanding musical performance in African societies. Of importance is the fact that aesthetics of music performance (AMP) and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are embedded, yet only manifested in the artistic and creative process of music making. Within its creative process, a unique predominant characteristic of Bukusu music performance that enables it to achieve its effectiveness in terms of aesthetic relevance is its composite nature. This is exhibited in the way several visual and performing arts are interwoven together to result into one composite. In a similar study, Stone (1998:7) affirms this attribute by acknowledging that;

> "African performance is a tightly wrapped bundle of arts that are sometimes difficult to separate, even for analysis. Singing, playing instruments, dancing, masquerading

and dramatizing is part of the conceptual package that many Africans think of as one and the same."

This shows that the Bukusu, like in other African music cultures, use varied visual and performing arts, in whose character lies a fair number of value systems that are culturally defined to work together in given contexts. The conscious or unconscious omission of any of them would compromise the aesthetic value of the musical performance or render its creative process counterproductive. Such composite nature is what Sieber (1959) refers to as "unvoiced aesthetics," that is, what the society accepts as its creative imagery, artistic or skilful expressions, which are revealed in different intertwined arts, but manifested as one.

Change is an unavoidable process whose inevitability has seen Bukusu music subjected to many influences that have led to creation of new ideas and transformation of existing ones. A notable novelty is that, currently, Bukusu music is performed in alternative contexts that are informed by music expressions akin to the traditional contexts. Giovanni (2002) refers to such contexts as ways of creating complementary means and approaches to fill the social void created by compromised traditional functions of music because of modernization. Giovanni in essence, reinforces the thesis of this research that filling the social void impacts on the music content, performance practice and style. These factors in turn affect the resultant aesthetic appeal of music performance and the inherent IKS.

Scholars such as Wanyama (2005) and Masasabi (2010) observe that other Luhya sub-nations of Western Kenya have to contend with music traditions that are adulterated due to influence of social change. However, they content that Bukusu musical expressions as experienced within cultural institutions such as initiation, marriage and post-burial ceremonies, still bear a fair amount of continuity. As is witnessed in many African communities, music of Babukusu is performed as a composite art. It involves dance, singing, visual aids, panegyrics, body painting and deco, costumes, masquerades, drama and playing instruments. The creative process of making music entails bringing to life these arts as one, in whose character lies aesthetics, meaning and inherent IKS.

Bukusu music is currently being performed in new contexts that defy the traditional social situations as they are known to their community. These contexts include music competitions and festivals, cultural nights, presentations in cultural revivals and enterprise development centres. It is in light of these transformational processes in performance of Bukusu music that

that there is a growing desire to establish the extent to which the AMP and the inherent IKS hitherto experienced in traditional performances are (is) reproduced or (mis)represented in the new social contexts.

Additionally, and of significance, is the impact of the new musical identities on the cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge systems of the Bukusu. In many ways music defines the community's history, cohesiveness, and systems of governance, social order, economic opportunities, and education. Besides, it connects the living world with that of ancestral spirits as realized through rituals.

These new musical identities demonstrate a fair amount of continuity within traditional contexts. However, the Bukusu music like that of many other African communities experiences what one would refer to as cultural adulteration, dilution or disintegration when it is performed in alternative contexts. Omollo-Ongati (2006) asserts that this has mainly been occasioned by the influence of the West and the wave of urbanization. A significant outcome of the transformation process is the creation of alternative contexts for music performance.

Currently, those who perform Bukusu music in the new contexts use new approaches that are informed by musical expressions borrowed from cultures that invariably differ from Bukusu music philosophy, institutions and traditions. The implication of this recontextualization[1] processes has arguably led to misrepresentation of aesthetics of music performance (AMP) and the inherent indigenous knowledge systems (IKS).

The extent to which the AMP and the inherent IKS embodied in performance is appropriate in the new contexts is an overriding concern. Over and above, misrepresentation of AMP and the inherent IKS when performing Bukusu music negatively influences, not only its social function but, also, the cultural and social beliefs of the community. It is against this background that the researcher found it imperative to ascertain the extent of the influence. This was done through a review of AMP in Bukusu music and the inherent IKS. The purpose was to ensure that the Bukusu community continues to hold together, fellowship as one people, economically empower itself, forms a strong political force and even mourn together in the wake of tragedies.

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[1] A dynamic transfer and transformation of something from one discourse to another (Urban Dictionary).

An important concern then is the dichotomy between traditional and alternative contexts. Kubik (1986) states that, a tradition is something that is passed on from one generation to another. Such transfer through generations, however, is subject to changes. But within the transformation, certain features are hardly altered. Kubik refers to them as 'immune to change'. He cites the example of the African timeline patterns he encountered in the New World.

In the Bukusu community, there similarly exist contexts in which music is performed that have lived on and exhibited continuity for generations, hence their being regarded as traditional to these people. Over time, other contexts associated with colonialism, religion, urbanisation, industrialization and education have come up, where music from the traditional contexts is performed. These may be regarded as alternative contexts, a term that still accommodates possible change. According to the Merriam Webster dictionary,[2] the term *alternative* is viewed initially from a point of available possibility or choice. This is true in instances like school performances where learners only perform music within the programmes of such institutions, as the only available possibilities.

The term *alternative* may also be understood as a form of departure from certain norms or a challenge to existing traditions. In the case of churches, history reveals how the missionaries challenged the African traditional religious institutions and practices in favour of their own. African Christian converts have since rode on the same wave where music in church is performed as a form of departure and challenge to the traditional norms. As a difference from the usual, therefore, the term *alternative context* is appropriate as a distinction from the usual, where musical phenomena exists or functions outside the established cultural, social and economic systems.

To broaden the understanding of contextual positioning and relevance as factors for how aesthetics are manifested, Nketia (1984:1) states that;

> "Traditional arts are cultivated in contexts in which behaviour is guided by ethnicity, kinship and a common indigenous language, religion and culture, while contemporary arts are cultivated in contexts in which linkages beyond those of ethnicity form the basis of social life. Such linkages are established through membership in educational institutions, churches and industrial institutions, new social, political and economic

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[2] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/alternative

associations such as trade unions and market unions and recreational associations like soccer clubs."

Nketia's theoretical underpinning outlines the basis on which historical and contemporary contexts are founded, which seem quite distinct in terms of objectives, mode of presentation and the desired product. In relation to traditional contexts, Babukusu are founded on a common ancestry and kinship. They also speak one language (*Lubukusu*), that carries the knowledge systems and philosophy of their arts.

The Bukusu traditionally believed in *Wele Khakaba* (God the giver) who created the first man Mundu. They have over time embraced other religions due to influences from outsiders such as missionaries hence a diversification of their belief systems. There, however, exist a minority that still uphold the traditional belief system. The Bukusu use their language to reveal their cultural systems, ceremonies, rituals, socio-economic and political activities. Similarly, their music is inter-twined in all these activities.

Nketia's assertion on how traditional arts are cultivated holds true for the Bukusu. Their music is similarly nurtured in contexts and behavioural tendencies, which are based on factors such as kinship, language, religion and culture. Consequently, such factors cultivate, inform, influence and determine why and how music is performed by Babukusu. Due to the shared values, the Bukusu understand and know their musical behaviour. Therefore, anything in their music that is foreign is easily identified. In terms of effectiveness and revelation of reality in their music, they also ascribe, formulate and agree on what they regard as aesthetic or un-aesthetic.

The process of moving music from one setting to another is defined as recontextualization. Based on Nketia's assertion, performance of traditional music beyond linkages of ethnicity is an example of recontextualization.

In the alternative settings (what he refers to as contemporary settings), four main new contexts in which Bukusu music is performed were identified. First is, competitive music festivals where KMF, an education-based festival, was the focus. Second, are cultural revival centres, that is, institutions that have been set up for archiving and providing opportunities for music to be performed for the sake of entertainment, preserving it and creating continuity of the art.

Third, are cultural nights that are closely related to cultural revivals. They, however, differ in the sense that there purpose is to celebrate cultures from specific ethnic communities. Finally, Bukusu music is performed as an entrepreneurial activity, or to support businesses in what is considered as enterprise development. Apart from the economic benefits, the aim is to entertain mainly revellers.

The contexts discussed above fit Nketia's definition and description of how contemporary contexts are founded. Most of them are associated with educational, religious, political, industrial and economic institutions. They have come about due to the wave of urbanisation and modernisation. Music performance in such contexts is characterised by different philosophies attributable to the objectives they seek to achieve. Arguably, those who perform music in the alternative contexts change its presentation, to ensure relevance to the main objective. For example, is the music meant for worship, edutainment or entrepreneurship? Such change in turn affects the aesthetic relevance of the music.

Interestingly, aesthetics in Bukusu music have been a victim of presentation to varying contexts similar to what Nketia presents. The theory on recontextualization is, therefore, essential in demonstrating the extent to which aesthetic and artistic principles are manifested in diverse contexts where Bukusu music is performed.

In the same light, Mans (2005:1) affirms that, "As environments change with time, so too do value systems and aesthetics, thus indicating a dynamic system of thinking, choosing, disregarding and creating." Seemingly, the ecosystem as a performance context is essential with regard to how value systems and aesthetics are created, recreated or modified. Performance contexts are significant because they influence and determine the value system the people use to react to the music. A contextual change would, therefore, lead to a shift in the value system, which literally influences the aesthetic regard hence a transformation of meaning in music.

These concepts can be fashioned into a conceptual model to further illustrate how change of performance contexts affects the resultant aesthetics.
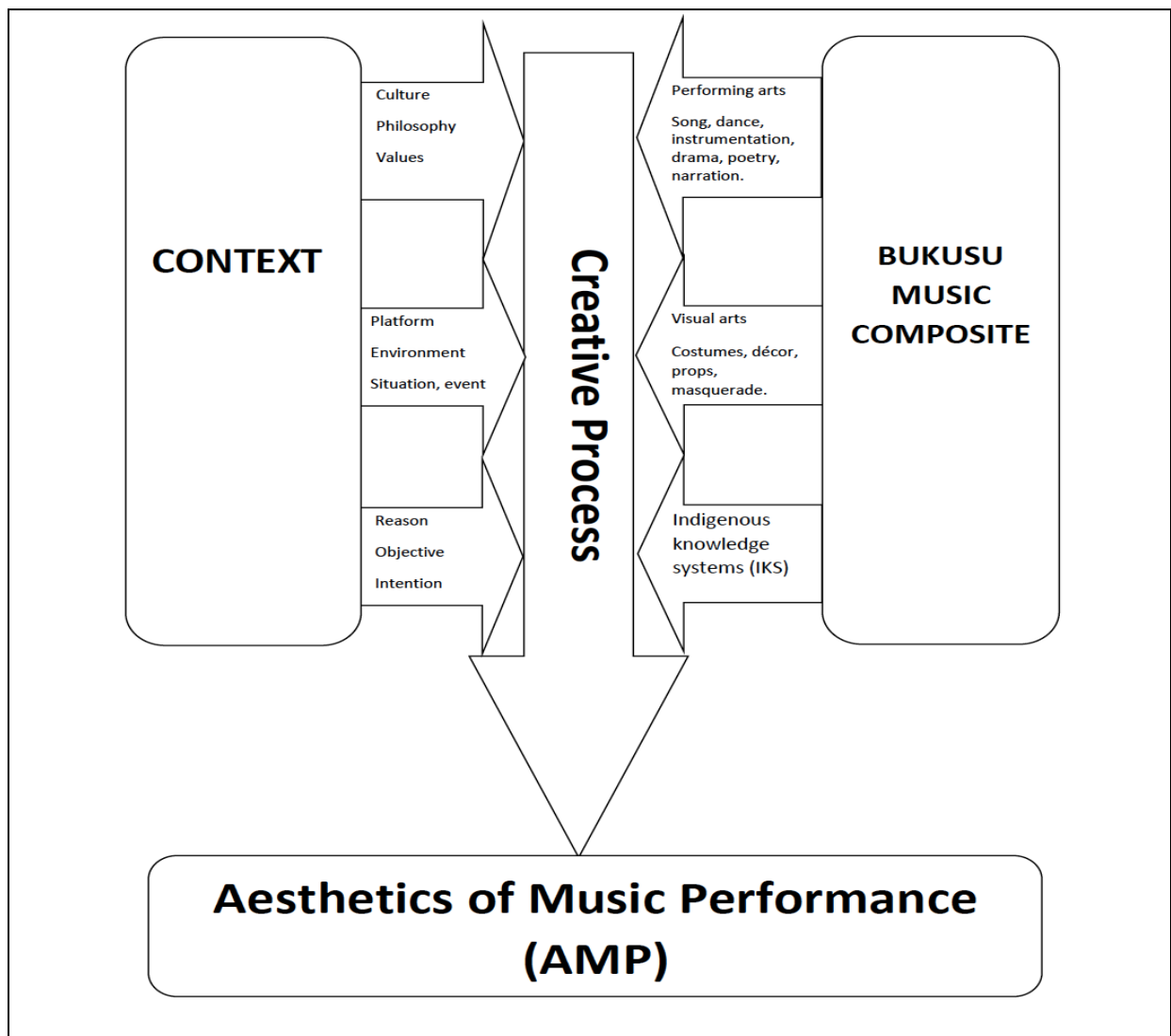
Figure 1: The process of aesthetic manifestation

The model in Figure 1 shows that Bukusu music as a composite brings together several performing and non-performing artistic facets. These performing arts include song, poetry, drama, dance, instrumentation, narration, masquerade and chants. Non-performing (visual) arts comprise of costume, body painting, and décor, props and ritual crafts.

Seemingly, all the performing arts are meant to work mutually for the music to make sense, the lack of which renders it incomplete. More so, for a meaningful discourse to be realized, the composite interacts with a given context in a creative performance process. According to the model, performance context may be viewed in terms of culture, philosophy, values, platform, situation, event, occasion, ritual, reason, objective or intention. The creative process in which the performance context and the music composite interact is an instance when the

artistic facets are brought to life by practically enacting them for a specific purpose. The interaction of context and the composite in the creative process then produces features that determine the effectiveness of the music. These are what we call aesthetics.

Based on the model, context may be viewed as an independent variable that is characterised by its own unique philosophies. Traditional contexts of Babukusu for instance are based on their kinship, knowledge systems, and language, and taboos, religious and cultural beliefs. A different context like a school music festival would be characterised by alternative philosophies, such as preservation of culture, competition, education, and artistic and talent development. Presentation of music in a respective context is, therefore, governed by the unique philosophy of the situation. A change in context would similarly imply a shift in all the parameters associated with its relocation to a totally new set of thinking.

The conceptual model in Figure 1 further demonstrates that the composite is another independent variable, which can be transferred from one context to another. The creative process, however, is dependent on the composite and the context. Changing the context would impact on the creative process which similarly changes to accommodate the composite. In which case, whenever the context changes, the composite similarly changes given that the creative process has been altered. The resultant aesthetics are then largely reliant on the creative process, which draws from the interaction of the context and composite.

This conceptual model in essence shows the nature of Bukusu music in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic features. These are the situations in which the features are presented and how they independently and jointly bring meaning to a performance. Given the differing foundations of the varied contexts, performance of Bukusu music therein affects the creative process in different ways, which leads to varied aesthetic manifestations.

2

The Bukusu Community

This chapter does not in any way attempt a comprehensive historical or cultural review or examination of the Bukusu community. Such an endeavour would require a deep anthropological study. It is, however, important to give a sizeable overview of the Bukusu community for a better understanding of their music. This is essential in the sense that music as an art is a product of a people and is society oriented. We have already discussed the significance of indigenous knowledge systems and cultural meanings with regard to aesthetics of Bukusu music. Arguably, such knowledge is embodied and rooted in the historical and cultural context of Babukusu. Such history is mainly manifested in their musical performances and rituals such as the post-burial ceremony called *khusena* or *khuswala kumuse.*

Music and the history of the Bukusu community are almost synonymous given that where one exists the other is manifested. This argument is reinforced by Tala (1984) who acknowledges that an understanding and acceptance of the socio-cultural background in which a work of art is embedded or from which it has emerged is fundamental to its aesthetic appreciation. To this end, understanding the Bukusu community from both historical and cultural dimensions is essential to achieve a more focused reflection on their music and artistic works.

An important question at this point is what a community entails. This term may be viewed from two dimensions. Quoting the *Oxford English Dictionary,* Shelemay (2011:356) defines a community as;

> "First and foremost as a collectivity, that is, 'a body of people or things viewed collectively.' It links a group to a single geographic setting, as a body of people who live in the same place, usually sharing a common cultural or ethnic identity."

Freitag and Von Open (2010:128), quoting Cohen (1985) object to the above definition, arguing that a community cannot be fixed in time and place. They consider it instead as;

> "A largely mental construct, whose 'objective' manifestations in locality or ethnicity give it credibility."

Guided by the above definition, this chapter discusses aspects of the history of the Bukusu community that cannot be pegged in a specific space and time. As will be revealed in the history, Babukusu underwent a long migration before settling in their current dwelling place. More so, many of the Bukusu people have moved from their predominant habitat and settled in other places around the world.

With regard to musicians, they move from one place to another in search of performance opportunities. Movement notwithstanding, they still carry with them mental constructs of their origin and practice many traditions passed to them by their ancestors over time. They are therefore, still regarded as members of the community albeit space and time.

Babukusu and their origin

Babukusu are the largest of the seventeen (17) sub-nations of the larger Luhya community of Western Kenya (Makila 1978). The other sub-nations of the Luhya community include; *Maragoli, Tiriki, Nyore, Marama, Idakho, Kisa, Marachi, Tsotso, Nyala, Tachoni, Wanga, Samia, Isukha, Khayo, Tura* and *Kabaras*. The names of the Luhya sub-nations are usually pre-ceded by the prefix "Aba", "Ava" or "Ba", depending on the dialect. The Babukusu for instance call the others with a 'Ba' prefix, that is, *Basamia*, *Bakhayo*, or *Batiriki*.

Currently, Babukusu largely reside in Bungoma County where they make up 50% of the population (Heine & Mohling 1980; Wafula 2003). The other inhabitants of the county with a significant population include the Teso, Sabaot, Elkony, Nyala and Tachoni. Sizeable population of Babukusu also live in Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu and Kakamega Counties. The population of Babukusu in the other counties, apart from Bungoma, is largely as a result of immigration into what were settlement schemes, as well as the need for individual expansion.

Several studies have attempted to explain the origin of Babukusu and how they came to settle in the current Bungoma County. According to Mukhwana (1996), Makila (1978), and Khaoya (2013), myths of Babukusu explain that *Wele Khakaba* (God) caused heaven (*Likulu*) and the fertile essence (*Waneloba*) to unite and procreate the first life and human being, *Mundu*. Mundu begot *Mwambu* (meaning the discoverer or inventor) a man and *Sela,* the first woman.

These forbearers of Babukusu are believed to have been created in a place called *Mumbo* (West). They begot *Mubukusu*, the eponymous ancestor of *Babukusu*, at a place called

Esibakala believed to be located in *Emisiri,* a place highly thought to be the current southern part of Egypt and the northern part of Sudan.

Unfortunately, there is no study that clearly describes the exact location of *Emisiri.* According to the writer of the *Periplus of Erythraean Red Sea*, William Schoff, in 60AD, there existed the 'town of Mundus.'[3] Ogot (1967) and Makila (1978) suggest that the town may have been the earliest meeting or gathering point for the early descendants of Mundu, or otherwise their dwelling place. The place, *Esibakala,* is also qualified by the term itself, which in Bukusu language means a dry place. Therefore, it is possible that it referred to the desert area located on the border of Egypt and Sudan.

The main preoccupation of Mundu's descendants at the dry place was domesticating animals. Due to the dry weather conditions, the animals suffered starvation. More so, famine drove neighbours to attack Mundu's descendants[4] in search for food. It reached a point where the Babukusu had to seek other places with more favourable environments.

From *Esibakala,* it is believed that Babukusu migrated to a place called *Esirende.* This place is thought to have had wet weather conditions that were favourable for crop planting and grazing fields. The word *Sirende* in Bukusu language means a place with plentiful water supply (wet land) with ever green vegetation. At *Esirende,* Babukusu encountered neighbours who were iron workers, but practiced no farming. These neighbours occasionally attacked the Bukusu people and took away livestock and farm produce. The enmity created by the neighbours forced Babukusu to seek safer places.

From *Esirende,* Babukusu moved to a place known as *Embayi* or *Mmbayi,* thought to the present parts of northern Kenya (occupied by the Turkana) and Uganda (occupied by the Karamoja). The inhabitants in this place were pastoralists (*Babayi*) hence as the name *Embayi* or *Mmbayi.* Presently, this area is occupied by the Turkana, Pokot and Marakwet in Kenya, and the Karamoja in Uganda, all pastoralists. They therefore fit their description as *Babayi.* It is alleged that the pastoralists were more aggressive to Babukusu who were forced to move down to the area around the current Bukusu Hill in Uganda. It is believed that from Bukusu

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[3] The peryplus of the Erythrean sea. Travel and trade in the Indian Ocean by the merchant of the first century.
[4] With time they grew in numbers to form the Bukusu community, a name borrowed from their eponymous ancestor Mubukusu.

Hill, they gradually occupied uninhabited land at Mount Masaba *(Lukulu lwa Masaba),* the current Mount Elgon that sits on the boundary of Kenya and Uganda. Figure 1 below shows the location of Bungoma County on the map of Kenya. It also shows Mount Elgon on the Map of Bungoma County. It is believed that is the place where early ancestors of Babukusu and their descendants first landed and settled. It remains their home to date.
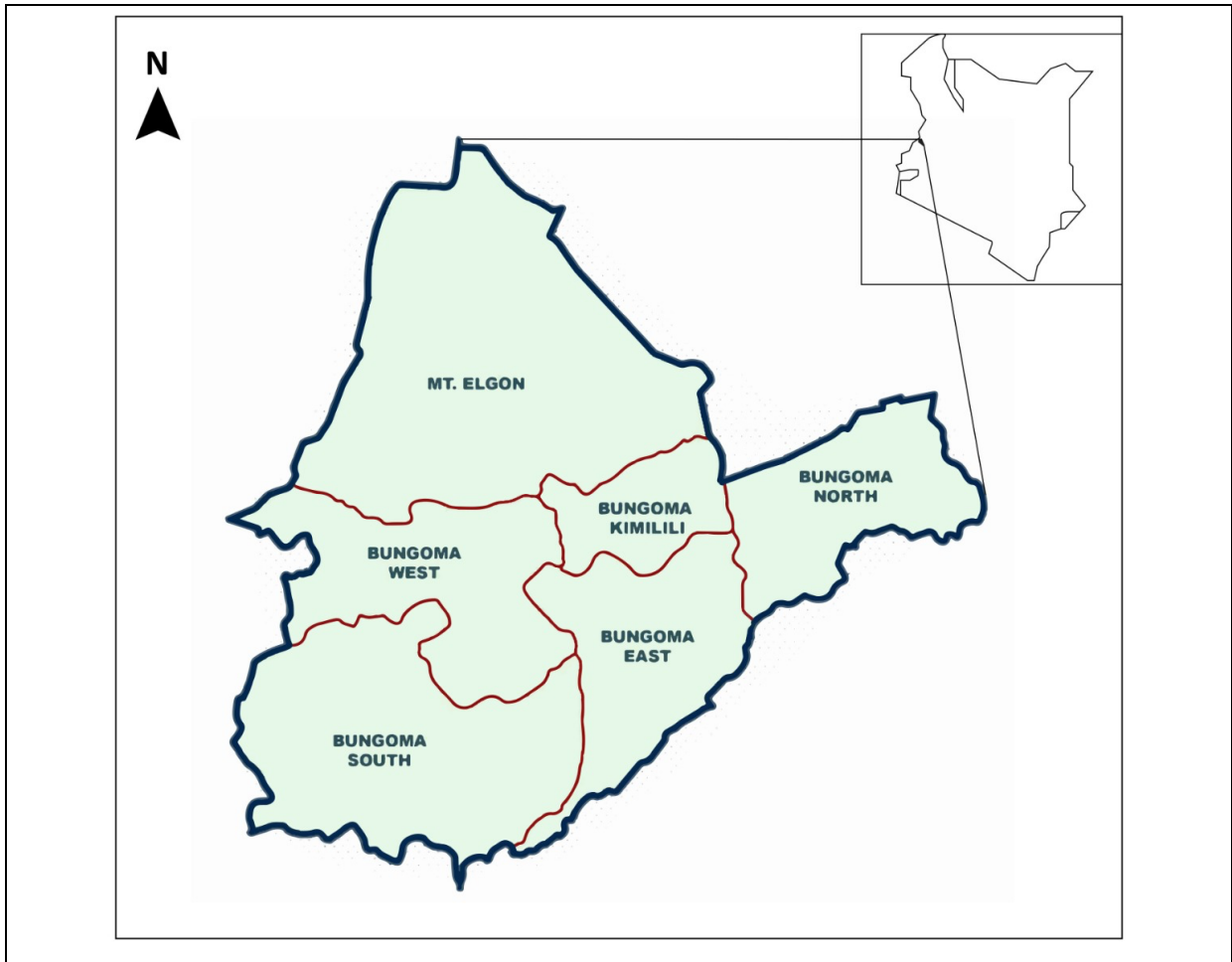
 Figure 1: Bungoma County

This explanation of the origin and migration of the Babukusu is rooted in their cultural accounts. It has been a subject of song texts, which during performances are either sung or spoken. Therefore, the importance of song texts with regard to their aesthetic relevance cannot be gainsaid. More so, aesthetic appraisal of Bukusu music is based on how the knowledge, history and culture of Babukusu is manifested in the music making process.

In essence, the story of the origin and migration of Babukusu is necessary in laying the ground for a better understanding of its aesthetic significance in the music making process. Textual development based on historical and cultural themes is an essential ingredient in the music.

Socio-economic and political organization of Babukusu

With regard to societal structure, the Bukusu community is defined by the following social institutions; family lineage, clans, forms of marriage, patrilineal descent, patrilocal residence and the eight cycles of male circumcision (age sets). These social institutions are still currently the principal organizing features of the Bukusu community. These features bind and compel individuals to adhere to the same norms, values and expectations (Mukhwana, 1996). Besides, such adherence fosters internal stability and cohesion of the community (Nangendo, 1996).

The Bukusu community is built on the patrilineal concept of husband, wife or wives and their children (the nuclear family). Traditionally, Babukusu accept polygamy where men are allowed to marry as many wives as they are able to sustain. The community recognizes the extended family, which includes more than one nuclear family related by blood or through marriage. Uncles, aunties, and cousins are recognized as members of the extended family. Marriage as a basis for relationships is determined by clans (*Chikholo*). People of one clan are not allowed to marry; neither can one marry from their mother's clan.

The Babukusu clan organization has a distinct ancestry, history, belief system, particularities, and skills. During the early times of the community migration, families were separated during times of war or conflicts, epidemics and famine or hunger. In some instances, apparently death occurred due to witchcraft *(Bulosi),* which scared the bereaved families to move in protest as well as fear of more deaths.

In other instances, for example gross misdemeanour *(Luswa),* people of the same clan engaging in a sexual act, led to the affected families migrating due to shame and the need to maintain family ties. As they sought for habitable places and food, they encountered other communities from whom they learnt different attributes that they later identified with. In the process, they became a clan with identifiable and distinct characteristics.[5] One of the families

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[5] http://dimplesnet.blogspot.co.ke

for instance learnt the art of iron working and, therefore, was called *Balako* (the iron mongers). Another one was good at pottery and was called *Baumba* (the potters).

In other instances, men who married more than one wife faced the risk of the many children separating and identifying themselves with their mothers' names. Wambuele Mwelu[6] described how their clan *Batukwika,* was founded by their ancestor *Tukwika.* Tukwika had six (6) wives; *Nambobi, Nasakha, Naluleti, Nakitang'a, Nabukwangwa* and *Naluchekhe.* When he died, the children separated and identified themselves with their mothers' names, which eventually became new clans. Currently, they distinguish themselves as ***Batukwika** – Banambobi, Basakha, Baluleti, Bakitang'a, Bakwangwa* and *Baluchekhe.*

Osogo (1966) suggests that there are sixty known clans in the Bukusu community. In contrast, Makila (1978), in a later research claims that there exist more than one hundred clans in the Bukusu community. This research was not able to establish the exact number of clans that exist in the Bukusu community given that this was not its main focus, besides time constrains. It is, however, a known fact that there exist many clans among the Bukusu, some that are unknown. The number of clans notwithstanding, this research established that there exist six (6) major clans, under which all the others belong. These are;

Basilikwa, the descendants of the Sirikwa Tribe (an extinct Kalenjin/Masai Tribe). They include *the Batukwiika, Bakimweyi, Babuulo, Babambo, Basefu, Bachemayi, Bakolati, Babiichachi, Batilu, Basimisi, Baliango, Barwa,* and *Bakiyabi.*

Bamwalie (Tachoni), who were initially referred to us Bayumbu. Kitimule from Batukwiika discovered them after they were thought to be Kalenjins and cannibals. He established that they were not Kalenjins because they spoke a language like his. They include; *Barefu, Basonge, Babangachi, Bahabiya, Basang'alo, Bamakina, Bawayila, Bamakhuli, Baengele, Basaniaka, Bakusi, Basamba, Basamo, Balukulu, Bakobolo, Babichu, Bamalicha, Bamacharia, Bakamukong'i, Bayumbu(my clan), Basonge Bamwalie and Banangali.* All of the are usually *baliche* and they face the East during circumcision.

Bamalaba, descendants of the great leader and warrior called Malaba the son of Sioka from the Balako group. He led Babukusu on their journey into what is now called Kenya when Walumoli died in Ekukumayi. They include; *Balwonja, Bayemba, Bayundo Baala,Bakuta, Basakali, Baliuli, Babasaba, Bakunga* and *Babuya.*

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[6] Wambuele Mwelu. Personal interview on 31st May 2017, at Nabuyeywe Village, Bungoma Sub-County.

Banabayi Luso, these were usually called to bless people's property and ask God to bring rain or even stop it. They include; *Bayaya, Basombi, Balunda, Baumba, Basime, Baleyi, Basekese, Batecho, Bakangala, Basichongoli, Bakoyi, Baliisa, Bamwaya, and Bayiitu (*the clan of *Mutonyi wa Bukelembe*, one of greatest prophet ever among the Babukusu)

Baneala, who settled in Neala Hills**.** They include; *Bachibino, Bameme, Bakisiayi, Bakolongolo, Batakhwe, Bamunaa and Bakhurarwa.*

Bakikayi who regrouped at *Kikayi* Hills. They call themselves "Naluwa" and "Nawanga". They include; the *Bamuyonga, Balako, Baechalo, Bachemwile, Bakokho, Basimaolia, Batemulani, Basituyi, Bamusomi, Bakhoma, Bakisebe,Basibacho, Bakhwami* and *Bamukoya.*

A unique character of the Bukusu is how members of a particular clan introduce themselves. The introductory statement by a person starts with the name of the clan's people, which is a show of a sense of belonging, pride and identity. In any form of speechmaking, therefore, one starts by giving a brief statement about their clan for identity purpose.

Christopher Wanyama for instance describes how people from the *Batukwika* clan introduce themselves, as follows; *"Ese Omutukwika, Kutusi, Machabe, mbirira, khwama mumbayi, khwecha ne Chikhendu sikanda, nende Emotia, ne Situkhu mumabeka."*[7] The translation of this is that; his clan is *Batukwika* the royalty who wear the animal skin cloth *(Ekutusi)* and royal bangle *(Lichabe).* They came from *Embayi,* carrying stacks of raffia reeds, with baskets of food stuffs and quivers carrying bows and arrows on their backs.

Wanyama[8] explained that this in essence means that he came from the royal clan, who originated from *Embayi* (migration of Mundu's descendants). The raffia reeds are used to prepare sour milk in Bukusu community. The process is called *khukhwifusia*, where ground charcoal from a special tree (*Kumufwora*) is added to the milk to give it colour, better taste and breaks down fermentation lumps. This means that they are farmers who domesticate animals (cattle) as well as plant crops. This feature is revealed when he says they were carried baskets of food on their journey from *Embayi/Mmbayi.*

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[7] Christopher Wanyama "Wananjofu" Personal interview on 31st May, 2017, in Mayanja Kibuke Village in Bungoma South Sub-County.
[8] Ibid.

Wanyama further explains that they were defenders of their people given that they carried with them ammunition in the form of bows and arrows. This introduction, therefore, in a way sums up the Bukusu migration story as well as their socio-economic life. The history of clans, how they were formed, the basis for maintaining social order, the way they fondly introduced and talked about themselves, are aspects manifested in their music making. The extent to which such factors contribute to aesthetic relevance, is a subject for discussion in subsequent chapters.

In earlier days, Babukusu lived in separate homesteads *(chingo)* that were enclosed in a common stockade called *Lukoba,* a mud-walled fence. The fence provided security from the threat of invaders (from other communities), as well as wild animals. In as much as the unity and cohesiveness still exists among members of the Bukusu community, currently they have separate homes that are individually fenced off. The common stockade does not exist anymore. Plate 1 below shows an image of how *Lukoba* looked like.

Plate 1: *Lukoba*

Inside *Lukoba,* there were many huts and homes that belonged to members of all of them were grass-thatched huts.

Plate 2: Bukusu homestead

Whereas grass was the most easily available material for roofing, it was liked because it also enhanced cooling of the houses during hot weather. The walls were made of earth, but smoothened to make it difficult for predators such as snakes to climb, as well as to eliminate any potential hiding places for insects. The earth pavements *(luyia)* not only enhanced the appearance of the huts, but also had other functions. In the evenings, the earth pavement was used as a sitting arena for entertainment. Animal skins and hides were spread on it where people sat. People preferred the earth pavement to sitting on grass due to the fear of insects and other predators that could not be seen in darkness.

Additionally, the pavements were smeared with cow dung, which on drying was used for airing grains. Cow dung in this case prevented dust and soil particles from mixing with

grains. During initiation ceremonies, elders spread flour on a small spot on the earth pavement, where circumcision took place. Whereas this form of structures still exists today, the Bukusu people have also adopted other forms of architecture and use modern building materials for putting up their houses.

The stockade was administered by an elder (*Owe epokoto*), who was chosen among the elderly and reputable members of the clan. This traditional leadership system continued until the establishment of colonial rule that demarcated land boundaries and introduced a central governance system that they have adhered to, to date. Currently, the central governance system has seven administrative levels as follows: the village elder (*Omukasa),* Sub-chief, Chief, Sub-County Commissioner, County Commissioner, Regional Commissioner and President.

Economically, Babukusu domesticate animals and plant crops for subsistence. Both men and women participate in these economic activities to sustain themselves and the community. Farming is supported by favourable weather conditions. The county experiences long rains, short rains and spells of dry seasons. Plate 3 below shows, on one side, a farm where both maize and coffee are grown. The other side shows cows domesticated by Jane Wabusia, a farmer in Elungai Village of Bungoma North Sub-County. This is typical mixed farming that is practised by majority of the people in Bungoma County.

Plate 3: Mixed farming in Bungoma County[9]

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[9] Picture taken by Mariano Gonzalez, research assistant, on 22nd July 2017 in Elungai Village.

The farming activities shown in Plate 3 are possible because of long and short rains, numerous wet lands as well as rivers. Water supply to the community is favourably consistent inasmuch as dry spells occur in the months of November, December and January. The food crops grown in Bungoma County include maize (*Kamaindi)*, cassava (*Kimioko)*, millet (*Buulo*), sorghum (*Kamaemba*), many types of vegetables (*Chinyenyi*) including *Murere, Esaka, Litoto, Likhubi, Sitipa, Sikayangaya, Murunde, Lifwafwa, Namasaka, Esufwa, Endelema, Kimiro,* and *Lisiebebe*. The domestic animals kept by the Bukusu include cattle (*Chikhafu),* goats (*Chimbusi*), sheep (*Kamakhese*), Chicken (*Chingokho*), ducks (*Kamapata*), doves (*kamausi*), and rabbits (*Chinduyu*).

In a research on traditional industries of the Bukusu community, Nangulu (1990) acknowledges that the people are known for basketry, ceramics, iron works, leatherwork, adornment, wood work and other related industries. During the field study, I encountered some evidence of the existence of traditional industries such as the farm structure shown in Plate 4 below.

Plate 4: *Sisiaki*[10]

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[10] Picture taken by Mariano Gonzalez, a research assistant, on 22nd July 2017, at Elungai Village.

Plate 4 shows a traditional granary called *Sisiaki* or *Sirara.* This store is made using flex sticks that are interwoven horizontally to form a basket that is then placed on a raised platform. The roof is made using iron sheets, which is a shift from the traditional use of grass. The iron sheets are preferred because, compared to grass thatching, they are not susceptible to the vagaries of harsh weather conditions.

Wood craft is yet another activity that is well manifested. I encountered many artefacts that were curved out of wood. Plate 5 below shows a traditional four-legged stool. Only male elders were allowed to sit on it, not young people or women.

Plate 5: *Endebe Embukusu[11]*

The stool is curved from wood. A keen observer will note that it had no joints. It is curved using of a machete (*Kumwolo*) and a special curving tool called *Embechelo.* Wholeness is a unique feature that is manifested in the making of this stool. Given that the stool is used by male elders only, that brings to the fore the issue of status, gender, respect and dignity among the Bukusu. Such factors also determine formation of aesthetic attitudes in music performance.

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[11] Picture taken by Mariano Gonzalez, research assistant, on 23rd July 2017 in Ndalu Village.

In Ndalu Village, I came across a unique cap, worn by selected elders of the community. These were elders of reputable character who had special talents such as iron working, craftsmanship, music and circumcisers. Only such elders were allowed to wear such a cap. Plate 6 below shows a picture of this cap. It is called *Ekofio ye Chisimbi.*

Plate 6: *Ekofio yie Chisimbi* [12]

The rhythm that is created by the beads exemplifies attention to detail by the person who made the cap. More so, the beads are attached on an animal skin. This requires advanced techniques and artistry. Given that only selected elders are allowed to wear such a cap, it in essence shows contextual selection (status and gender) as an aspect of aesthetics, especially with regard to musical performance.

The products of the traditional industries of the Bukusu community determine the way people adorn themselves as well as the appearance of their surroundings. In an interview with Josephine Namarome, she explained how the Bukusu people traditionally beautified themselves. In terms of dressing, young children were did not wear clothes. At puberty stage when they were preparing for initiation and subsequently marriage, they wore certain cloths.

Girls put on short skirts made from banana fibre, metallic (aluminium) sheets and animal skin. The front part of the skirt was made from banana fibres and was referred to as *Siyula*. The sides of the skirt were made from thin metallic (aluminium) pieces called *Kamachweno,*

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[12] Picture taken by the researcher on 11th June 2017 in Ndalu Village.

which were made by blacksmiths (*we Lirumbi*). The workstation of the blacksmith is called *Mwirumbi*. The back side of the skirt was made from animal skin that was cut into strips. It was called *Chinyinja*. The entire dress was called by the latter name *Chinyinja*.

I did not come across such a dress during the field study. Seemingly, the traditional dress-making technology has been overtaken by the modern textile industry. From the description of the dress/skirt above, I drew the illustration in Figure 2 below, in order to give a pictorial appearance of *Chinyinja*.
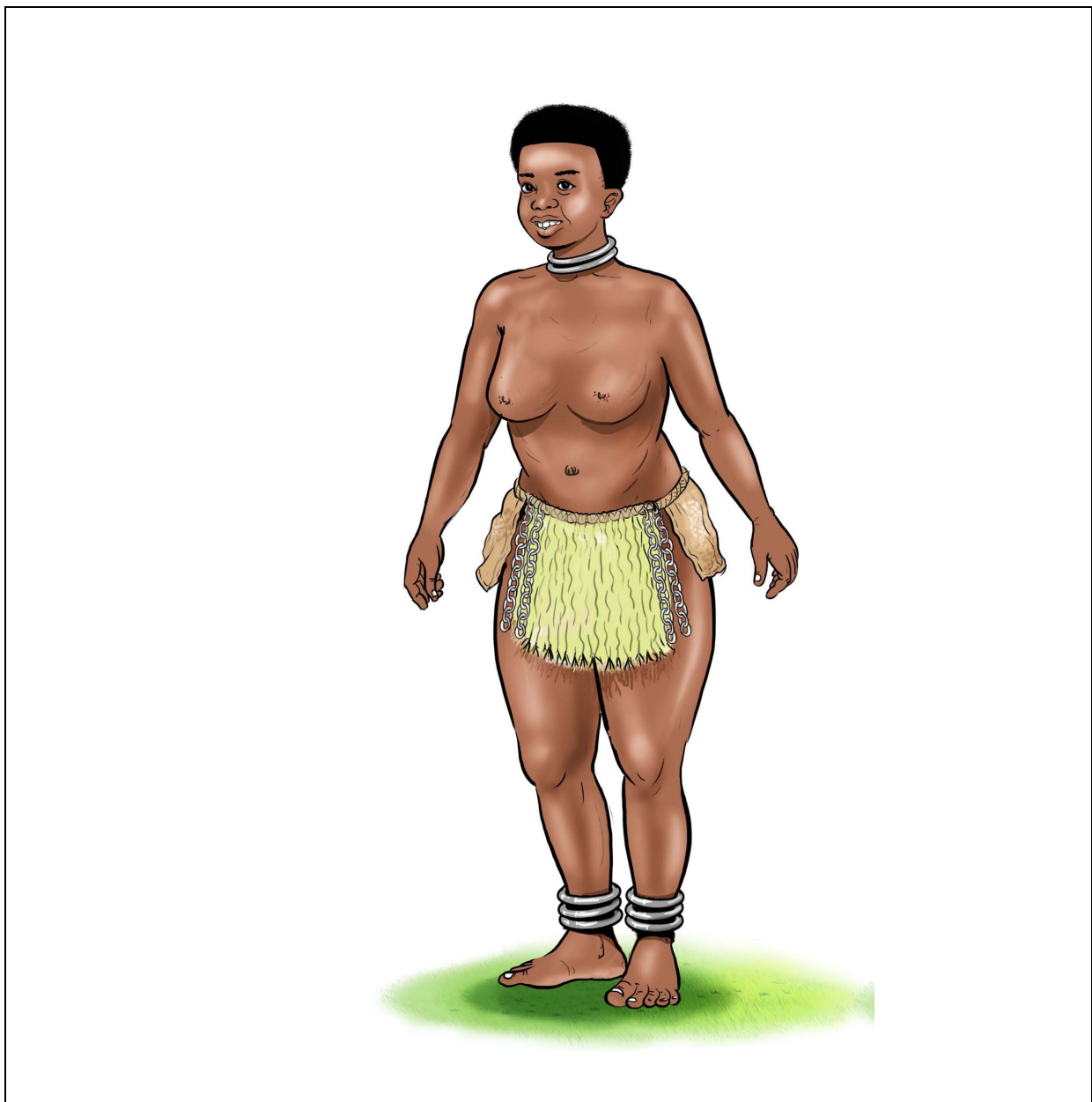

Figure 2: *Chinyinja*

At puberty, boys wore a short dress made from goat skin which covered the part below the belt. The dress comprised of a front and hind part whereas the sides remained uncovered. Seemingly, any dress that was made from animal skin was in general called *Likutu*, as in the case of the boys' dress. Given that the boys' dress was small, it was called *Khamolo*. From the informants' description, I made an illustration of *Khamolo* as shown in Figure 3 below.
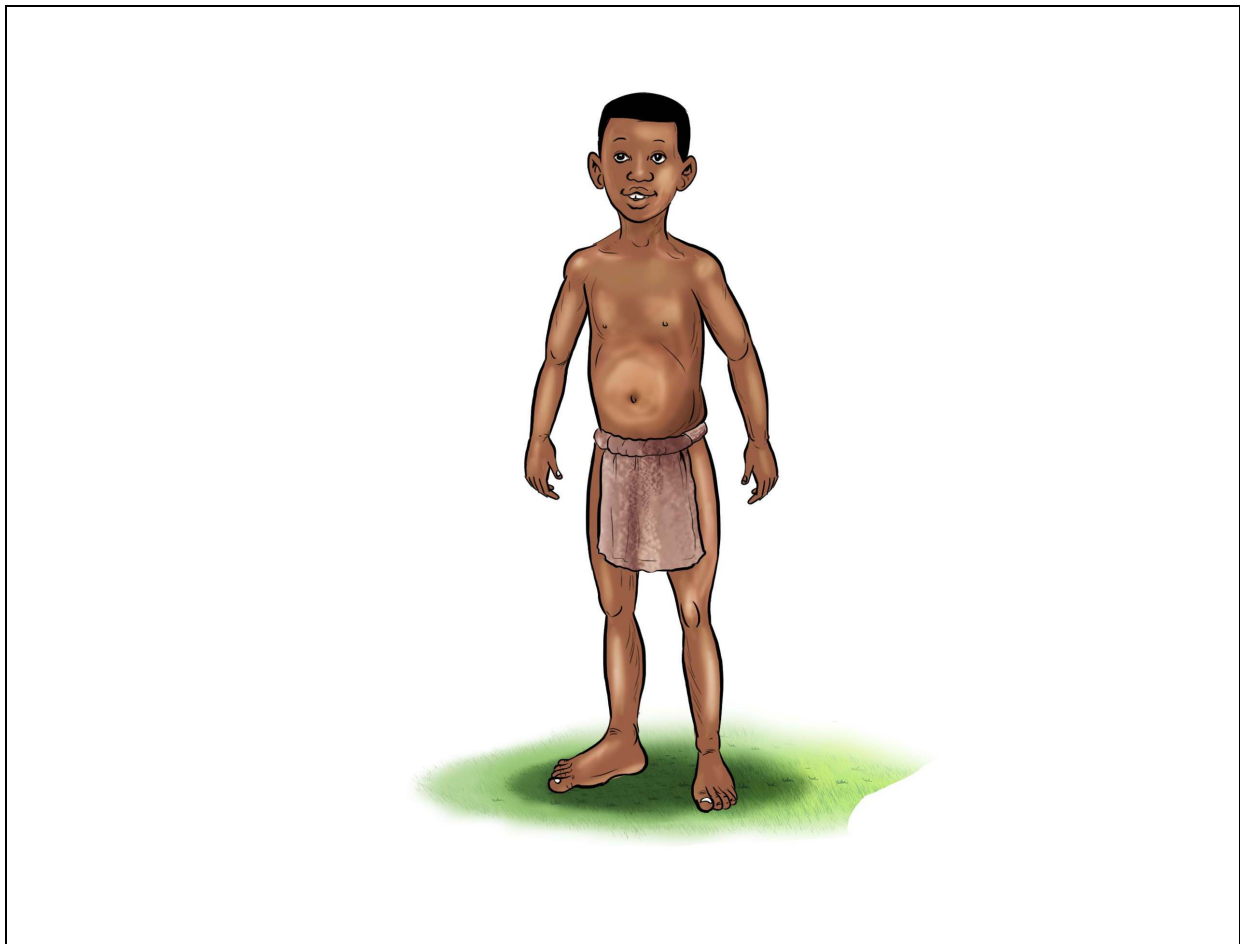
Figure 3: *Khamolo*

Elders of the community wore cloths that fully covered their bodies. At marriage, ladies sew a dress that had two pieces, one to cover the waist and the other to cover the upper part of the body. The dress was also made from goat skin, hence called *Likutu*. Given that they were tied from the waist, this dress was specifically called *Engubo emboela* (dress that is tied). The women wore it during the marriage ceremony and henceforth. Figure 4 below shows an illustration of this dress.
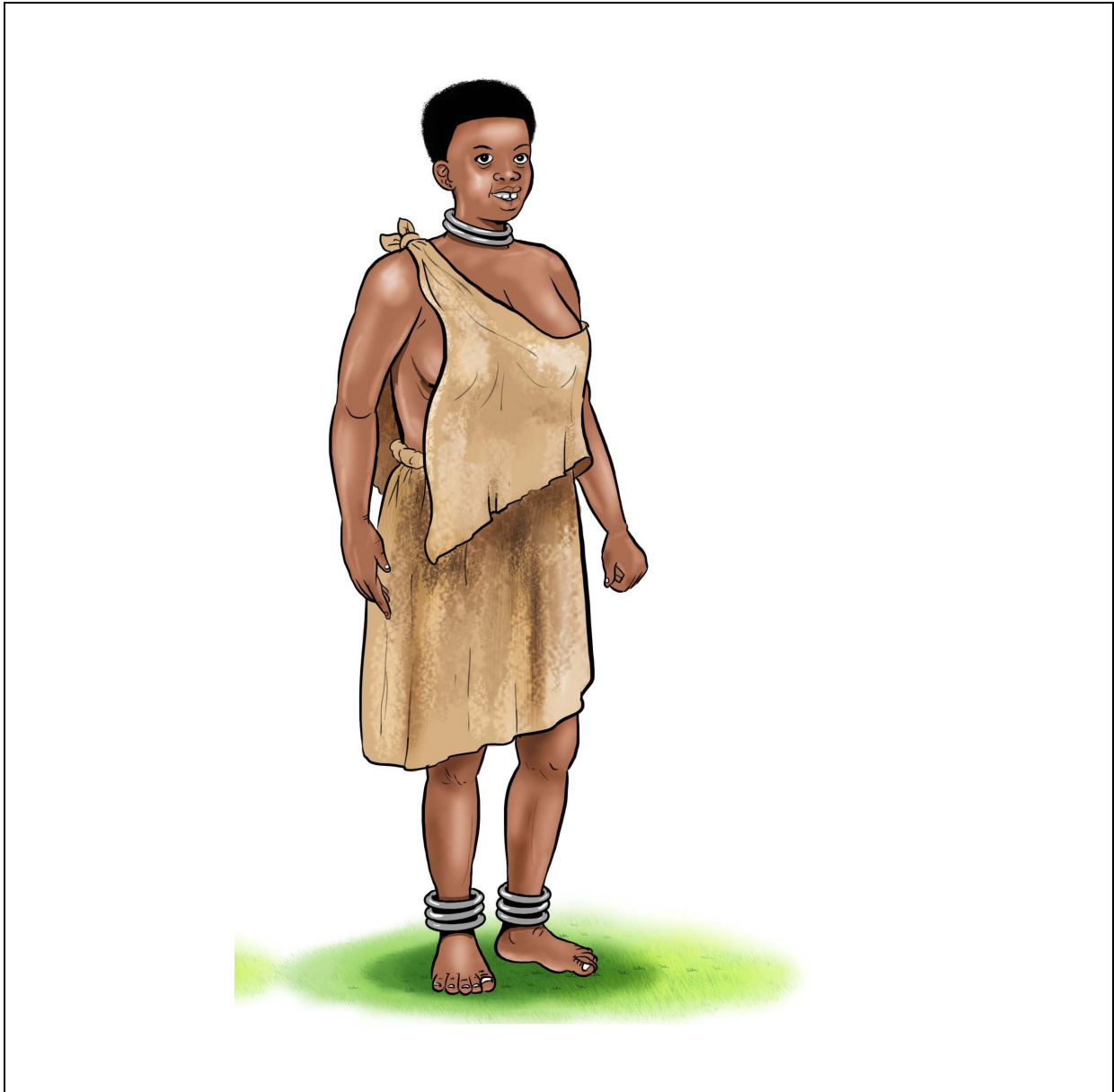
Figure 4: *Engubo emboela*

During the marriage ceremony, the bride wore *Engubo emboela* as she held a long stick from a tree called *Lufufu*. In the mythology of the Bukusu community, *Lufufu* was used to resurrect the dead. In the marriage ceremony, it was given to the bride as a sign of life that she may go forth to procreate and fill the world.

Older male members of the community also wore dresses made from animal skin. In their case, it was made from a bigger animal (cow) given that it covered the entire body. This was also referred to as *Likutu*. The name *Likutu* was given to this particular dress given its large size and completeness. The dress is demonstrated in clip *Vc 5.3.3.8*: *Maayi muro,* where the

lead singer is dressed in an animal skin. Although the lead singer is not an elder, he wore such a dress to signify elevation to the status of an elder. That was because of the significance of the message he intended to communicate in the song. Such elevation strategically positioned him to assume the status of an advisor through music.

Apart from the normal clothes, people of repute in the community were accorded special clothes. These included leaders, people with special talents, and men who were of elderly age and endowed with wisdom that was beneficial to the community. These people were given a dress called *Ekutusi,* which was made from 'strange wild animals'. These strange animals looked like hyenas and lived by the riverside. None of the informants knew the name of the animals.

Such reputable elders also wore the special cap called *Ekofio yie Chisimbi* already mentioned above. Luckily, I came across an informant who had kept this regalia to date. He was accorded *Ekutusi* due to his unique talent as a *Litungu* player, a circumciser and a blacksmith. Such a dress was also accorded to a wealthy man, although his was bigger in size than *Ekutusi.* The wealthy man's attire was called *Eng'ilisi.* Plate 7 below shows the informant in his royalty traditional regalia.

Plate 7: *Ekutusi nende Ekofio yie Chisimbi*[13]

Apart from dressing, Babukusu also made use of other effects to beautify themselves. With regard to hair style, girls and women kept short hair. They shaved the hair using a special blade or knife called *Lubeko lutama*. On the sides of the head, they made a hairstyle shape that is referred to as a 'cut' in barber language today. This was called *Ekinwa*. It made the girls look more attractive, as demonstrated in Figure 5 below.

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[13] Picture of Wanyama Fungututi, taken on 18th May 2017 at Ndalu Village, Bungoma North Sub-County.
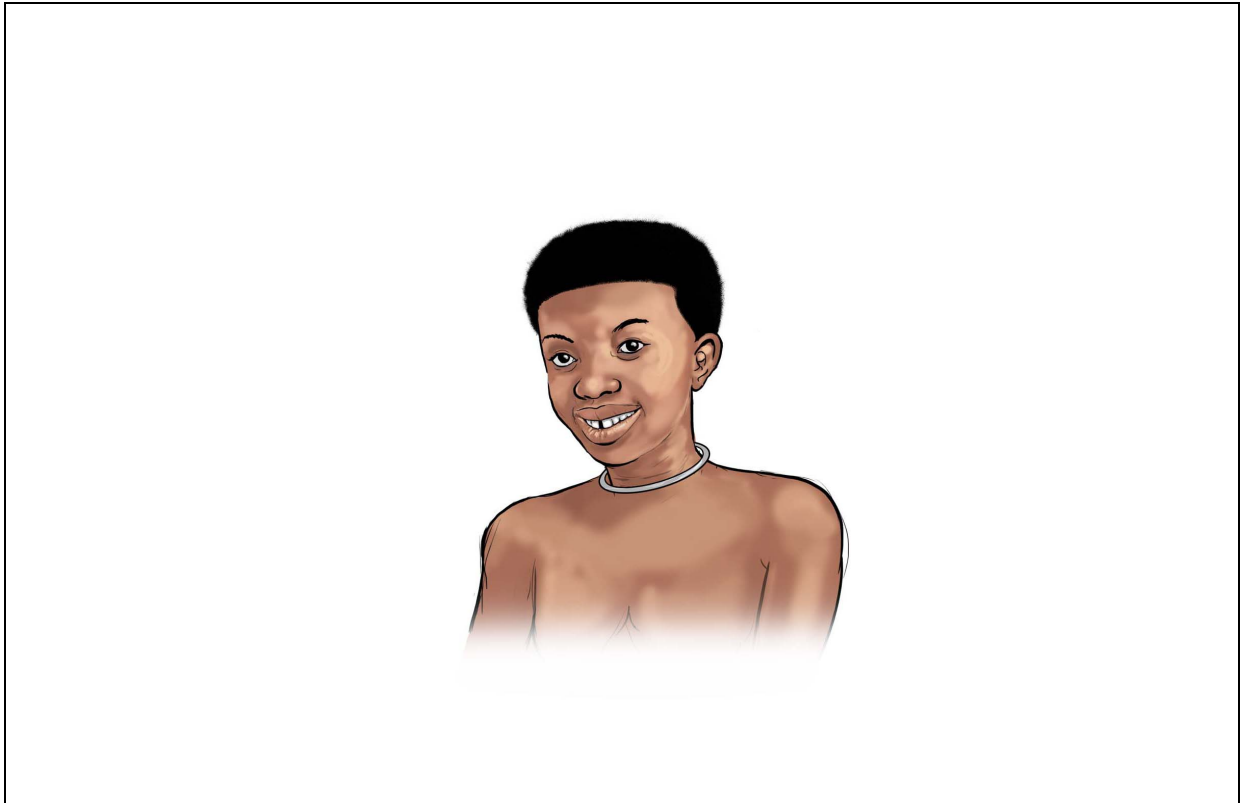
Figure 5: *Ekinwa*

The men kept long hair that was curled into small strips. They applied red ochre to the curls to keep them intact. This hair style was referred to as *Buyuni.* Figure 6 below shows how the hair style for men looked like.
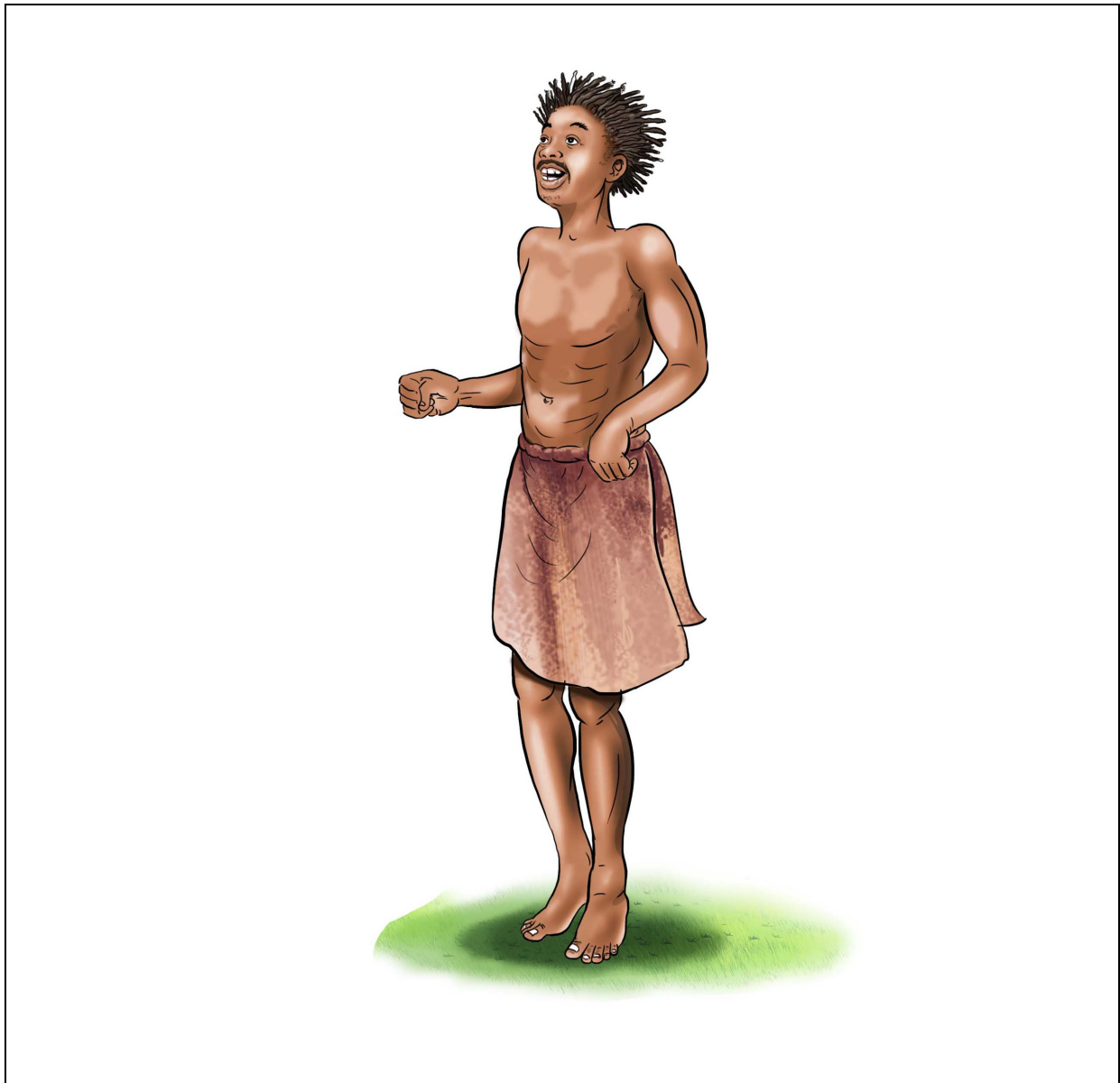
Figure 6: *Buyuni*

Besides hair style, the women adorned themselves with jewellery. They put metallic rings (*Chindekwe*) around their ankles and others around their wrists. These rings were called *Birere*. There were also thinner rings called *Chisinga* that were worn around the neck and others around the waist referred to as *Butundi*.

In addition, women made special decorative marks on their bodies. These marks were made during adolescent stage to make them look more beauty as they approached the age of marriage. Such face and belly markings and decorations were generically called *Chisale*. The *Chisale* inscribed on the cheeks were referred to as *Kamatete*. In the process of making the decorations, either flat marks or protrusions were left on the body of the women, after

healing. The flat marks were referred to as *Chisambatore,* while the distended marks were called *Chisale.* I met many elderly women who had such decorations. Plate 8 below shows a woman adorned with *Chisale.* From the picture, you can see that she only has special markings on her forehead.

Plate 8: *Chisale*[14]

Apparently, teeth were a unique element of beauty among Babukusu. A woman with a natural gap between her front upper teeth, *Embanya* (a diastema; plural diastemata), was regarded as having special beauty because not all women had such a gap. Young men were attracted to such women because of this unique beauty. During bride price negotiations, the parents to such a woman would request for more because of the extra beauty. I came across such a woman with a gap between her front teeth, *Embanya,* as shown in Plate 9 below.

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[14] Picture of Nang'eni taken by the researcher on 11th June 2017 in Soy Village.

Plate 9: *Embanya*[15]

Apart from the natural gap in the front teeth, boys and girls went to specialized traditional doctors who removed two of their lower jaw front teeth. This gap was referred to as *Ebuula,* which had two functions. First, it was regarded as a sign of beauty and discipline especially for women. A woman who did not have such a gap was referred to as "a thief of vegetables in the kitchen."

In an interview with Josephine Namarome, she described the way boys mocked and made fun of a girl without *Ebuula,* in a song, *"Senge senge chabwifwi, wamala makumba ka mao."* This meant, "The one with long teeth who steals and crushes all the bones in the cooking pot!" It was, therefore, shameful for girls who did not have *Ebuula*. If mocked, they would immediately go to remove the teeth.

Ebuula was also useful for therapeutic purposes. The informant[16] pointed out that there was a certain disease that would render the jaws of a person immobile. In such a condition, the jaws could not open fully. If this happened, the caretakers of such a patient would open the lower lip and feed the patient via *Ebuula.* They would then administer medicine and feed the patient (mainly milk), through *Ebuula.* Eventually, the affected person would get well courtesy of the gap or opening, *Ebuula.*

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[15] Picture of Nabusefu taken by the researcher on 11th June in Ndalu Village.
[16] Josephine Namarome, Ibid.

Adornment among Babukusu was highly appreciated, but that does not mean that that is the only quality that determined the goodness of a member of this community. Other qualities such as responsible character, morals, manners and respect were used to determine one's goodness or badness. Moral goodness was an essential virtue that was valued more than outward beauty or appearance. This attribute is captured in a number of proverbs that are used to emphasize virtues, namely;

> *Kimiima kikhila lukondo* – This means that good manners or moral uprightness is better than outward looks or beauty.

> *Omukhasi we'nju omumanyila emaika, omubi omumanyila ekhukenda* – A good wife is known for her ability to cook (taking up the womanly responsibilities), but the bad one is known for loitering around the villages (to show off her beauty).

These two proverbs prove that among Babukusu, aesthetics too, may not entirely be about beauty. This motivated me to further want to explore ways in which Babukusu perceive their aesthetics with regard to music performance.

Apart from adornment, Bukusu traditional industries also supported performing arts. Arts were fundamental aesthetic components in ceremonies and rituals of Babukusu. One of the unique literary works rich in poetry is *Khuswala* or *khusena kumuse*. Wanjala (1984) defines *khuswala* or *khusena kumuse* plainly as 'stepping in the arena,' which means comforting and reconciling the bereaved. The person who narrates the poetry is called *Osena kumuse* (the reconciler). It is believed that such a narrator comes from a clan that is known for performing this art. He is not only specially trained under a master narrator but also has divine and spiritual inspiration and blessings from the ancestors.

Osena kumuse is known to possess extensive knowledge and understanding of the Bukusu culture and history that he presents in a poetic manner as he chants. *Khusena kumuse* is only done during the funeral of a male elder who has attained a reputable age (an age where one has great grandchildren). In Lubukusu they say, *owolile obilo*. In selected instances, men who are slightly younger, but have attained reputable status in the community may be accorded this ceremony.

To date, Babukusu still perform the ritual of *khusena kumuse*. In the field study, I met a person who performs this unique poetry in Naitiri Village of Kimilili Sub-County. I interacted with the "bereaved comforter" as he calls himself, in a session where he was not performing the ritual. He, therefore, did not recite the narrations as he could have done in a funeral scenario. Plate 10 below shows the researcher in a session with *Omukhwami* Pius Sikuku, an *Osena kumuse*.

Plate 10: *Omusena Muse*[17]

In the picture, *Osena kumuse,* Pius Sikuku, is holding a special cane (*Esiimbo*) that he uses while performing the ritual. The cane is made from a tree called *Kumukhendie,* hence the name *Esiimbo ekhendie.* The cane is made in a specific shape as shown in the picture. Other

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[17] Picture taken by Enock Wasilwa, a research assistant, on 23rd July in Naitiri Village.

canes such as walking sticks have different shapes. Inasmuch as there is a special dress for this function, he had not attained the level of coronation to be allowed to wear the regalia.

Besides the historical, political and socio-economic aspects, social gatherings, rituals and ceremonies are an integral part of Babukusu. These include initiation of teens, marriage, funeral, beer parties, communal work, harvesting among many other social occasions. Such occasions, ceremonies and rituals bring the people together to celebrate, condole and most importantly learn about their community.

Music making is an integral performing art, which facilitates generation of further meaning to these occasions. In these situations, music entertains, rejuvenates, consoles, comforts, brings merry, is leisure, a source of community's history, brings social order, condemns vices, teaches and educates. In a nutshell, the life of Babukusu is largely revealed in their music making processes.

Part II

Musical Practice and Aesthetics

3

Bukusu music in historical contexts

Many Kenyan communities have to contend with diminishing traditional institutions and their respective music. However, Bukusu music has shown a fair amount of continuity. Although such continuity is evident, Bukusu music is also performed in other contexts (alternative) beyond the traditional predominantly ritual-based contexts. To show how aesthetics are manifested in Bukusu music when performed in the alternative contexts, it is important to first discuss the ways in which the music was performed in historical contexts. This Chapter details how Bukusu music is performed in traditional contexts. The main focus is on song, dance, instrumentation and its place in the society. These are the details used to determine the aesthetics of Bukusu music.

Given the largely ceremonial and ritual-based character of Bukusu music, the discussion in this chapter focuses on the initiation and marriage ceremonies. It is in these two ceremonies that the core secrets, indigenous knowledge systems and cultural beliefs, norms, and the fabric of the community are mostly manifested. The rituals are the 'heart' of Bukusu culture. That is where the ancestral spirits of Babukusu reside. The fountain of their indigenous knowledge systems is what they refer to as *Etiang'i.* That is why whenever a real Bukusu explains any musical concept, they mostly refer to the two ceremonies (initiation and marriage), where their *Etiang'i* resides.

Song practice

In the Bukusu community, music involves instrumentation, dance and many other performing arts. The first song a child learns is a lullaby *(chinyimbo chie khuolelesia babana).* Parents and older siblings sing such songs to sooth children to sleep. Children also sing songs *(kimienya kie babana)* to enhance play, growth and learning. Children's plays involve imitating adults, by mimicking their roles, especially those of parents. They mainly role-play the activities performed by adults and simulate what they aspire to be when they grow up. Most of the games are usually accompanied by song and dance, which enhances interest and generates more fun. Among Babukusu, it is also common for children to play in the evenings, as a form of leisure after a day's duties or apprenticeship. Notably, song and dance dominates such games where the children play for enjoyment or in part to entertain their elders.

Puberty as a period of change from childhood to adulthood has a special ritual to mark the transition. This ritual is called initiation. During the ritual, songs *(Kimienya kie sikhebo)* are sung to encourage the initiates, educate them on their new roles as adults in the community as well as condemn those who do not partake of the ritual. *Sikhebo* refers to the entire process of initiation, where song and dance is performed in a rite called *khuminya*. During *khuminya,* the initiates play hand bells *(chinyimba),* as other people, irrespective of gender and age, join in to sing and dance.

In a marriage ceremony, songs *(Kimienya kie Siselelo)* are sung mainly to praise the bride and the bride groom. The songs also advise the couple on married life, wish them a successful union, entertain the visitors and bring merry to the occasion. These songs are mainly sung by women. The men also play a role, but their presence is also a symbol of security.

The songs sung vary at different stages of the marriage ceremony. For example, when bride groom's people arrive at the bride's home, they sing a song that is meant to beseech the bride's people to release her. In contrast, the bride's people sing a song in which they resist such overtures until they are properly appeased. They only sing a song to release the bride after they have been appeased.

Work is a virtue among *Babukusu.* Members of the community who are lazy are deemed as social misfits. The traditional economic activities of *Babukusu* were crop farming, pastoralism and craftsmanship, among others. These activities ensure availability of food and support the livelihoods of the people. When working, it is common for members of the community to sing for motivational purpose as well as condemning laziness. They also sing to beseech *Wele* (God) for rain and also to thank him for bountiful harvest. The songs sung when working are called *kimienya kie kimilimo*.

One of the important work activities where songs are sang is during harvesting of termites *(chiswa)*. A special wooden rattle *(kumwanjo)* is played as they sing to entice the termites to come out from the earth in plenty. Another work activity where songs are common is when women grind grains *(khusia busie/buufu)* using a stone *(Lususi)*. When ploughing, men also sing to encourage the oxen *(Chieyi)* to pull the mouldboard *(Esungura/Embako)* without tiring. These songs also keep the workers entertained as they do their chores.

When a member of the community dies, songs *(kimienya kie kamasika)* are sang to eulogize the deceased, remember the dead and console the bereaved family. Notably, professional

mourners who attend any and every funeral they can access are common among Babukusu. Their professionalism is based on the a unique sense of oratory that is depicted in the dirges they sing. In the dirges, they reveal knowledge of the community's clans, age sets, history, culture, virtues and vices, and family relationships.

Although singing is a communal activity, there are specialized lead singers or soloists. The term *Omwimbi,* generally refers to a person who leads others in singing. But the soloist is given different names depending on the occasion. This is because of the unique function the music plays. During a marriage ceremony, the lead singer is referred to as *Omuchelesi.* In the initiation ceremony, they are called *Owe sioyo,* whereas is social gatherings, they were known as *Omulai.* The lead singers were known to have specific hereditary musical talents that not all other persons possessed.

To understand the concept of music, I approached it from a point of whether the Bukusu participated in activities such as singing, dancing and playing instruments. Josephine Namarome stated that they sang songs (*khwimbanga kimienya).*[18] When requested to sing one of the songs, she started by shaking her shoulders then sung the song *tindikiti* (see clip *Vc.1*). She used the song to express her joy that a young person had visited and brought her sugar. Given her old age (92 years), she did not stand, but sat as she enjoyed, shaking her shoulders.

Throughout the research period for this book, such scenarios were common. When a respondent was requested to sing a song, they would start by dancing then followed by singing. However, others were able to perform the two actions concurrently. Their explanation for such musical behaviour was that songs were performed to be danced to. The oldest respondent (103 years) pointed out that, "If *omukhupetungu* beats a song and people do not dance, he is not *omukhupi.*"[19] This statement in essence means that whenever music was made, it was natural for people to dance. In the event that they did not, it meant that the song was boring and essentially lacked artistic significance as envisioned in the Bukusu cultural practice.

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[18] Personal interview with Josephine Namarome Wekesa, on 7th June 2017, at Ndengelwa Village, Bungoma East Sub-county.

[19] Personal interview with Wanyama Kalibola Fungututi, on 1st June 2017 at Ndalu Village Bungoma North Sub-county. The phrase "beat music" is a direct translation from the Bukusu language. It means to play the *Litungu.*

Apart from a single singer, I also endeavoured to establish how song was rendered by a group of people. While visiting three respondents, two sisters and their mother in Ndalu Village of Bungoma North Sub-county, they performed marriage songs upon request. They confirmed that in marriage ceremonies, mainly women performed songs and that is why they still found the songs most relevant. Women's voices make the ceremony more colourful, as they welcome a fellow woman to join their clan. More so, is the belief that the women are peace makers, hence they negotiate to ensure better relationships between the in-laws.

To explain how exceptional *Engubo emboela* (see Figure 6) is in the marriage ceremony, the two sisters cited a song that was performed to demonstrate its uniqueness. The song was performed after the bride was allowed to leave her parents' house. In the song, people sang about the beauty of the bride, her elegant dress, as well as praises of her clan. The song is transcribed in Excerpt 1 and Transcript 1 to show its content and structure.

In Excerpt 1, the terms 'Inputter' and 'Receivers' are used. These terminologies result from the fact that Babukusu refer to a person who leads a song as *Oramo kumwenywa* (the one who puts in the song). Earlier researches called the person 'leader'. The persons who respond are called *Babaakanila* (receivers of the song), regarded as response or chorus. This song text and all other transcriptions adopt the Bukusu terminologies, that is, 'inputter' and 'receivers' as a way of retaining the philosophy and musical thinking of the community.

Excerpt 1: *Engubo yeteya*

Bukusu words	**English translation**
Inputter: *Engubo yeteya*	The dress is stunning
Receivers: *Solola*	Look
Inputter: *Engubo yeteya*	The dress is stunning
Receivers: *Solola, engubo yeteya solola*	Look, the dress is glittering, look
Inputter: Naliaka *yeteya*	Naliaka is stunning
Receivers: *Solola*	Look
Inputter: Mbirira *yeteya*	Mbirira is stunning
Receivers: *Solola*, Mbiria *yeteya solola*	Look, Mbirira is glittering look
Inputter: Kutusi *yeteya*	Kutusi is stunning
Receivers: *Solola*	Look

Inputter: Machabe *yeteya*	Machabe is stunning
Receivers: *Solola*, Machabe *yeteya solola*	Look, Machabe is glittering, look
Inputter: *Engubo yeteya*	The dress is stunning
Receivers: *Solola*	Look
Inputter: *Engubo yeteya*	The dress is stunning
Receivers: *Solola, engubo yeteya, solola.*	Look, the dress is stunning, look.

The song above is calling upon the audience to come forth and see how the bride is adorned, graceful, beautiful and full of life. It further highlights praises of the bride's clan. In the above case, she is called Naliaka from *Banambobi, Mbirira, Kutusi,* and *Machabe,* names that typify the history, character and pride of this clan.

Apart from song text, I also transcribed the structural aspects of the song. The subsequent transcription and others follow Kubik's (1989) system of methodical approach to notation of African songs. Kubik's approach is premised on the fact that structurally, African songs are largely based on a frame of patterned elementary pulses. He, therefore, adapted the staff notation by incorporating numerous vertical lines to represent the respective elementary pulses.

The cycled number at the beginning of the staff indicates the number of pulses within a cycle. This is similar to the Western time signature. The vertical lines also connect sections for the 'inputter' and 'receivers' to demonstrate the embedded nature of song practice. Naming of the horizontal lines corresponds to the Western staff notation. In essence, such transcription not only shows the result of a performed construct, but also the logic behind its presentation in practice.

Transcript 1: *Engubo yeteya*[20]

Apart from *Engubo yeteya*, the two sisters and their mother also sang *Njolile* (I have arrived)[21] a song that was performed when a bride groom's party went to the bride's home to receive her. The song is transcribed in Excerpt 2 below.

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[20] Transcribed by the researcher on 2nd October 2018.

[21] Song performed by Nabusefu (girls from Basefu clan of the Bukusu community) and their mother Jane, on 1st June 2017 in Ndalu Village, Bungoma North Sub-county.

Excerpt 2: *Njolile*

Bukusu words	English translation
Inputter: *Njolile lelo njolile*	I have arrived; today I have arrived
Receivers: *Lelo njolile*	Today I have arrived
Inputter: *Njolile lelo njolile*	I have arrived; today I have arrived
Receivers: *Lelo njolile*	Today I have arrived
Inputter: *Busiele milumi kinjolela*	Every day you bother me
Receivers: *Lelo njolile*	Today I have arrived
Inputter: *Busiele milumi kinjolela*	Every day you bother me
Receivers: *Lelo njolile*	Today I have arrived
Inputter: *Busiele mumbakhile Omukhasi*	Every day you want to court for me a wife
Receivers: *Lelo njolile*	Today I have arrived
Inputter: *Busiele mumbakhile Omukhasi*	Every day you want to court for me a wife
Receivers: *Lelo njolile*	Today I have arrived
Inputter: *Aa*	Ah
Receivers: *Aa aa, lelo njolile*	Ah, ah, today I have arrived
Inputter: *Aa*	Ah
Receivers: *Aa aa, lelo njolile.*	Ah, ah, today I have arrived.

Inputter

Njo-li-le   le - lo   Njo-li-le   njo-li-le   le - lo   Njo-li-le

Receivers

Le-lo Njo-li-le

Clapping   X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . .

Bu-sie - le mi-lu-mi ki - njo-le-la   bu-sie – le mi-lu-mi ki-

Le-lo njo-li-le   le-lo njo-li-le

X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . .

Njo-le-la   aa_____

le-lo njo-li-le   aa   aa   le-lo njo-li-le

X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . . X . .

Transcript 2: *Njolile*[22]

The above transcription of *Njolile* makes use of phrase cycles, a typical characteristic of Bukusu songs. Whereas the structure is solo-chorus, a full phrase was essential to give it proper meaning. In the song, the bride groom is supposedly bragging and exuding confidence

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[22] Transcribed by the researcher on 3rd October 2018.

that "he has arrived" (to mean, the time was nigh). For the people who doubted and mocked him for not being able to get a bride, it has come to pass and he is ready to take her home.

Therefore, the song shows conviction and confidence in the man's ability to be a husband, characteristics that are supposed to convince the in-laws to trust him with their daughter. From Transcript 2 above, it can be argued that the conviction is supported by the design of the song where the response is articulated on an enhanced pulse. More so, the response is short enough for the chorus to achieve as much intensity that is also compounded by constant clapping.

Performance of this song is marked by singing and dancing, as the people move around in the arena. The reason given is that receiving a wife was never done while sitting; that is why in their demonstration; they danced in a processional formation to show movement towards the bride's home. They danced because they wanted to please the bride and make the ceremony colourful.

Through the singing, they also negotiated for the bride to be allowed to leave the house. This was done by appreciating the in-laws, their good deeds and praises that were typical of that particular clan. More so, they sung fondly about the good character of the bride groom, adding that he is hardworking and handsome. These praises were meant to prove that he was the most qualified man to marry the bride. Such information if well rendered by the singers, persuades the in-laws to release the bride quicker. Plate 11 below shows the two sisters demonstrating how the song is performed.

Plate 11: Demonstration of marriage song *Njolile*[23]

In Plate 11, the two sisters are dancing and singing in a processional formation. They are called Nabusefu, meaning girls from Basefu clan. That is because they prefer to be referred to by their clan name which is their pride. Here, they were demonstrating that during marriage, the bride groom's people left their home to go to the bride's home to fetch her. On arrival, they sang and danced, making salient movements that not only entertained the people, but indirectly helped to negotiate and convince the in-laws to release her from the house. The two singers indicated that poor singing was met by resistance from the bride's family. In most cases, they would decline to let her out of the house.

Instrumental practice

Instruments are an important part of material culture of *Babukusu.* They are played by people of different ages, gender and speciality. However, the function of a respective instrument also determines who can play it. A person who can play any instrument is called *Omukhupi.* Children (especially boys) have their instruments, which they play as they look after cows to entertain themselves. Children instruments include *Walubende,* an earth bow made from a tin, a sisal string and a peg that is driven into the ground. Children always play this instrument as

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[23] Picture of *Nabusefu,* taken by Mariano Gonzalez (research assistant) in Ndalu Village, on 23rd July 2017.

they sing. Since there is some mischief associated with songs that are sang when playing the instrument, children sing the songs mostly when they are on their own, far from the elders.

The other instrument for children is called *Chindulienge,* a reed. It is made from a reed with a natural hollow, which is slight on the side. Children make this instrument in different sizes, and it produces varied sounds in a kind of ensemble. Another children's "instrument" is called *sifwototo,* which produces high pitch sound when you fold two palms of the hand together and blow into them. In most cases, children play *sifwototo* to imitate birds, which are fooled to come by only to end up being hunted down. *Sifwototo* is also made from guava *(Lipera)* shells, where a mouth piece is carved and blown across. The instrument has one or two holes to vary sounds.

The instruments played by adults include *Litungu,* a 7-string lyre. This is the main instrument of Babukusu. *Litungu* is accompanied by *Bichenje,* a leg rattle made from iron and *Luengele,* a wooden rattle. *Litungu* was traditionally known to be a "male" instrument, though presently girls and women play it too. There is another *Litungu* that is played by women called *Litungu lie Bakhasi* (*Litungu* for women). This is a hand-held zither that is made from a dry sorghum stalk. The other instrument is *Siilili,* a 2-string fiddle that is played by bowing. When played on its own, *Siilili* is accompanied by the same instruments of the *Litungu* ensemble. In some instances, *Siilili* is also played together with *Litungu.* Plates 12 and 13 show pictures of *Litungu* and *Siilili.*

Plate 12: *Litungu*[24]

Plate 13: *Siilili*[25]

Drums are also common among *Babukusu,* including *Engóma,* which is made from a barrel and covered with animal skin on both sides. The drum is played in many occasions as people sing. There is, however, one such drum with a specific purpose; it accompanies *Bukhwana* (a dance performed to cleanse twins) called *Engóma yie Bukhwana.* It is similar in appearance to *Engóma* but bigger in size and produces louder sounds and so is the pitch deeper. The other drum is *Efumbo,* a goblet-shaped drum that has one open end. It is a special drum that is played by special persons, given that it is used to relay messages as well as musical functions.

According to Christopher Wanyama,[26] there were different types of *Efumbo,* depending on when the drum is played. For instance, when it is time for war, the player climbs on a hill and plays specific rhythmic patterns to announce to the public that there is impending warfare. This is called *Efumbo ye liiye* (*Efumbo* for war). During a marriage ceremony, *Efumbo is* played to entertain the gathering. This is referred to as *Efumbo yie Siselelo* (*Efumbo* for marriage ceremony).

Aerophones are also common among Babukusu. These include; *Lulwika,* a horn made from a buffalo or cow horn. It has one open end and a mouth piece on the side. Close to *Lulwika,* is *Ekhombi,* which is similar in appearance to *Lulwika* but smaller in size. It is usually made from an antelope horn. The two horns are used both for accompanying songs, as well as relaying messages.

In the instance of relaying messages, a special player who understands the respective motifs in relation to the message being transmitted is the one who blows it. The other aerophone is *Kumulele,* a flute with five finger holes blown at one end. It is made from bamboo stick (wood with a natural hollow). The flute is open on both ends, with a V-shaped mouth piece cut on one end. The player blows across the V-shape mouth piece as they open and close holes, using fingers, to vary the pitches. *Kumulele* is used to accompany songs and also as a solo instrument.

Idiophones are another common instrumental feature among Babukusu. These include *Bichenje,* ankle bells made from iron. They are worn on the leg by the *Litungu* player *(Omukhupetungu),* or *Siilili* player *(Omukhupi we Siilili),* as percussive accompaniment.

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[25] Picture taken by Mariano Gonzalez (research assistant) on 24th July 2017 at Miluki Primary School.
[26] Personal interview with Christopher Wanyama on 23rd July 2017 at Mayanja Village, Bungoma South Sub-county.

Luengele is a wooden base that a player strikes using two sticks *(Chimbengele)*. It is played alongside *Litungu* or *Siilili*.

The other instrument is *Chisasi,* a gourd rattle. *Chisasi* is used to accompany songs as well as for therapeutic purpose such as exorcising demonic powers. Many talented people play it when singing. But for therapeutic devotions, only special persons with spiritual inspiration from ancestors are allowed to play it.

When researching for this book, I met several instrumentalists. Before interviewing them, I requested them to demonstrate briefly how the instruments were played. It was interesting to observe that before they started playing the instrument, they would first confirm and re-adjust the tuning of the instruments.

In his words, Jackson Masinde indicated that the *Litungu* was supposed to 'talk' before you start playing it. 'Talking of the instrument' as he put it, was only possible when the strings had been given respective "voices" (*kimimilo*).[27] When I challenged him to give the string "voices", it turned out to be tuning of the instrument. This was marked by adjusting the tuning knobs (*Kamafundikho*).

To tune *Litungu,* he started by plucking the first string from left, after which he tuned the one on the extreme right. He explained that the first three strings on the left are called *Chisia chikhasi* (female strings)*,* whereas the remaining four are called *Chisia chisecha* (male strings). He kept on adjusting and readjusting the two strings until he reached a point where he was satisfied with the sounds produced. After listening keenly, I noted that the sounds were close to a tonal range of a perfect octave apart.

The string on the extreme right side is the higher one; it produced sounds of considerable microtones above a perfect octave. As he plucked each string, he also sounded the pitch with his voice while explaining that the *Litungu* was not supposed to 'exceed his voice.' Later, I discovered that he meant the sound was within his vocal range. He explained that the two strings at both the extreme ends are the most important, after which the others fall in place (to mean the other pitches were determined by the two). Plate 14 below shows the informant, Jackson Masinde, tuning his *Litungu* before he embarks on a performance.

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[27]Personal interview with Jackson Masinde on 25th July 2017, at Ndengelwa Village, Bungoma West Sub-county.

Plate 14: Tuning *Litungu*[28]

As you can see in Plate 14, Jackson Masinde is adjusting the tuning knobs (*Kamafundikho*) using his left hand while the right hand is plucking the strings (*Chisia*) to confirm the pitches. I tested such tuning on twelve (12) different *Litungu* using the same tuning system. One *Litungu* was then used to show the sample tuning represents the rest.

To achieve the exact pitch levels, I used a sonic visualiser computer program which captured the sounds of the *Litungu* strings by giving exact frequencies. Transcript 3a below shows the respective frequencies and pitches of the *Litungu* strings. These are also demonstrated in Clip *Vc.2*. On the transcript, string number one coincides with the first string (lowest) on the left side of the *Litungu*. The *Litungu* strings were numbered from left to right. The strings then graduate just like the pitches as indicated in the transcript below.

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[28] Jackson Masinde tuning *Litungu* (picture taken by Anderson Merklein (research assistant) in Ndengelwa Village on 25th July 2017).

String Number	Hertz	Cents	Interval in cents	Octave
1	159.5	8780.9		
			204.5	
2	179.5	8985.4		
			178.5	
3	199	9163.9		
			117.7	
4	213	9281.6		
			228.1	
5	243	9509.7		
			195.2	
6	272	9704.9		
			292.2	
7	322	9997.1		
				1216.45

Transcript 3a: *Litungu* tuning[29]

From the transcript above, intervals between *Litungu* strings were separated as follows; string one to two - 204.5, two to three - 178.4, three to four - 118, four to five - 228.2, five to six - 195.2, six to seven - 292.15 cents respectively. Besides, the intervals between respective adjacent notes showed variances. Ideally, a semi-tone should be 100 cents.

It was, however, noted that the process of tuning *Litungu* showed deviations from this norm. Intervals that were close to a full step (which should ideally be 200 cents) were the first and second (+4.5 cents), second and third (-21.5 cents), fourth and fifth (+28.1 cents) and fifth and sixth (-4.8 cents) strings. There was one interval that was close to semi-tone, that is, string number three to four with a deviation of +17.7 cents. The last one was closer to a minor third, that is, string six to seven, which was -7.8 cents. The total interval between the lowest and the highest note was 1216.45 cents, which is slightly above an octave (1200 cents). Based on the tuning of *Litungu* that was sampled, the tone system is demonstrated below on the staff;

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[29] Transcribed by the researcher on 4th October 2018.
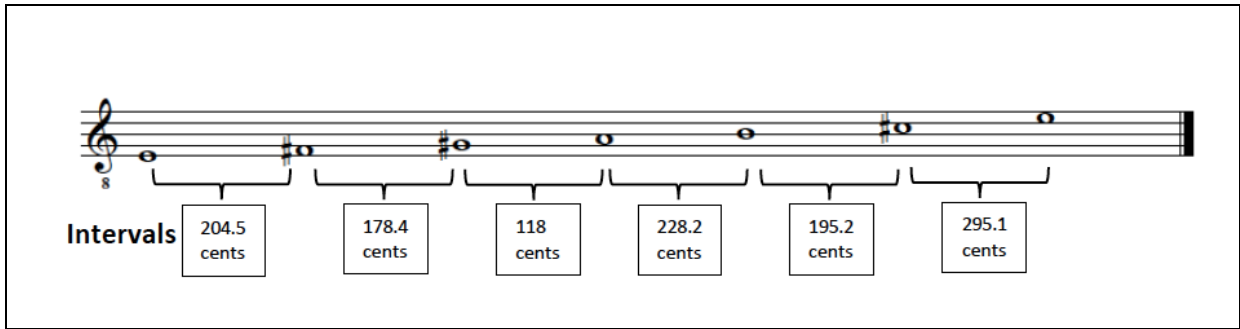
Transcript 3b: *Litungu* tuning on staff[30]

Whereas the staff indicates exact pitches as shown in the foregoing, there were frequency variances that similarly influenced the deviations on the intervals within this tuning system. Such deviations notwithstanding, the scale above seems to follow a system of 1, 1, 1/2, 1, 1, 1 and 1/2 tones, with six intervals. The tuning of the *Litungu* may, thus, be likened to a heptatonic scale system, but with a unique intervallic pattern and structure that is not equidistant. The tone system of the *Litungu* may be summarized in a pictorial representation as shown in Transcript 3c below.
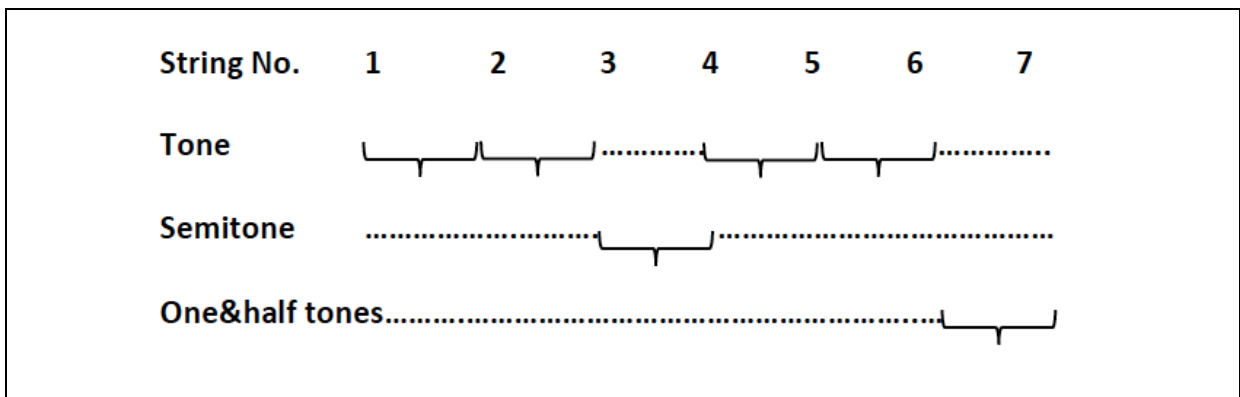
Transcript 3c: *Litungu* tone system[31]

Besides the tuning system, it was evident that during performance, the fingers of the left hand play the melody while those of the right hand play an ostinato. The interplay between fingers of both hands is characterized by interlocking or hocket technique that features alternate as well as combined articulation of the strings. This results in both melodic and harmonic renditions of the *Litungu*.

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Transcribed by the researcher on 4th October 2018.

Siilili (the fiddle) players similarly tune it before playing. The instrument has two strings attached to one knob. The tuning knob is adjusted repeatedly as both strings sound higher in pitch. After adjusting them to the preferred level, the lower string is pressed down, so that its pitch sounds lower than the upper one. The players did this several times until they felt comfortable that it was sounding in tune or harmonious. Tuning *Siilili* is delicate and needs considerable attention, as well as energy. In Plate 17 below, the instrumentalist has put the instrument on the ground to enable him to turn the tuning knob, which is made of metal. He tuned the two strings to a point where the lower one sounded a tonal interval of a fifth below the upper string.

When playing *Siilili*, the upper string sounds the melody while the lower string provides a kind of complementary drone. This combination produces a unique soothing harmony that is described as what makes the song "sweet", meaning the culturally desired sonic character. Without such tuning, the instrument essentially loses the cohesive interplay (*chisia chinonosiana*) of the strings that bring about the unique harmony. This is regarded as the culturally accepted sound of the instrument. Plate 17 below shows a fiddle player tuning his *Siilili*.

Plate 15: Tuning _Siilili_[32]

The _Siilili_ is tuned to the pitches in the following transcription.
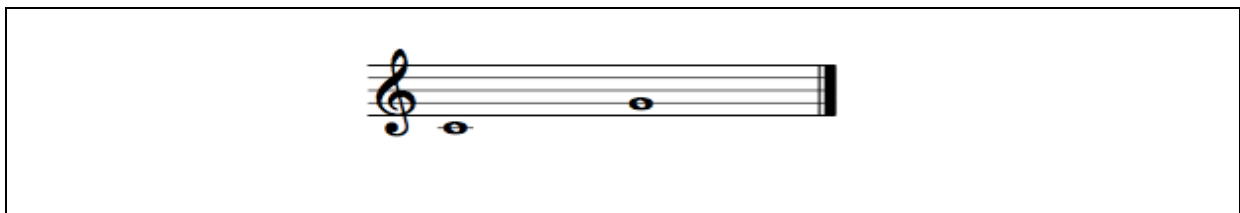
Transcript 4: _Siilili_ tuning on staff[33]

Drums are other instruments that are tuned to give them the desired relevant musical disposition. In a session with Juma Wataka, he explained that there are four drums (_Ching'oma,_ plural for _Eng'oma_) of varied sizes. The drums are tuned to certain pitches, which when played provide rhythmic as well as melodic effects. The different pitches enrich the music in a manner that people appreciate as the culturally accepted sounds.

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[32] Cleophas Wamalwa Wabomba tuning _Siilili_ (Picture taken by Mariano Gonzalez (research assistant) in Mayanja Village on 25th July 2017).

[33] Transcribed by the researcher on 4th October 2018.

Wataka equated the drums to a family where each one has a specific voice and is supposed to speak certain words depending on the roles they play.[34] He, therefore, puts the drums next to a fire so that each drum acquires its own 'voice' (pitch). Plate 16 below shows how the drums are tuned by warming them on a fire that is lit using papers.

Plate 16: Tuning *Ching'oma*[35]

The tuning process takes close to fifteen (15) minutes. During the process, the drummer keeps hitting them gently to ascertain whether they have achieved the correct "voice" (pitch). Towards the end, he plays the drums in succession to determine the harmony of the pitches, from one drum to the other.

The intriguing process of tuning Bukusu music instruments challenged me to establish how the correct pitches are achieved. Apparently, the drummists learnt the tuning system and process by keenly watching and listening to how the older musicians, who mostly were their relatives, did it. With time, they were able to turn the knobs, memorize the pitches and tell when the instrument was on or out of tune.

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[34] Personal interview with Juma Wataka on 18th July 2017, at Muyayi Village, Bungoma West Sub-county.

[35] Picture taken by Mariano Gonzalez (research assistant) in Muyayi Village, on 18th July 2017.

The process of learning how to tune music instruments is quite similar to how they learn how to play the instruments. Jackson Masinde[36] pointed out that if one played an instrument that was off tune, any listener would easily tell. He said, "Even your mother here in the kitchen will know the *Litungu* does not produce the correct voices." This, he explained, was the case because an incorrectly tuned *Litungu* does not intone the song as required (*selibuula bulayi ta*). His statement confirmed that knowledge about instruments and music at large is not restricted to the musicians only. The knowledge is common to other members of the community.

After tuning the instruments, the players embark on performance. Once they have played for a considerable length of time, they start narrating. The narration is done in form of the spoken word or chanting discourse. After a fair length of narration, the musicians resort to singing as the instruments play on. In the course of the performance, there were instances where only the instruments are played for substantial durations before song and/or narration is re-introduced. This is done over and over again until the end of the performance. Figure 7 below illustrates the form and structure of the songs described above.
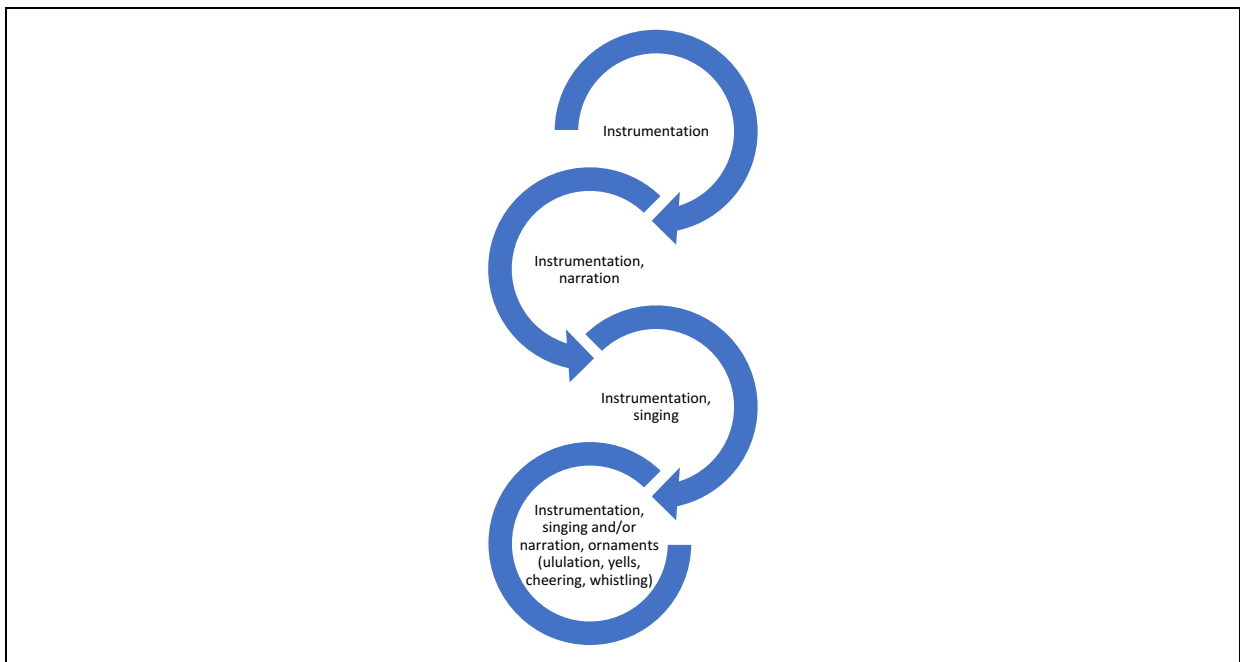

Figure 7: Form and structure of Bukusu performance[37]

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[36] Jackson Masinde, Ibid.
[37] Developed by the researcher based on the study findings.

The performance of songs and playing of instruments is based on cycles of instrumentation, narration, song and ornaments. These are introduced alternately and/or in combination. Figure 7 is an illustration of the basic form of a performance. However, the cycles are repeated with new thematic, textual and sonic material to create variation. More so, they repeat to achieve a desired duration of performance, so that the song can last as long as the event does. From Figure 7, instrumentation means the combined performance of any Bukusu instruments, depending on the ensemble formation as dictated by the needs of respective events.

It is also interesting to observe how the musicians behave when playing the instruments. Stamping of one foot is a common practice especially among *Litungu* and *Siilili* players. They also shake their heads, depending on the different styles the players undertook. Additionally, they also shake their shoulders to accompany the playing. Some shake shoulders while sitting, whereas others stand to dance as they play on.

Asked why they were able to play instruments, sing, and gesture and dance interchangeably and/or simultaneously, the musicians explained that, "the song enters one's blood." That is why they made all the movements naturally without them thinking about them. This statement in essence means that music has an affective consequence that motivates body movements. This characteristic of combined activity in music making is captured in clip *Vc.3*, showing a band playing as they sing and dance.

Hardly was any instruments played on its own. In most instances, more than one instrument was played at the same time. On requesting Anicet Wafula to play the *Litungu*, he first tied jingles (*Bichenje*) onto the ankle of his right leg. He explained that *Bichenje* is an important accompaniment when playing *Litungu*. Without it, the performance sounds desolate. He further explained that the jingles help him "to get the direction of the song."[38] On interrogating this statement as he played, I realized that he meant maintaining the rhythm. In the performance, he played the *Litungu,* sang along and played *Bichenje.*

After two songs, he requested one of his grandsons to call some people. Two of his uncles came, one of whom was a *Siilili* (fiddle) player and the other a *Luengele* (wooden rattle)

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[38] Personal interview with Anicet Wafula on 8th June at Ndengelwa Village, Bungoma West Sub-county.

player. They formed an ensemble in which they played four instruments in combination. They explained that playing different instruments simultaneously made the music sound 'sweeter', meaning richer in sound and texture. The Bukusu term for 'sweet' in this regard is *kumunulu.*

It was further clarified that in the instance of performance in the dance-arena (*Mubukhino*), such an enriched sound made the attendees dance more and in return give gifts to the musicians.[39] It was interesting to observe how they played, sang, narrated and danced simultaneously during the performances. Clip *Vc.4* shows the group playing together in their *ad hoc* ensemble formed on the afternoon that they were interviewed. All the groups that were researched on behaved the same way when an assortment of instruments was played.

Dance practice

Apart from song and instrumentation, dance is also practised among Babukusu. Munialo Kane points out that the main dances in the Bukusu community were *Kamabeka* (shaking shoulders) and *khusuna singorio* (stylized leaps). He further explained that dancing involved movement of shoulders because the community valued decency especially in dance, which is always a communal activity. Movement of the shoulders or better said, the upper part of the torso, cannot be said to be indecent. On the contrary, suggestive dancing during public performance is regarded as obscene and socially unacceptable.[40] Suggestive dances here mainly involve gyration of hips or buttocks.

Munialo Kane also opined that there exists a dance in the Bukusu community where suggestive dances were permitted. The dance, called *Bukhwana*, was performed after the birth of twins. It was an isolated ritual where suggestive body movements were accepted. This dance was performed in a ritual that was meant to allow the mother of the new-born twins to leave her house (release from seclusion). More so, it was performed to thank the gods for the birth of twins as an unusual occurrence.

Few people (mostly those who had ever given birth to twins) attended the ceremony. They danced to a drum (*eng'oma yie Bukhwana,* drum for twins) that seemingly talked (it played forms of speech surrogates). He demonstrated that the drum usually said *khina okitukhe,*

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[39] Personal interview with Anicet Wafula, Lukas Sore and Jackson Masinde on 8th June at Ndengelwa Village, Bungoma West Sub-county.

[40] Personal interview with Munialo Kane on 16th June 2017 at Nalutiri Village, Bungoma East Sub-county.

khina okitukhe (dance until your back breaks). The dance was characterized by sexually explicit movements, seemingly, to show off the exemplary skills that resulted in conceiving twins.

During the dance, people used vulgar and obscene language without any form of self-censorship. Following this ritual dance, any movement of the waist came to be referred to as *Bukhwana*. In a dance-arena where etiquette, respect and decency were of essence, any person whose dance involved movements of the waist was rebuked and sent away for being immoral in their physical expressions.

Dance in the Bukusu community was meant to not only depict but also instil and educate the people on the need for decorum, decency and respect, especially in public spaces. Unfortunately, I did not find any respondent who was willing to demonstrate *Bukhwana*, given its moral implication. They said that it was 'bad manners' (not socially appropriate), to be performed in broad day light, especially before me who was much younger than most of the respondents. The interactions were essentially captivating because the respondents elaborated on varied issues related to dances. However, the topic of *Bukhwana* was received with low mummers and subdued energy, due to its unenthusiastic social implications in the society.

Any time I requested any of the respondents to dance, they could not without playing an instrument. In some instances, they opted to sing as they danced. But in cases where instruments were played, the dancing to the beats came naturally. Therefore, song and/or instrumentation and dance complemented one another. Margaret Sella dispelled the notion that there existed dance without song and/or instrumentation.[41] "What would you be dancing to?" she exclaimed.

Sella explained that instruments always 'sang songs' (played melodies), and 'songs said words' (communicated messages). The lyrics, messages and beats of songs motivated people to dance. Sella further pointed out that when people danced to songs, they "gave the instrumentalist energy (motivation) to play better." A fundamental practice in Bukusu music, therefore, is the inseparable combination of song, dance, narration, poetry, drama and instrumentation.

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[41] Personal interview with Margaret Sella on 20th July 2017 at Naitiri Village, Kimilili Sub-county.

Structural significance

The combined nature of performance was also exemplified in instances where there were no instruments. As an alternative, the informants tapped, stamped their feet, clapped or found a simple object to hit for to get the rhythm. This may be considered as improvisation of instruments, which brought to fore the idea that singing or dancing is not sufficient. An extra component is needed for the performance to achieve a more culturally revealing structural dimension. It was found out that they always needed something to help the instrumentalists get the "direction of the song". A keen observation on how they played instruments and sang, revealed that the "direction of the song" meant rhythm. The combination of several performance facets is, therefore, a way of achieving better rhythmic harmony and firmness. The two pictures in Plate 17 below show instances where the informants improvised to achieve rhythmic accompaniment.

Improvised *Eng'oma*   Improvised *Luengele*

Plate 17: Improvised instruments[42]

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[42] Pictures taken by Anderson Merklein (research assistant) in Mayanja and Ndengelwa villages on 25th July 2017, respectively.

The first picture shows a drummist playing; note the focus on his band leader who is a *Siilili* player. The drummer is beating a "drum" improvised from a water jerry because he did not have one then. The drummer explained that the water container is a fair substitute given that it has a hole that lets out sound. More so, the plastic is elastic enough to vibrate and produce the desirable sound.

The second picture shows an instrumentalist playing a wooden rattle. The bench is put on the ground and hit with four sticks (two in each hand). It is like a *Luengele,* which again the musician did not have, but improvised because he had the desire to perform. Such instances of improvisation reveal that rhythm is paramount especially in performance, hence the need for an instrument to give the rhythm. To further exemplify the need for rhythm, Plate 18 below shows an old woman standing up to sing and dance. But given that there was no instrumentalist, she decided to clap her hands in order to create for herself a rhythmic foundation.

Plate 18: Rhythmic clapping[43]

Given the importance of rhythm as highlighted above, *Chinyimba* (wrist bells)*, Bichenje* (metallic leg rattle)*, Chimbi* (clapping) and *Eng'oma* (drum) have a similar rhythm despite

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[43] Picture taken by Mariano Gonzalez (research assistant) in Ndalu Village, on 24th July 2017.

the fact that the styles of playing them differ. *Luengele,* however, depicts almost similar rhythm but with remarkable distinction in terms of metric components yet maintaining the same metre. The transcription in Transcript 4 shows the two predominant rhythms that were achieved by the respective rhythm instruments. The transcription format follows Kubik (1979) system of notating timeline patterns for African rhythms in Brazil. In the timeline patterns, Kubik sought to demonstrate how certain patterns keep recurring; a feature that was common among the Bukusu rhythms that I encountered too. Additionally, such patterns fall in certain mathematical configurations. Any alteration to the patterns is, therefore, only achieved within the existing configurations.

Key:

LH – Left hand, **RH** – Right hand, **x** – regular accent, **x** – strong accent, x – Weak accent
• - silence

Transcript 5: Dominant rhythmic patterns (*Luengele*)[44]

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[44] Transcribed by the researcher on 15th October 2018.

Bichenje	* •• * •• * •• * •• * •• * •• * •• * •• * ••
Chimbi	‖ •• ‖ •• ‖ •• ‖ •• ‖ •• ‖ •• ‖ •• ‖ •• ‖ ••
Khusinyila	⊥ •• ⊥ •• ⊥ •• ⊥ •• ⊥ •• ⊥ •• ⊥ •• ⊥ •• ⊥ ••
	L R L R L R L R L

Key:

*, ‖ , ⊥ - rhythmic pulses for *Bichenje* (jingle), *Chimbi* (clapping) and *Khusinyila* (stumping) respectively.

• - silence, L — left leg, R – right leg

• - silence, L – left leg, R – right leg

Transcript 6: Dominant rhythmic patterns (*Bichenje, Chimbi, Khusinyila*)[45]

Transcript 5 shows the different rhythmic variations that were produced by the wooden rattle (*Luengele*), which is played using sticks held in both hands. The transcription demonstrates movement of both hands as well as the created sound. Rhythmically, the pattern is similar yet differentiated by accents.

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[45] Transcribed by the researcher on 15th October 2018.

Transcript 6 shows a common rhythmic pattern produced by three different instruments. In the transcription though, different symbols are used to show that distinctive parts of the body are involved. The resultant sound is different due to the mechanism and material involved in its production. For stumping, the symbols **L** and **R** are used to show movement of the legs as the mechanism that produces the sound.

Visual arts and performance

Performance that brings together many facets is incomplete without other visual arts. Munialo Kane explained how *khusuna singorio*[46] (stylized leaps) dance was performed. First, the male dancers, especially in olden days, kept curled long hair. They applied ochre (*Kumutoba*) on the hair for colour effect and to maintain the curls.

In Bukusu language, such hair styling is called *Buyuni.* Given that *khusuna singorio* entails jumping and vertical movement of the head, the curled hair enhanced and/or elaborated the rendition of the dance. When performed in a group, *Buyuni* made patterns, which were appreciated by the audience.

During the research, I did not come across any person with this type of hair style. Figure 6 shows a drawing that was fashioned to demonstrate the appearance of *Buyuni*. The illustration of this hair style is as a result of descriptions that were given by the respondents. *Buyuni* is a result of visual art, which in many ways embellishes the art of *Khusuna singorio.*

Apart from hair styling, performers put on costumes. Girls wear skirt-like dresses called *Chinyinja.* These are made from strips of banana fibre, thin sheets of aluminium metal and strings of animal skin.[47] The skirt-dress is worn by girls when they perform *Kumukongo.* Seemingly, girls are most suited to dance *Kumukongo*[48] (the back) version of *Kamabeka* dance, where movement of the back is emphasized. This kind of dress is meant to embellish movement of the back – making the dance more elaborate. Unfortunately, I did not come across any people wearing such dresses. Seemingly, they were used much earlier by the

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[46] This is a special dance that involves jumping up and shaking the head with grace and glare. It was mainly danced by men of the age sets *Basawa* and *Bakolongolo* who were initiated in the years 1888-1898 and 1900-1910 AD respectively.

[47] Description of how this dress is made was in an interview with Josephine Namarome on in Ndengelwa Village, Bungoma West sub-county.

[48]There are three types of *Kamabeka dance,* that is *Kumukongo* where the back is emphasized, *Bitenga* where shoulders are shaken rapidly, and *Kumuchenje* that emphasizes that head.

generation of some of the elderly informants. Nowadays, they do not make and/or use them anymore. From the description of the dress by the informants, I fashioned a drawing of how the dress looked like (see Figure 4). Such dresses and body make-up, therefore, embellish music performance in varied proportions.

Song text

The individual components of music interact to contribute to effectiveness of performance. However, the role of song text as an essential component of Bukusu music was emphasized by all respondents. Seemingly, the Babukusu listen carefully to the words that *Omwimbi* (singer) sings. Through song text, music plays many important roles. For example, Christopher Wanyama[49] explained that a musician assumes the roles of *khuchuuba* (challenging and encouraging), *khukambila* (advising), *khusomia* (educating) and *khubiita* (giving a way forward). These roles are achieved using song text that carries the message embodied in the songs.

Apart from the sung song text, it is also common practice that whenever an instrumentalist starts playing, they incorporate a narration. In the narrative, they introduce themselves (*khukhwetacha*); where they come from, their clan and its pride (*enono*), then welcome the audience to listen to the song. Such identity is borrowed directly from how the people introduce themselves in their normal day-to-day lives, or greet each other. In most cases, they praise their clan's past heroic acts. For example, a person from *Bakhone clan* would introduce himself as follows;

> "*Efwe Bakhone, bariti bamalukwa, bamwalie basila mbongo, khwambukhila khuluusi.*"[50]

This means that they are from *Bakhone* clan, *Bariti,* those who used to take away people's meat without requesting*,* their uncles are *Bamalukwa Bamwalie* clan who did not eat antelope (Kudu) meat. They crossed river Nzoia on a suspension bridge that was made from sisal ropes.

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[49] Christopher Wanyama, Ibid.
[50] Chris Wasike, unpublished thesis titled *Kumuse.*

One of the most revered circumcisers in Bungoma County, a profession that he has practiced for forty-nine (49) years, introduced himself as;

> *"Ese pasta Japheth Simiyu omusaba omukhaloba omunambae omuebatela chililia omwene Maeso."[51]*

In the introduction, he states his name as 'Pastor' Japheth Simiyu, from the clan called *Babasaba bakhaloba.* He is titled 'Pastor' because his work (circumcision) was religious in nature and that God's guidance and providence enabled him to successfully carry it out. He further explains that the state of being a circumciser is God-given. For that reason, no one is ever trained to be a circumciser; instead, they receive anointment from the deity.

Japheth Simiyu cited two proverbs to demonstrate that such talents are God-given and that they run through family lineage; *"Bubasi bulondanga silibwa"* to mean that iron working or mongering follows the 'gate'. This proverb in essence means that the talent of iron moulding is hereditary (it follows the family lineage (gate)). It points to the fact that certain trades run through specific families and clans. The other proverb he cited was, *"Bukhebi bulondanga ekholo"* which means that being a circumciser is founded on clan lineage. The proverb clarifies that not all people can be circumcisers. It is only a few, in whose family such talent is evident.

Another respondent who introduced himself, stating heroic acts of his clan was Wanyama Kalibola Fungututi. While playing his *Litungu,* he narrated;

> *"Ese Wanyama Kalibola Fungututi, omumeme omuneala nasakami, ngulani mitungu, sikula mianda."[52]*

In this incidence, he reveals that his name is Wanyama Kalibola Fungututi, of *Bameme* clan, who came from *Mwiala.* He further explains that *Bameme* clan were respected because they lived at the place (*Mwiala*) where initiation, the most revered ritual of the entire community, was founded. The act of initiation was founded by a man called Mango of the *Bakhurarwa* clan.

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[51] Personal interview with a traditional circumciser "Pastor" Japheth Simiyu Sindani on 21st August 2017, in Bukembe Village, Bungoma East Sub-county.
[52] Personal interview with Wanyama Kalibola Fungututi, on 1st June 2017 at Ndalu Village Bungoma North Sub-county.

In the introduction, *mitungu* meant that they were the players of the *Litungu,* hence the leading musicians in the Bukusu community. *Sikula mianda* (rock openers), means that they create options, especially in moments of desperation. That is why they are called Bameme, which is derived from *khumeema* (to carry), hence the ones who carry others.

The above three examples of how people introduced themselves, respectively, exemplify the diversity of Babukusu through their clan system. Such introductions usually demonstrate how unique each clan is from the rest, but remains attached to, and of importance to the entire community. It reveals the people's history, pride (*enono*), unique achievements, taboos (*Kimisilo*) and above all their talents (*Kimikabo*). Such information is revealed in the introductory statements that are made by instrumentalists through narration sessions. The introductions show how musicians are a repository of Bukusu historical facts, as revealed during their performances.

Apart from the introductory sections, narration was also evident when the musicians identified and/or recognized (*khulaa*) members of the audience. In such instances, the musician mentioned the name, clan and heroic deeds of the desired person, at the end of which they invited him or her to come and speak. The narration by members of the audience took place as the instruments continued playing alongside dancing by the rest of the audience. Excerpt 3 below shows how a *Siilili* player recognized his host in a narration that was done in the course of performance.

Excerpt 3: *Khulaa*

Bukusu words	**English translation**
Siilili Player: Wananjofu *kekhale, babuyila*	Wananjofu is sitting, they praise him
Basakwa niye	He is my in-law
Basakwa,	In-law
Wanyama: *Ndi ano*	I am here
Siilili player: *Mungo muno oriena ne babandu boo?*	How is this home with your people?
Wanyama: *Tawe Wele kakhuanyilekho kamanyasi*	God has showered us with blessings

Khwabone enyanga	We have seen this day
Siilili Player: *orioo,*	Thank you
Wase okachulangakho wakana	Please say something
Oloma yuno alomela kumuchilo	I am speaking with all the zeal
Busia buri salio ta	I may not speak for ever
Khekhuchwanjwania papa	I am motivating you
Ne sibala sikhubala	And the world is counting us
Wambwele: *Asandi papa omupeni*	Thank you musician
Nakhubone ne bakeni	I have seen you with visitors
Ne lusia lwoo kholukenda	with your instrument
Omwiwana wase alia no	My nephew is here
Kechile khubona kukawe	He has come to see his grandfather
Nasangalile nabi.	I am most grateful.

In the performance, the *Siilili* player recognizes the owner of the home Christopher Wanyama aka "Wananjofu", and also invites him to speak. The owner of the home acknowledges that they are peaceful, because of the providence of God, the giver. The musician goes ahead to request another man (Wambwele) who is sitting next to the owner of the home to also talk. Wambwele acknowledges the presence of the visitors and thanks the *Siilili* player for the music that he is making for them. Through such narration, there is unity of purpose in the music making process. The people in attendance not only comment on the music but help in its thematic development. Interestingly, textual development is achieved by incorporating the audience who render the performance a communal activity.

Textual development is further enhanced through stylistic design of how the song is presented. One of the styles common among Babukusu, is in form of a hidden story (*Lukano*). Kennedy Nandasaba described one of his favourite songs titled *Maayi muro* (step-mother)[53] that was performed by Wanyonyi Omukoyi. The song talks about a step-mother who never offers befitting love to a child as a biological mother should. In telling the story further, it

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[53] Personal interview with Kennedy Nandasaba on 4th June 2017 in Chemwa Village, Bungoma South Sub-county. Nandasa explained the meaning of the song titled *Maayi Muro,* that was performed by Wanyonyi Omukoyi.

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turns out that the song is lamenting that Bukusu politicians have left their own political party to join another one, which is not benefiting the local people.

Notably, the change of the political allegiance is compared to taking a child to be brought up by another woman who is not their biological mother. The foster-mother, the singer laments, would not offer better love than that of a biological mother. In essence, the second political party (step-mother) did not meet the needs of Babukusu. It would have been better, he sings, for Babukusu to remain in their own party through which they could bargain on how best to benefit their population. The song uses a hidden story approach in order to convey the politically loaded message yet mapped on a simple message of a step-mother. Given this approach, a listener who focuses only on the story of the step-mother, may be lost for a while, only to discover the hidden message later. The style of the song is captured in **Excerpt 4** below;

Excerpt 4: *Maayi muro*

Bukusu words	**English translation**
Inputter I: *Yuno* Wanyonyi *omukoyi*	This is Wanyonyi
Omusererwa omuniambi	From Basererwa Banianiambi clan
Omusila mekhalilo	The ones who defy sitting
Mbechanga oli ndila	Whenever I cry
Bali khalimo khulila	They complain that I cry
Nekhale ne Nyongesa wa Wambasi	I am with Nyongesa son of Wambasi
Babukusu nendila ndio	Bukusu people I cry like that
Ngobola mu bami befwe	I come back to our leaders
Bama khale bababiya	From long ago they take issue with them
Khayo mbabolele nyanga ya luno	Let me say the day is here
Bakhubukula munju mwefwe	You are taking us from our house
Bakhurusia munju mwefwe	Removing us from our house
Bakhuyila munju ya maayi	Taking us to the house of another mother
Ekholo ng'ali eyo ekindi busa	To another clan
Bali paapa kasiimamo	Father loves there
Bali sikila kasiima yo	He loves there
Bakhukusia nga chinyanya	They are selling us like tomatoes

Bakhuyila khumunanda	They take us to the animal auction
Bali wa maayi omutiti	To our step-mother
Nakhalola sekhunyola	I cannot understand
Kumukasa khakunania	Leadership is elusive
Mwekhale nende emonyo	Share a secret
Khane mwekhale nende omukuta	Yet sitting with the one backbiting
Mweika ng'ali lulomo lwenywe	Learn your own language
Oli mwemonya wakasuta	After you talk they carry it all
Wayilila barandukha	Take it to the ones with slit ears
Wayilila balata ng'eni	To the fish castrators
Ali Babukusu balomile	That the Bukusu said this
Mwakhabaka khu tolondo	When you were sharing a secret
Bali semufaula kakenywe	You do not make head way in you endeavour
Ese mureba	I ask you
Mukhuyilanga munju yino	You are taking us to this house
Ya maayi ng'ali omutiti	The one of the step-mother
Mala nakhalola sindu mbamo	When I look, nothing is there
Maayi omutiti ng'ali sakhuyeta	Step-mother does not help
Abanga ng'ali omulayi niye	If she was good
Andi busomi ng'ali khwasoma	We would have schooled
Bali nakhalola busomi	When I review education
Khane busomi bubi nibwo	Education is bad
Bali chiparapara sekhunyola	We do not get the roads
Enyama bakabana bong'ene busa wase	They share the meat alone
Bali maayi omutiti chana,	The same step-mother
Biboko akhupa buli nyanga	She canes us every day
Enywe khamwime silala	You stand as one
Mukanakane ya mulembe	Think about the house of Mulembe
Mukhusie owenywe mulala	Grow one of your own
Khurame munju ya maayi	We remain in our mother's house
Yakhaba ng'ali nesulula	Even if it leaks

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Khucha eluchi khwala kimilele	We can go the riverside and get napier grass
Namwe khucha eluchi khwarema kamakololwe	or reeds
Namwe khucha khwakhaa akhaba bunyasi	Or we get thatching grass
Mala khwabimba enju yefwe	Then we roof our house
Khwakibimba ekhasulula	So that it does not leak
Mwalekhile enju yenywe	You have left your house
Mutimaka mu yabene	Rushing to one that is not your own
Balebe ng'ali moyo kwalila	My relatives my heart cries
Mukharura mu yenywe	Do not leave your house

Inputter II: *Mbuka busa kali munda*	I wonder what is in the stomach
Khane Baluyia khuli mwima	Luhya people have a culture
Khane ng'ali efwe khwama atayi	We came from far
Bakhaloma sekhubola	We do not let out a secret
Khane Babukusu khwiyike elomo	We have secrets
Khane nabutondo nikho khakhoo	The small one is your own
Khane nasietuba nasiebanda	The meagre one
Enywe mwabene ng'ali mwaulile	Your have heard it yourselves
Wanyonyi *nga aloma ario*	What Wanyonyi is saying
Kalomile enyanga yakwa	He spoke till dusk
Basoleli be kamaani.	Energetic man.

Inputter I*: Ndile busa moyo kwaloma*	I cry the heart has spoken
Bali mubolela mukhaleka	I tell you do not despise
Muulile kemumwenywe	Listen to what is your own
Khuungane kumukhono	Let us unite
Khwonge na lumelela	To line up like safari ants
Mala khurobore omuruki	Let us choose a leader
Mukharobora mwana siasa	Do not choose a politician
Roborakho omuruki	Chose a leader
Abe nga Mumia wa Nabongo	To be like Mumia Nabongo
Abe nga Masinde wa Muliro	Like Masinde Muliro

Maayi muro	Step-mother
Receivers: *Maayi muro*	Step-mother
Maayi muro sali maayi	Step-mother is not mother.

In the first paragraph of the song, the singer introduces himself as Wanyonyi from Bakooyi clan. He also introduces his co-singer, Nyongesa, the son of Wambasi. He goes on to describe the character of a step-mother who makes the step-child perform all house and farm duties. During meal time, the step-child is sent out only for the others to eat all the food while he or she is away. Such character exemplifies how unloving the step-mother is. In the song, the singer compares the character of the step-mother to the way the leaders in the Bukusu community have shifted allegiance to another political party.

The singer laments that the strangers (in the new party) are only seeking secrets from Babukusu but will not help them. Despite the so-called alliance that they have formed, education, roads and other social amenities are still in deplorable conditions. The musician, therefore, is advising the people to get back together and form a united political front for their community in order to realise better returns.

In the song, change of allegiance to a different political party is likened to being taken to a step-mother's house, in which there is no love. The style of presenting a musical idea is well typified in the allegory employed in this song. An interesting character of the song is how ideas are presented in a way that provokes and challenges people to further seek for the hidden meaning.

Besides the style of textual development, certain stylistic devices (*khukobia chilomo*) are employed in order to enhance the communicative as well as aesthetic character of a song. Kennedy Nandasaba[54] identified the following devices; *Lusimo* (proverb), *Lukaato* (metaphor) *Kumunayi* (riddles), and *Chingacho* (comic language). Such figurative language gives the listeners an opportunity to ponder over the message being communicated. The anxiety created in trying to figure out the desired message, makes people enjoy the song even better, besides appreciating the beauty of the Bukusu language. The respondents pointed out that not using such a rich language renders a performance unappealing, a scenario that prompts the audience to call on another musician to play.

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[54] Kennedy Nandasaba, Ibid.

To understand the significance of the above stylistic devices, I sampled few songs in which they were used. The use of a riddle (*Kumunayi*) for instance, was captured in the song titled "*Enombela*" (**Excerpt 5**) that was performed by Wasike wa Musungu, as reproduced below:

Excerpt 5: *Enombela*

Bukusu words	**English translation**
Amanyile khulola	He knows how to see
Sibala sino Wele	This world God knows
Silimo siliomo nende ekhoyo	It has happiness
Amanyile khumanya	He knows how to know
Wa Musungu *noma*	Son of Musungu I say
Reuben *naloma*	Reuben I say
Nyokha fwesi khukhine	Stand up all let us dance
Baluyia naloma	The Luhya I say
Yinyokha mwesi khukhine	Stand up all and let us dance
Bachaluo naloma	The Luo I say
Yinyokha mwesi khukhine	Stand up all we dance
Ebulokoli nakenda	In Maragoli I travel
Yinyokha mwesi khukhine	Stand up all we dance
Enombela yenyokha	The offshoot has germinated
Yinyokha mwesi mukhine	Stand up and dance
Manyile khulola	He knows how to look
Ese wa Musungu *kha nelome*	Son of Musungu I say
Mwana omunyange	Of the Banyange age set
Wema kane na munane khanome	I stood in 1948
Ngobole Ebung'oma	I come back to Bungoma
Ewefwe erurare niyo	Our home is poor
Okhaulila mbindo	Do not hear the footsteps
Welukha omukeni	You run away from the visitor
Yibasia kumoyo	Think your heart
Kenda mbola kola aleyi khanome	The slow and sure one
Babukusu naloma	Babukusu I say

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Yinyokha mwesi mukhine   Stand up and dance

Enombela yenyokha.   The potato offshoot is here.

To understand the meaning of the song in **Excerpt 5**, Ann Namalwa[55] clarified that sweet potatoes, *Kamapwoni,* were one of the staple food for Babukusu. Potatoes were harvested using a special tool called *Kumusa.* The tool was used to dig the soil and remove the root tubers, one after another. When the plantation matured, they used a hoe (*Embako*) to uproot potatoes in a process called *khuremaka,* where the smallest sticking tubers were removed from the soil.

It was, however, noted that in the process, some of the tubers were never completely removed. They ended up germinating anew and growing into sweet potato vines. While the focus of *khuremaka* was to uproot the entire plantation, in a way, some ended up re-germinating. The mystery of how such potatoes re-germinated is demonstrated in one of the Bukusu riddles below. When one starts, he is said to be "beating the riddle" (*khukhupa kumunayi*) whereas the people who respond 'receive it'. The two positions are therefore referred to as 'beater' and 'receivers' respectively.

	Bukusu	**English translation**
Beater:	*Namunayi*	Riddle, riddle
Receivers:	*Kwichee*	Riddle come
Beater:	*Tondo wafwa, tondo wakobola*	As if dead but comes to life
Receivers:	*Enombela*	Sweet potato re-germination

The riddle seeks to show what in nature appears to be dead yet later comes to life. The answer to this riddle is the sweet potato re-germination. Wasike wa Musungu uses this riddle in the song *Enombela,* to illustrate to the people how powerful, able and up-to-task Michael Kijana Wamalwa[56] was as a leader. In addition to these leadership characteristics, his oratory skills were remarkable. The essence of citing Wamalwa's leadership ability was because, for some time, the Babukusu had been mourning the demise of their most revered leader,

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[55] Personal interview with Ann Namalwa on 21st July 2017 at Chebukwa Village, Bungoma South sub-county.
[56] Michael Kijana Wamalwa is Kenyan politician who fought for the multiparty democracy. He later rose to be the eight vice president of the republic of Kenya.

Masinde Muliro,[57] who according to the respondents was allegedly was believed to have been assassinated.

Through this riddle, the musician strives to console the community, by assuring them that Masinde Muliro died, but was alive in Michael Kijana Wamalwa, who equally has good leadership skills. The musician gives the community hope and urges them to support the new leader to realize their political ambitions. The suggestion that Wamalwa also has Muliro's leadership aspirations and abilities can be likened to the re-germination process of a potato plantation. It was uprooted (assassinated in the case of politics), only for a new potato plant to re-germinate (the new leader – Michael Kijana Wamalwa). Because of the use of stylistic devices such as the riddle in the song described above, the music of Babukusu achieves better appeal.

With regard to the use of metaphors (*Lukaato*), a song titled *"Memba wa Kalabayi"* was transcribed to demonstrate how Babukusu used such a style in their songs. This is shown in Excerpt 6 below.

Excerpt 6: *Memba wa Kalabayi*

Bukusu words	**English translation**
Inputter: *Hoya hiya* Memba *wa Kalabayi*	Hoya hiya, Memba daughter of Kalabayi
Receivers: *Hahoo oo, oo, oo,*	Hahoo, oh, oh, oh
Memba wa Kalabayi	Memba daughter of Kalabayi
Walekha basoleli	You left boys
Wacha khu kurenyakhu	Went to a firewood collector
Hoya hiya	Hoya hiya
Inputter: *Hoya hiya wacha khu kuche'luchi*	Hoya hiya, she went to water fetcher
Receivers: *Hahoo oo, oo, oo,*	Hahoo, oh, oh, oh
Memba wa Kalabayi	Memba daughter of Kalabayi
Walekha basoleli	You left boys
Wacha khu kuche'luchi	Went to a water fetcher
Hoya hiya	Hoya hiya

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[57] Masinde Muliro was one of the founding fathers of Kenya, anti-colonial activist, who later (late 1980s into early 1990s) fought for multipartism and restoration of democracy.

Inputter: *Hoya hiya wacha khuku khaniafu*	Hoya hiya, she went to a big chameleon
Receivers: *Hahoo oo, oo, oo,*	Hahoo oh, oh, oh,
Memba wa Kalabayi	Memba daughter of Kalabayi
Walekha basoleli	You left boys
Wacha khu kukhaniafu	Went to a big chameleon
Hoya hiya	Hoya hiya
Inputter: *Hoya hiya wacha khuku fwakhala*	Hoya hiya, she went to the one that crawls
Receivers: *Hahoo oo, oo, oo,*	Hahoo, oh, oh, oh
Memba wa Kalabayi	Memba daughter of Kalabayi
Walekha basoleli	You left boys
Wacha khu fwakhala	Went to the one that crawls
Hoya hiya.	Hoya hiya.

The song in **Excerpt 6** above is performed during the initiation ceremony to encourage, develop and advise the initiates, as well as condemn vices and uphold virtues of the community. The song is a social satire against Memba, the daughter of Kalabayi. In normal circumstances, a girl partnered with a boy of about the same age or slightly older in a cultural marriage ceremony. In the song, Memba, the daughter of Kalabayi went against the grain by marrying an old man. Therefore, the performers are wondering why she chose the partner (whose name, age, or status is not revealed directly); neither do they outrightly state it is an old man. They only describe his characteristics for the listeners to figure out the meaning. The descriptions are;

- *Kurenyakhu* (one who collects firewood); this task was normally performed by women. A man who carried out such duties was considered a social misfit.
- *Kucheluchi* (one who fetches water from the river); it was the duty of women to fetch water from the river or borehole, yet this man also performs this duty. The respondents are wondering what other feminine jobs the man performs.
- *Kukhaniafu* (a big chameleon), he was known to change colours, hence regarded not to have colour. In this context, it means that the man is not good-looking (ugly).

- *Kufwakhala* (one that crawls or creeps), this means that he is slow and wears heavy clothes that make unpleasant sounds as he moves. This statement also figuratively means that he was sexually a non-performer, who only crawls in bed.

The metaphorical aspect of the song is captured in how the singers use certain descriptions to reveal the identity of Memba's partner, without mentioning that he is an old man. The descriptions border on describing a man who is in such a sorry state that arguably no woman would admire. The man is considered a social misfit in the community, a non-performer in many respects, one who is ugly and likened to a woman because of the nature of duties that he performs.

For the sake of initiating young people into adulthood, the message in the song communicates to them (especially the initiates) to seek for suitable marriage partners. In essence, they should avoid partners who are in a deplorable state like the one Memba, the daughter of Kalabayi chose. The song demonstrates how metaphors as stylistic devices are used in Bukusu songs.

With regard to structure, the song in **Excerpt 6** is characterised by a solo-chorus format that is typical of most of the songs chosen for study. Notably, most songs were short meaning that they required further development for them to meet the requirements of a full performance. Among the Bukusu, song elaboration was based on its theme and the context in which it was performed. Such prevailing situations motivated the lead singer to continuously create text that effectively elongated the song to meet the demands of a given context.

To elaborate on the contextual nature of Bukusu music, the same song can be performed in two different occasions yet differing in text. Florence Nalyaka affirmed this fact. This is because musicians select a theme based on the specific occasions that they performed in, which were characterised by different meanings, attendees and processes. Based on the attendees for instance, the musician sung by mentioning their names, clans' praises and their achievements.[58] In the performance, the singer also talked about the meaning of that particular occasion and its effect on people's lives. Such art of creating text and performing simultaneously was called *khuroma.*

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[58] Personal interview with Florence Nalyaka on 15th June 2017, in Ndengelwa Village, Bungoma West Sub-county.

Everlyne Nakhumicha pointed out that during the process of *khuroma,* it was important for the singer not to lose (*khutondobana*) the movement pattern and rhythm of the song, or lack necessary and sufficient words to express themselves at any given point.[59] As they created the words, they were supposed to also incorporate the devices discussed previously, as well as create a stylized form, which is captivating for the listeners. Through *khuroma,* the singer also identifies, interacts with and involves the audience in the performance.

In developing the song further, singers are also expected to vary the melodic contour to avoid monotony. In her own words, Nakhumicha noted that "the singer changes the voice" (*akobia Kumumilo*). Transcript 1 *Engubo yeteya* is of a song in which pitches of the solo part were altered, a characteristic that was alluded to by Everlyne Nakhumicha.[60] From her description, the word '*Kumumilo*' means pitch as well as voice. The alternation of pitch is supposed to rhyme with the song text so that they communicate similar messages (word painting). While *Khuroma* involves aspects of text, pitch and rhythm, text is the main focus of the song. It is supposed to communicate the requisite messages.

Given its artistically demanding nature, it is acknowledged that a musician who possesses an in-born music talent achieves the process of *khuroma* with ease. In as much as it is hereditary, upcoming musicians complement their natural talent by learning in a process where they observe and listen to older relatives perform. The exposure to experienced performers helps the young musicians to develop vocabulary and style of framing and articulating song text. The learning process is, therefore, important in the training of a musician with regard to textual and melodic development, during performance.

To confirm how important song text is in a performance, the demonstrations proved that there never exists a song without text. Inasmuch as people listen to instrumentation, the message embodied in the song text supersedes the melodic aspects of the performance. The audience derives more joy in listening to the message in songs, given the communicative role it plays in any given context. Song text is, therefore, the main aspect that draws people to the performance. Other musical aspects only complement it. A distortion of any musical features

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[59] Personal interview with Everlyne Nakhumicha on 17th June 2017, in Bukembe Village, Bungoma West Sub-county.
[60] Ibid.

also affects the relevance of the song text. The significant dimension is that, when used in certain ways, song text achieves more effectiveness in the performance than other facets.

Music and the community

That the Bukusu people empowered themselves can be deduced from their daily hard work. Young people learnt early in time how to perform selected duties in an apprenticeship system. Knowledge about the community was also learnt through arts such as poetry, narration, story-telling, folklore and music. These arts helped elders and people with special knowledge to impart it to young people and even adults who needed to be reminded of the same.

Given the important role that arts play in educating the community, Pius Mayende acknowledges that a good musician was one who possessed extensive knowledge about the history and culture of the Bukusu community.[61] Having such knowledge was essential, before performance in ceremonies, rituals, functions and other occasions in the community. The musician used the knowledge to educate the people on diverse issues while at the same time entertaining them. The learning at the varied ceremonies was also reciprocal, because the musicians also continuously gained more knowledge from these events.

Arguably, the manifestation of indigenous knowledge in a performance enhanced its artistic relevance. On the contrary, lack of such demonstration of knowledge rendered a performance unpopular because of the short fall this most essential ingredient. Apart from knowledge gained from attendance of rituals, musicians also gathered knowledge from elders and other resource persons in the community. This characteristic is referred to as *Nabwebwe, Nalulingo* or *Omuyoti.*

An intriguing observation was that all the attendees in a given function, ceremony or occasion were part and parcel of the music making process. To expound on this collective nature of Bukusu music performance, Susan Nafula confirmed that in the traditional marriage ceremony, the process of going to receive a bride (which was characterized by singing) was challenging. The team of women from the bride groom's side (usually as many as possible from the village) were supposed to have a good soloist(s). All of them actively participated in

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[61] Personal interview with Pius Mayende on 16th June 2017 at Soy Village in Uasin Gishu County.

the singing. The intensity (*khukuuta, khusamisia*) of the song from a bride groom's side was not only an honour, but in part determined how soon a bride was released from her parents' home.

A scenario where a notably large crowd from the bride groom's side was achieved and sang well, persuaded a bride's relatives to join in the song and eventually release her. Susan Nafula[62] reiterated that a good song was one where all the people joined in the singing, seemingly, because the performance achieved the desired intensity. On the contrary, a song which did not attract many people to participate in was regarded as desolate (*kumuchangalafu*) and 'not sweet' (*sekuli kumunulu tu* – not captivating).

To further illustrate why collective participation was important, Omukhwami Sikuku, who is *Omusena muse* cited initiation, which seemingly is the most intricate, respected and culturally revealing ritual or ceremony of Babukusu. It marked the transformation from childhood to adulthood. In one of the rejoinders, he narrated how music was used to distinguish the different parts of the ceremony, besides communicating essential information about the history and culture of Babukusu. The most revered song in this ceremony was *Sioyayo.* It was sung four times before the initiates were circumcised. That is, three days before circumcision (*khuchukhila*), two days before circumcision (*Ebukhocha*-maternal uncle), the opening song for the overnight dance (*mu Namwima*) and during the early morning procession by the initiated from the river (*khukhwama eluuchi*).

Omukhwami explained that *Sioyayo* was the song of the ancestors that was never substituted in its function in the specific contexts mentioned above. He equated the song to the official 'anthem' of Babukusu inasmuch as it was only sung on specific occasions. When the song was being sung, no other activity was supposed to take place in the home. All the people turned their attention to the song and joined in the singing because the ancestors had come down to sing with them.[63] The song was meant to change the mood of the initiate(s)[64] so that their focus was solely on facing the knife. Collective participation, therefore, enriched the purpose of the song. Its beauty was achieved in the joint effort by all the people in attendance, including the unseen members of the community (the living dead and ancestors).

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[62] Susan Nafula, Ibid.

[63] Personal interview with *Omukhwami* Pius Sikuku on 23rd July 2017 in Naitiri Village, Kimilili Sub-county.

[64] The term initiate(s) was used to show that in a given situation, there could be one initiate, yet in others more than one.

The example of *Sioyayo,* in the Bukusu initiation ritual demonstrates how audience participation in music making is important in terms of giving a song character and substance.

On the same concept of shared values, Anicet Wafula clarified that any good thing was ideally communal. For instance, well-cooked food needed to be shared by many people. When people eat together, they celebrate and show gratitude to the person who has cooked the food. More so, well-cooked food is a sign of good upbringing and training on the part of the cook. Wafula pointed out that it was customary for people to thank the mother of the house, after meals, whether or not she was the one who cooked. This is arguably true because, a mother is always the provider and the trainer of all the cooks in the home. That is why all gratitude went to her.

The children said, *"nasiima maayi"* (thank you mum)*,* while the husband said, *"wateekha muloosi"* (well-cooked my wife). Proverbs were used to encourage people to embrace joint participation in all events. The proverbs affirm the philosophy of shared values in the Bukusu community. Some of the ones cited were as follows.

- *Emalilisi eandanga khulialililo,* – the last termite gets stuck on the cross line. These proverb challenges people not to be lone rangers. It is important for individuals to be in the company of the others.
- *Luluchi lwichulilanga kimikhula* – a river accumulates its water from overflows from the pathways. These proverb means that anything substantial always benefits from the contribution of even the ones who seemingly do not matter. Little contribution from different sources, therefore, achieves a bigger task.
- *Litere lilala selira enda ta* – one finger nail cannot kill a louse. From a literal perspective, the proverb means that one needs two finger nails to kill a louse. In its true sense, the proverb advocates for joint effort for more effectiveness.
- *Lusala lulala selumama chibili chaaya ta* – one stick cannot roast two birds. This means that in the event that one has more than on task to perform, they require help from others to accomplish the missions.

The above proverbs were used by Babukusu in their daily interaction to encourage each other to work together. This shows that collective participation in given tasks is not unique or limited to music making. It was also evident in many other activities. It can therefore be

regarded as a philosophy rooted in the Bukusu culture. In music making, lack of joint participation led to lack of the uniqueness that comes with working together. Clip *Vc.5* demonstrates the communal participation in an initiation ceremony.

Another pertinent dimension of Bukusu music was the specificity of contexts in which performance took place. Among other ceremonies, the contextual nature of Bukusu music was especially evident in the initiation ceremony. Initiation (*Sikhebo*) ritual, which marks the transformation of young people into adulthood, had sections that were distinguished by songs. The songs were unique to each section and never interchangeable. The respective sections of *Sikhebo* had specific messages that they communicated, which gradually facilitated the transformation of the young persons into adulthood. One of the focused group discussions described the sections as;[65]

- *khulanga* – this refers to instances where the initiate/s went from homestead to another inviting relatives and friends, to the main overnight initiation dance on a prescribed date. During these visits, the initiates played *Chinyimba,* and *Efirimbi,* as other people accompanied them singing jubilant songs.

- *khuchukhila* – in this stage, the initiate/s went to the river to draw water for brewing liquor, *ke buulo* (made from millet). The liquor was drunk by close members of the family after the circumcision ceremony. It was believed that during the ceremony, the close family members would be busy entertaining the visitors and taking care of the initiate/s, hence did not have the time to enjoy the brew. From this day, the initiate/s played *Chinyimba* only (no whistles) as *Sioyayo* was sang for the first time. The songs that were sang thereafter, suggested that the time was nigh. The initiates were, therefore, expected to make a decision as to, if they were willing to go on with the initiation or to stop it. They could actually opt out.

- *khucha ebukhocha* – this was the day before circumcision took place, where the initiate/s went to the maternal uncle's home, a bull slaughtered and a piece of meat placed around the initiate's neck. The piece of meat was usually taken from the belly of the cow, also regarded as *enda ya maawe* (the stomach of the mother). Later on, the meat was given to the initiate/s' grandmother. On this day, *Sioyayo* was sung for the

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[65] Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) comprising Omukhwami Pius Sikuku, Pole Henry, Wanabiswa Mandiko and Enock Wasilwa, on 23rd July 2017, in Naitiri Village, Kimilili Sub-county.

second time. The songs performed then, talked about how painful the circumcision procedure was and the need to be brave.

- *khumiinya* – this was a song and dance ceremony that was performed overnight in the homestead of the initiate's parents. It was done on the night before circumcision. During this occasion, the initiate/s were warned through songs not to run away in the event that they see a circumciser.

- *khucha esitosi* – at this point, the initiate or initiates was or were taken to the river early in the morning. It could be either an individual or a group, depending on the choice of the family. On this journey to the river, only one song was performed that beseeched the initiate to 'surrender it (the penis) to be chopped' (*orao bachonga*). At the river, they were smeared with cold mud. The mud partly numbed the body, for the initiate/s not to over-bleed and reduce pain during circumcision. At the spot near the river, no song was sung because the place was believed to be sacred where ancestors dwelt.

- *khukhwama esitosi* – the initiate/s left the river to go back home for the actual circumcision. On the way back home, *Sioyayo* was the only song that was performed. The initiate/s did not play *Chinyimba* anymore.

- *khukheba* – Early in the morning, the initiate(s) were circumcised in front of their parents' homestead. After the procedure, the women ululated, as all the other people sang songs of victory including *khwaela* (we have breathed) and *khwera Omurwa* (we have killed the enemy).

- *Mwikombe* – the initiated[66] stayed in seclusion, in a house that they built before circumcision. The house called *Likombe,* was destroyed a day before the initiated graduated from seclusion.

- *khubiita* – this is an advisory ceremony for the initiated where elders gathered and talked to them on the required behaviour for grownups. They emphasized good manners, positive thinking and virtues in the society. This was usually done in the home of the initiated's father. No songs were sung given that this was a meditation session.

- *Sisialukho* – this was a graduation ceremony, where the initiated officially left seclusion, to be full members of the community. The initiated stayed overnight in a banana plantation (*Mwiruti*). Then early in the morning, they went to the river to wash

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[66] Before circumcision, they were referred to as initiates, but after, they become the initiated.

off all the dirt of their childhood. Thereafter, they dressed in new clothes which could be either traditional or modern garb. From this point onwards, they never used the clothes and other personal belongings that they possessed before circumcision. At this point, the initiated were allowed to sing a song, *Leelo mundubi embia, leelo mungubo embia,* meaning they were now new beings. They could eat from a new serving pot and had new dresses. They used to wear the mother's dress, but were now wearing the father's dress.

The stages of the initiation ceremony that were performed at different times, places and the participants were described in a Focused Group Discussion. Notably, the stages had different meanings and that is why they were unique in different situations. The songs that were sang at the different stages communicated varied messages and drew varied moods. Selected people were also charged with certain and specific roles to play in the respective stages.

The initiates played *Chinyimba* on specific occasions. They were not allowed to use a whistle three days before circumcision. From the river, they never sang *Chinyimba* again. They were only allowed to sing on the day they graduated from seclusion. The description of the initiation ceremony is an example of how Bukusu music was context specific and utilitarian in nature. The FGDs brought out the distinctiveness of the respective phases of the ceremony and the accompanying corresponding musical features that gave the entire ritual a sense of beauty and character. The discussions revealed that many other ceremonies in the community used the same philosophy of performance within other specific contexts.

The discussions elucidated considerable understanding concerning performance practice manifested in a single performance. The intriguing integrated character of the songs was to me an eye opener. I now understand how all aspects of a song are revealed in a single performance, and if not, what the implications are. Vincent Barasa pointed out that as members of the community, they always had working knowledge of how music ought to be practiced.[67] Growing up and general learning empowered them to know what music entailed. Collective participation in musical activities further made the people know its intricate characteristics. Musical practice was, therefore, shared knowledge that all members of the community interacted with on daily basis.

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[67] Personal interview with Vincent Barasa, on 12th June 2017 in Tobolia Village, Bungoma West Sub-county.

Another interesting finding was that all the knowledge about the music making process and knowledge on the community is not written. Members of the Bukusu community carry with them the knowledge as they go about their daily activities. Apparently, all people who are present in a ritual are the custodians of how music is practiced. In terms of standards, all members present qualify, and are allowed to appraise music performance. Members of the public are, therefore, the custodians of performance standards, due to the knowledge they possess about music practice in the community.

In situations where more than one musician was present, the attendees determined who played first or last. In most cases, this was based on the abilities of the musicians, who were well known to the public gauging from their previous performances. Apart from voicing their concerns on whether or not a musician should play, and/or who should play first, there was another way of knowing whether or not an audience appreciated a good performance. This determination was based on how the attendees responded to the music, especially dancing. Instances where they danced vigorously without tiring (*khukubukha*) implied that the performance was artistically gratifying. But in cases where the attendees danced for a short time or did not participate at all, it was seen as negative appraisal of the performance.

Whenever a performance was captivating, they used certain phrases to express their approval. It was common for instance for them to say *kwanyingilamo po* (it has really entered me), meaning that the song was captivating and artistically enlightening. To express the fact that a certain musician was incredibly artistic, they said *akho khalulu baya* (oh dear, the musician is hot). In normal circumstances, the word *lulu* means bitter, but in this instance, it is contextually applied to mean hot. In other instances where music got too tempting, the intensity of dancing equally escalated. To express the impression that the dance is more intense, courtesy of excellent music, they would say *bukhino khayo butile aasi nono* (let the dance touchdown).

A lead singer (*owimelela kimienya/omwimbi*) with hoarse voice (*kumumilo kukhalanya*) that was not clear (*kwe kamachanjasi*) or a thin voice (*kumunyelele*), were detested. However, such lead singers were only accommodated and allowed to perform in the absence of the favoured ones. The ideal voice was a clear one (*kuchelela*) that also needed to be pitched

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correctly. Because of the preferred voice quality, the person who led songs in a marriage ceremony was referred to as *Omuchelesi,* from the word *khuchelela.*

A marriage ceremony was characterized by grace, beauty and charm. The *Omuchelesi* was expected to, in many ways, bring out such characteristics. That is why she was called *Omuchelesi.* The act of starting or leading a song was referred to as *khuramo kumwenya* (putting in the song)*,* whereas the ending was called *khukhalaka kumwenya* (cutting the song). The start and ending of a song were important to the lead singer; so she had to be very creative. A powerful start was important, and so was an ending that left the participants wanting more.

Further on the issue of appreciating performance, in any ritual, musicians were rewarded in form of money, poultry, farm produce or any other available valuables. Wanyama Kalibola Fungututi made fun of it, saying that his "*Litungu* had eaten so many chickens."[68] By this, he meant that people had appreciated his performances by giving him so much. Musicians did not earn a formal salary or wage at the end of a performance. The tips that they received from the audience were their earnings for the performances. The artistry of the musician, therefore, earned them a living in form of gifts, handouts, tips and benevolence from their patrons.

Instances where the musician was overwhelmingly rewarded, was a sign that his or her performance was par excellence. The process of rewarding performance was called *khufua.* Inasmuch as *khufua* was a measure of merit, the Bukusu also encouraged each other to always appreciate the musicians, if at all they expected good performance from them. That is why they used a proverb that says, *Litungu liimbanga* or *lipanga owalifua*, meaning the *Litungu* sings about the one who appreciates it. Interestingly, singing praises of a given member was regarded as an honour.

An intriguing aspect of music appreciation was when a woman ululated (*khukalakasia*). To demonstrate the significance of ululation (*Lukalakala*), Christopher Wanyama gave three other scenarios when it was performed. He explained that when a child was born, women ululated to celebrate a new life as well as the woman who had successfully carried the pregnancy for nine months. In addition, ululation signified the inner joy of the women felt for

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[68] Personal interview with Wanyama Kalibola Fungututi, on 1st June 2017 at Ndalu Village Bungoma North Sub-county.

one of their own who had gone through an experience that they regarded as a matter of life and death, but conquered it – by bringing forth a child.

The second instance of ululation was when initiate/s were circumcised. Wanyama explained that when the boys arrived at the river, the mother immediately sensed and sat on the floor with her legs straight. Any other woman that the boys called "mum" – a maternal aunt and/or wives to their uncles – also sat in the same posture. They assumed this posture for as long as the initiate/s were on their way from the river. They only stood on hearing the sound of the whistle to signify the end of the circumcision procedure, and that the boy/s had braved it. At this point, the mothers stood from their sitting position and ululated with joy as they came out of their houses. The scream-like ululation was described as a sign of victory against an enemy. They equated braving circumcision to killing a leopard single-handedly. The breath of sigh was only expressed through ululating, to release the inner joy that comes with victory of a son's bravery.

The third context of performing *Lukalakala,* was during marriage. In describing the Bukusu marriage ceremony, Jane Wabusia opined that the most difficult part of it was when the bride groom's family side beseeched the in-laws to let the bride leave the mother's house to her new home.[69] She explained that it involved bargaining that was done in form of singing and offering gifts to the paternal aunties of the bride. On isolated unfortunate occasions, the bargaining ended up in fights between the two sides.

Whenever it came to pass that the bride had been released from the house, the women broke into thunderous ululations. She explained that the bride groom's side celebrated for having prevailed over their in-laws, to acquire a wife for their clan. The bride's side celebrated victory of having taken good care of the girl, who had troubled people – in this case the bride groom's relatives – to travel long distances, give several heads of cattle and other food stuffs, just to get the bride. A traditional marriage ceremony was a great honour.

To this end, Christopher Wanyama[70] clarified that ululation was voluntary, and no one was employed or requested to do it. It was, however, evident that an ululation with a deep tone was not well received by the audience. They appreciated a high-pitched *(lulwoki)* ululation

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[69] Personal interview with Jane Wabusia on 23rd July in Eluya Village, Kimilili Sub-county.

[70] Christopher Wanyama, Ibid.

that was in synch with the pitch and rhythm of the song. The ululation was noted to be a sense of reaching a climax (*khundelelwa*). Seemingly the ululation came from the heart and was poured out to express innermost joy and victory. In sounding it at a climax, it showed that the musician had succeeded in touching the inner-most feelings of the audience. In essence, ululation signified victory.

Wanyama concluded that ululation in performance communicated more than its own musical sound. This has already been described above in the three scenarios. In musical performance, the highest level of elevation was when a woman ululated. Such ululation awoke even those who did not know how to dance, to rise and shake their bodies as if they were possessed with unknown spirits. Wanyama further intimated that it challenged even the non-givers for once to offer something to the musician. This shows that in the Bukusu community, ululation was a high level of evaluating a performance.

4

Aesthetics of Bukusu music

Among Babukusu, concepts related to aesthetics and how life was appreciated are not peculiar to music performance. Many other aspects of Bukusu life reveal similar aesthetic thought, regard and values. A review about the Bukusu community showed how the people kept their homesteads and their own selves with a sense of splendour.

In the homestead, there existed round mud-walled and conical grass-thatched huts. The huts were built in definite shapes that were crafted with a drive to exquisiteness. To make the huts more attractive, the walls were coated with soil that made the surface look as good as cement-plastered walls. Around the house, there were earth pavements (luyia) that were keenly shaped and swept to demarcate them from the manicured garden.

Additionally, smoothening of the walls and earth paving were meant to use for other functions beyond their outward look. Plate 4 shows an example of the earth pavements. The homestead was not just for dwelling but drew an extra sense of attraction from the way it was designed, crafted and kept. The exterior of the homestead shows additional effort towards beautification. This reveals the sense of taste and drive to what is aesthetically revealing among the Bukusu. Most importantly, such beauty served other purposes beyond its outward look.

Apart from the homestead, Babukusu had great regard for beauty in other facets, especially the beauty of a woman. By tradition, certain effects made a woman's appearance standout for them to take up a more privileged space in the society. Notably, both natural and what the women applied to their bodies contributed to beauty. A natural gap, *Embanya,* in the front upper teeth was enviable for a woman. Such a characteristic made the woman draw more bride price. More so, a woman was regarded as prettier if she had a thin waist, bulging hips and strong legs.

Short hair with a well-done cut, *Ekinwa,* was admired by Babukusu. It complemented the other natural aspects of physical appearance. Additionally, people went ahead to remove the two lower front teeth, *Ebuula* (See Plate 9)*,* to look more beautiful. *Ebuula* also served other purposes such as therapeutic in times of need. Teenage girls wore short skirt dresses,

Chinyinja (see Figure 2) to reveal their beauty. And when they got married, they adorned *Engubo emboela* (see figure 4) which exemplified the look of a mature woman.

As for the elders, there was the revered cap, *ekofio yie chisimbi (*see Plate 6) which they wore. The cap was made from animal skin. It was adorned with beads that depicted a sense of rhythm and variation. The artistic design of the cap again reveals how Babukusu had a sense of taste for things that added extra attractiveness to the objects that they used.

Such dressing not only made the people appear well-groomed but was also worn as costumes during musical performance. An interesting revelation though, was that whereas outward beauty was highly regarded, it was secondary to the character and moral being of members of this community.

The above discussion about the beauty of the home, a woman and other cultural regalia, complete with the relevant vocabulary that was used demonstrates that aesthetics were significant in the Bukusu community. Many aspects of the culture were manifested in a manner that revealed a sense of exquisiteness. Music being a process and product of the culture that produces it was not spared either, in deriving a sense of aesthetic endowment. Such aesthetics in the music drew people to listen to, participate in, appreciate and be a part of its manifestation. This chapter discusses the dimensions and facets that characterized what the Bukusu regarded as aesthetics of music performance.

Sonic character

Sound is an essential medium of expression among Babukusu, especially with regard to music performance. It is manifested in actions such as playing instruments, people singing, the stamping of feet as they dance, and in ornaments such as ululations, yells and whistling. Basic sound, however, is not satisfactory as music until it meets a certain threshold that is already culturally determined and acceptable. For example, while the *Litungu, Siilili* and *Ching'oma* produce varied sounds, not all the sounds meet the expectations of Babukusu, in terms of music performance. These instruments must be tuned to specific and/or sets of pitches so that they can produce sounds and speech surrogates that typify the acceptable Bukusu cultural idioms. Despite the fact that all musicians have a familiarity with their instruments, they must test to confirm the sounds the instruments produce before starting a performance. The testing involves tuning and retuning the instruments before starting a

performance. The process of tuning ensures that the instruments produce the correct and culturally relevant sounds that "speak" the language of Babukusu.

Therefore, tuning of instruments means that they are cognizant with what characterizes not only culturally acceptable sounds, but also what makes music have meaning. From their assertion that *Litungu,* for instance, is supposed to 'talk' (*lilomaloma*), that means that when it is out of tune, it will not 'talk' the correct Lubukusu, Instead, it will 'talk' a different language; a language that is unknown to the people. In such a case, it would distort the meaning or make it incomprehensive. The result is, in the absence of meaning, no beauty can be attributed to the music.

Interestingly, most members of the community know the requisite and correct pitches that are responsible for rendering proper and relevant music. This is cultural knowledge which is at their disposal. This observation further confirms that not achieving the proper sound because of wrong tuning of instruments leads to negative aesthetic appraisal by the public because it is well endowed with the knowledge. As one of the respondents ably put it, "even your mother in the kitchen would know when *Litungu* is out of tune."

After keenly listening to the main instruments – *Litungu* and *Siilili* – I noted that they not only played in unison, but were also in harmony. About the *Litungu,* the first and third strings sound in concordance, as do the second and fourth strings, third and fifth, fourth and sixth and fifth and seventh. The agreement of the sounds produced by the alternate strings of the *Litungu* is definitely as a result of tuned pitches.

When playing the instruments, the strings are either played alternately to produce melodic effects or simultaneously to produce harmonious sounds. In the event that the tuning is wrong, playing the instrument would produce incomprehensible melodies and discordant sounds. For the *Siilili,* the top string is tuned at a tonal interval of a fifth above the lower string. Whenever the strings are played in combination, a soothing harmony is created by the lower string in a drone-like effect. The harmonic renditions by the two instruments described above, are important musical components that typify them, without which they would sound idiomatically irrelevant.

Therefore, the sonic substance of the two instruments is in playing the strings individually as well as in combination. Lack of tonal agreement of the strings, especially when the

instruments are played simultaneously, distorts the harmonic expected component. Such congruence in the sound of the respective strings results from definite tuning of the instruments. Besides, the tuning of instruments and the subsequent efficacy of the sounds produced shows sensibility and cultural knowledge of the Bukusu. Such knowledge is acquired as a part of their indigenous knowledge systems that is necessary for better aesthetic appreciation in music performance. Whereas tuning is a preparatory step, its effectiveness is manifested in a performance – a latter activity – when the character of the sound produced appreciated as an aesthetic.

Similarly, the respective players get artistic identities based on how they tune their instruments. Although the tuning process is standard, individual players achieve varied pitch levels and unique tonal characteristics. The deep voiced players – for the sake of ease when singing – tune their instruments according to their vocal range; and so do the high-pitched players. Therefore, respective players are thus identified by the tuning levels of their instruments, and the sounds they produce.

The high-pitched players play *Litungu liseecha* (male *Litungu*), whereas the low-pitched players play *Litungu likhasi* (female *Litungu*). To exemplify the above argument, Transcript 4 shows one *Litungu* whose tuning starts on note E. In contrast, Transcript 10 shows another *Litungu* with its tuning starting on note F#. Whereas the two *Litungu* were tuned in the same way, the tuning was done at varied pitch levels.

As mentioned above, the beauty of the sound of an instrument after tuning (at varied levels) in part determines or influences the identities given to the players who play the instruments. A change in the levels of tuning by a player affects both his or her individual ability and musical identity. Changed or altered identities to a considerable extent, affect the appeal of the music rendered by the concerned musician.

Apart from tuning of instruments, sonic character is also important in the way especially lead singers vocally manifest themselves. They categorize voices as *kwe kamachanjasi* (hoarse)*, kumunyelele* (thin)*, kutondomela* (damp) *kukhalanya* (distorted) or *kuchelela* (clear). Among these voices, the last one is the most preferred, especially for a lead singer. Inasmuch as the others can sing, if given an opportunity, the one with a clear voice, *kuchelela,* endears himself to the people more. A person with a clear voice that "penetrates the hearts of the people" is said to sing like an angel (*Engelosi*).

Marriage songs are typically full of grace, beauty and joy. The person who leads in singing marriage songs is called *Omuchelesi*. The word is derived from the appreciation of a clear voice (*kuchelela*). Apparently, the person in many ways brings pleasure to a marriage ceremony, but mainly because of their vocal quality. The sensitivity of Babukusu about the messages that are communicated through songs in part necessitates the need for a clear voice. Such vocal clarity ensures the effective delivery of a message in a song, influences the appeal of the music as well as the understanding of the hidden meaning, if any.

Conversely, an unclear voice not only distorts the message but also lacks the beauty that is expected from a sung text. Therefore, the inter-phase between vocal clarity and the message embodied in song text results in a nucleus. It is this nucleus that brings about a more aesthetically revealing musical experience.

Suitable pitching of a song is another important facet of music appreciation among Babukusu. During performances, the audience sometimes demands that some singers stop because the pitch is too deep (*kwe likono*), or too high (*kwe angaki*). Whenever the audience stops a song, another person with the ability to lead it would volunteer or be requested to take up the lead role. One of the interesting observations was that the musicians naturally choose pitches that the audience is comfortable with. They do not use a pitch instrument.

Consequently, the choice of pitch for the sake of easy sharing and participation influences how appealing a performance can be. Given how naturally and relevantly they choose and use pitch, it is evident that pitch is part of the Bukusu indigenous knowledge systems that determines if a performance is aesthetically enlightening. The pitching of a voice is related and likened to the tuning of instruments. The instruments are supposed to sound in certain ways that are comfortable and culturally acceptable for a performance to be considered artistically relevant. Conversely, lack of the beauty of sound, achieved by tuning and pitching, denies Bukusu music an essential aesthetic component.

Most of the ceremonies, rituals or occasions last for a considerable length of time. Music being a fundamental part of such occasions is supposed to be played for as long as the people want. It is imperative, therefore, that a lead singer in such ceremonies must have a voice that can endure long durations of performance. A person who loses their voice within a short time is not preferred. On the contrary, a person who maintains long durations of performance is said to sing like a cricket (*Enyenje*). The reasoning is that crickets sing for long durations

without losing the quality and loudness of their voices. The quality of the voice notwithstanding, it is clear that the ability for it to be rendered over a long period of time is also aesthetic due to its ability to deliver to the satisfaction of the people.

An ululation (*Lukalakala*) is preferred when highly pitched (*Lukalakala lulwoki*). It not only ornaments music, but also communicates other essential knowledge. Ululation takes the music performance to a higher level of exultation. It also awakens even the people who never dance or give anything to the musician. Ululation marks the climax, *khundelelwa,* which is essentially the high point of a performance. For the Bukusu, the climax is supposed to be heightened and not the other way round. In terms of it being performed as a form of appraisal, the sharper the ululation, the better it is. In actual fact, it shows greater appreciation, meaning the music is good. Ululation further demonstrates how essential the pitch is when using the voice to communicate a desired message.

From the discussions above, it is obvious that the character of sound is an important aesthetic facet in the performance of Bukusu music. Such qualities are achieved through proper tuning of instruments, choosing the correct pitch for singers and having a clear voice (*kuchelela*). These attributes are determined by culture and have been accepted by Babukusu. The above attributes on their own lead to and typify sound, which in many ways influences how aesthetic relevance is achieved in Bukusu music performance. Of importance is the fact that the community has well defined terminologies for requisite aspects of the sound quality. Examples of these terminologies include *kuchelela* (clear sound), *Lukalakala lulwoki* (sharp ululation), and *khundelelwa* (climax), among others.

It is interesting to note that certain performance aspects related to excellence and aesthetic appeal are associated with non-humans. Some ideologies elevate these non-humans to a level where they suggest that they are able to make music beyond human ability. An example is the case where Babukusu compared the quality of a voice to the voice of an angel (*Engelosi*), to mean that it was exemplary. So far, the sound features discussed in this chapter range from pitching, and timbre, to tuning and the ability to be rendered over varied qualities, proportions and durations. Notably, each sound feature is not independent of the others. Instead, the sound features work together to achieve an aesthetically revealing performance; a combined characteristic is regarded as sonic character.

Contextual nature

A fundamental principle of Bukusu music is that it is presented in specific environments, at given times, by specific people – depending on gender, age or status – and, it is guided by certain philosophies that are unique to each performance context. According to accounts of performance practice of Bukusu music in the traditional settings, different contexts were used to achieve relevance, function and aesthetics. Such situations were unique to each type of music given its specific role in the society. Music performance contexts in the Bukusu community are viewed in the following contexts.

Place or venue

Among Babukusu, the venue where any form of music is performed is usually dictated by the impending ritual, ceremony or occasion. Such is demonstrated in the example of the dance called *Bukhwana,* where a specific place is chosen for its performance. The dance is performed to celebrate the gift of giving birth to two children at a go (twins). The purpose is to officially free the mother of the new born twins to leave her house (seclusion), and to appease the gods.

The sexual explicitness of the dance necessitates that it be performed at a secluded place in the home. The place is usually chosen by elders, based on their cultural knowledge. Arguably, the place where the dance is performed is regarded as a context. Given the need for secrecy, the elders must choose a place where obscene dancing styles can be used without inhibition. The beauty of the dance, therefore, is in the vulgarity of the dance styles. If done in the open, it is possible that the performers would shy away from expressing themselves to the required level of obscenity, lack of which would render the dance unaesthetic.

With reference to the initiation ceremony as described in Chapter 3, there was a unique song that was sang when the initiates were escorted to the river. As they went to the river, they followed a specific path, which was never used on the return journey. They instead used a different path to go back to their homesteads for the circumcision procedure. As they went to the river, they sung *orao bachonga,* but when they left the river, they sang *sioyayo.* Near the river, the initiates were neither allowed to sing nor play *Chinyimba,* given the sanctity of the riverside as the dwelling place for the ancestral spirits of initiation.

The two paths the initiates use in the circumcision ceremony are specific contexts in which two different songs with divergent meanings are performed. The two paths never meet, are not interchangeable, and neither are they mentioned in the songs. Performing the two songs

away from the stipulated paths would render them out of context. Such misplacement of the context would deny the songs the beauty that comes from the uniqueness of the paths and so would be the resultant meaning and aesthetics.

With regard to the post-burial ceremony for a deceased male elder, when the people leave the riverside as they herd the cows back home, they sing the song *Obilo wangosia.* The song is likened to one of the ancestors who was unable to walk due to fatigue and was left in the wild only to be eaten by vultures (*Chingosia*). The song, therefore, explains that before the ceremony is performed for deceased elder, he is as good as having been left in the wild for the vultures to eat up his body. Performance of the song in this ceremony is meant to escort the deceased elder back home, and that is why it is performed on the path as they go back home.

When they arrive at the home, the cows surround the burial site as the people sing *chabuyabuya.* The song means that the cows (and all his properties) are mourning the elder who would eventually be sent to his eternal home (world of spirits). In this ceremony, the song *Obilo wangosia* is performed on the path they use to go back home, while *chabuyabuya*, is performed by the grave side. The two songs have specific meanings as to why they are performed in these specific places that cannot be interchanged.

The three rituals described above show how music is specific to certain environments that are marked by different meanings. In the respective places, the function of music is unique and the contexts are not interchangeable. The function of music in the definite places gives it substance and character that is responsible for how it appeals and its aesthetic relevance. Therefore, a change in the places in which the music is performed would distort, change or distort the meaning, and so would be the aesthetic significance. The foregoing discussions confirm how the place or venue, as a context, is important in influencing and determining how aesthetics of Bukusu music are manifested in a performance.

Ceremony/ritual

Respective songs are also specific to certain ceremonies and/or rituals of Babukusu. Notably, the meanings communicated in songs and their respective functions are unique to each occasion. One of the ceremonies discussed in Chapter 3 was marriage which features songs that elaborate on married life. The songs talk about the beauty of the bride, the ability of the bride groom and what the community believes concerning the union of two people. The other one was initiation, a ceremony and ritual where boys had their foreskin removed, but most

importantly marked the transformation from boyhood to adulthood. The songs performed in this ceremony were supposed to encourage the initiates to brave the knife, teach them about adult life, vices and virtues in the community, and above all an adult man's responsibility in the society.

The two, (circumcision and marriage) among others in the Bukusu community, show how exclusive certain songs are to the specific rituals. The messages that are communicated in the songs are different and serve varied functions. The moods of the rituals are also different and so are the songs that in many ways are supposed to bring out such moods. Of importance is the function of the songs in their respective ceremonies or rituals. Given the specificity of the songs to the rituals, such songs are never replaced, neither can they be substituted. To this end, it can be postulated that the messages conveyed, roles played and function of the songs are in many ways supposed to reveal certain aesthetics and substance of the given contexts (ceremony or ritual). Therefore, a change of the song, would lead to a relocated function which negates the beauty of the songs that is vested in role, meaning and function as dictated by the rituals or ceremonies.

Time

In most cases, time is viewed in terms of the hour, day, week, month, season, year or years. Bukusu rituals are based on time, with regard to years and seasons. Two types of years exist; the year of sadness (*Sikumenya*) and the year of happiness (*kwe busangafu*). All the years that end with an odd number (1, 3, 5, 7 and 9) are regarded as years of sadness, *Sikumenya.* These years are set aside for remembering the dead.

On the other hand, the years that end with an even number (0, 2, 4, 6 or 8) are viewed as happy years. In these years, people undergo initiation, marriage among other joyous rites. Given its important role in the ceremonial life of Babukusu, befitting music is assigned and performed in the respective years (sad or happy), to grace the occasions. It is, therefore, misplaced for an initiation song to be performed in an odd year (*Sikumenya*), or a post-burial song to be performed in an even year.

In view of the dichotomy of the years as determined by Babukusu, it is imperative that the time at which a song is performed determines how the people receive it. Negative reception due to wrong timing, essentially renders a song irrelevant, lacking substance and, therefore, unaesthetic. The audience focuses their energy on the inappropriateness of a song, at the expense of other musical qualities. From a different dimension, negative reception due to

condemnation for contextual irrelevance would also demotivate the music maker and render their performance below expectations. It therefore follows that performance with low energy levels reduces the aesthetics of the music.

With reference to the post-burial ceremony (*khulotia*), that is held in honour of a deceased male elder of the community, all cows from that clan are taken (by male members of the community) to the riverside to graze early in the morning (before many people woke up). The animals then graze until afternoon (when the sun changes direction), then they start the journey back home as they sing the song *Obilo wangosia.*

With regard to time, this song would be misplaced if it is sung before or at noon, when the sun is either still in the eastern direction or overhead. The elders tell the herders to wait until they are notified. It is therefore interesting to note that songs in the Bukusu community only made sense when sung at specific times. A change of time at which a song is performed renders it unappealing to the ears of the target audience. Once the music conforms to the designated time, the focus then shifts to its musical qualities and determination of its aesthetic significance.

From the Focused Group Discussions (Plate 2) of the initiation ceremony, it was revealed that the ritual had different stages or phases. Each phase of the rite was said to have a different meaning, as evidenced by the unique songs that accompanied it. It was notable for instance that, there were times when the initiates were allowed to play *Chinyimba* and *efirimbi,* other times, *chinyimba* only and no instruments were played in the last phase of the ceremony. Each respective phase was also supported by a unique song.

The phases of a ceremony like initiation can be viewed as time, that is, when it is happening. On this basis, songs exhibit their deserved beauty when performed in the correct phase of the ceremony. In the case of the initiation ceremony, a song designated to be performed after one had been circumcised, would be irrelevant if performed when they were still inviting friends and relatives to the ceremony. Misplacement of the stage or phase in which a song is supposed to performed renders it irrelevant, lacking in substance, and hence attracts no iota of beauty.

In the same way, using instruments in phases where they not supposed to be used distorts the musical appeal in that particular phase. The beauty of music, therefore, is vested in the

character of the respective time and contexts in which they are performed. In a nutshell, wrong contexts adulterate the substance of the music and hence its expected aesthetic value.

Gender, age and status

The people who perform music in certain situations are selected based on their gender, age or status. Therefore, the persons who perform and/or participate in such music making processes are a context in their own right. For instance, women perform music during marriage ceremonies. The men only accompany them to offer security as it is in their duty in day-to-day activities. If an instance occurs where a group of men go to the bride's home to sing marriage songs, they would be seen as misfits for going against the social norm.

The songs that are normally sang in feminine voices would lack flavour if rendered by male voices. The dance styles that are characteristically female would not be rendered accordingly by their male counterparts. Ululation (*Lukalakala*), which plays an important part in this ceremony would lack completely given that men cannot produce such high-pitched sounds, and that it is a taboo for men to ululate. Performance of music by men in marriage ceremony is, therefore, out of context.

With regard to age, we noted in the previous sections that the earth bow, *Walubende,* was played by young uncircumcised boys, while herding cattle. The instrument is small in size, a characteristic that makes it relevant for young boys. More so, it has limited tonal range, which can easily be achieved by the young upcoming musicians. Given that it is played while herding cattle, songs that accompany the instruments are in a way full of mischief that is associated with peer influence among boys.

The description of *Walubende* can only be relevant for the stated age of performers. If for instance an old man tried playing it, a number of things would not be right. First, the instrument would be too tiny for the grownup man to handle. Second, old men do not herd cattle, given that as elders, they have other essential duties to perform in the community. It therefore follows that they would completely lack a context play the instrument from. Finally, given the mischief associated with playing *Walubende,* it would be strange for old men to appear to participate in such.

Walubende is also known as an instrument played by uncircumcised boys (*Basinde* – plural for *omusinde*). That contention disqualifies an old man from playing it since he would be called *Omusinde,* which is a gross misnomer among Babukusu. In summary, even if an old

man decided to play the instrument, several factors would work against them. That means, the fear of performing an instrument that is below their status in the society; an instrument that is too small for an old man to handle, and lack of a context to perform, would greatly impact on how it would be rendered musically.

The beauty of *Walubende*, therefore, is achieved when played by people of a certain age and status. It is only them who know where to play it, the correct mannerism of engagement, and the ease with which they manipulate and handle it. A person of a different age would lack a context to play this instrument. Such predicament would then deny them the aesthetics that results from sounds of the instrument. Age and status are, therefore, essential contexts that largely determine how the music performed is aesthetically relevant. It can be postulated that when people of the correct age perform their music, they are considered relevant. Therefore, they seize the opportunity to bring out the requisite aesthetic attributes in the music.

Another instrument that has been discussed is called *Chisasi*. It was played by special people (*we chisasi*). While this was a musical instrument, it was also used for non-musical purposes such as performing rituals to heal people who were demon possessed. The persons who play this instrument have not only talent but also blessings from the ancestors to exorcise demons. This ability was not common to all members of the community. Their status, therefore, elevated them to be designated players of *Chisasi*. Any other member was not allowed to play because they do not possess the requisite talent and blessings from the ancestors. If undesignated people play the instrument, it basically made music or otherwise noise, but did not perform the desired therapeutic function.

Given the above discourse, status is a context that allows one to play certain roles, whether for musical or non-musical purposes. The relevance of status determines their acceptability in the community, and consequently the liberty to play the instrument, which allows for ease of musical expression. Denial of freedom to perform an instrument, especially *Chisasi* in this case, inhibits appreciation of the musical output and also the resultant aesthetical significance. Status is, therefore, an important context that is necessary to determine how certain musical practices are rendered, which in effect translates to its aesthetic appeal.

Governing or guiding philosophy
Varied underlying reasons dictate and inform why music is performed on different occasions. In each situation, there exist inspiring, governing and guiding principles as to why the music, who and how it is performed. Such guiding philosophies are regarded as important contexts

that largely influence and determine how the music is performed and ultimately its effectiveness in terms of aesthetic value.

With regard to the initiation ceremony that was well elaborated in a focus group discussion in Naitiri Village, music plays a focal role in entertaining and educating the attendees. On the part of the initiates, the songs encourage them as well as inform them as they gradually transform into adults. Of interest is the fact that, inasmuch as the music performs many functions in this ceremony, the overriding focus is to prepare the initiates to undergo the circumcision procedure. The circumcision procedure is a painful process that requires bravery and endurance. The songs and dances, *khuminya,* are therefore meant to deafen an initiate's senses from any distraction. That way, his heart, soul, body and spirit will be focused on nothing else but the goal of facing the circumciser.

From a literal translation, the word *khuminya* is derived from *khuminyala* (to be deaf). The purpose of the act of singing and dancing during the initiation ceremony is to deafen the initiate in all possible ways. This is achieved through music performance, characterized by pertinent teachings, the shouts by the singers, the stamping of feet by the dancers, the encouragement, scorning and rebuking. As stated above, these gestures render the body, spirit, mind and soul of the initiate immune to all distractions and lend themselves to the circumcision process. Thus, the governing or guiding philosophy in *khuminya*, is to unite the focus of an initiate towards circumcision. It ensures that their senses are not distracted to the extent that they start worrying about the anticipated pain that comes with circumcision. Musical practice in this sense is an ideological context and process, which if not properly rendered can fail to achieve its purpose.

As pertains to musical practice in the marriage ceremony, women are the main performers of the music. To clarify why mainly women were involved in this particular scenario, it is clear that men do their part of bride price negotiation, where in most cases either side (bride's or bride groom's) strives to get the best bargain. That is, the bride's side seeks for more bride price while the bride groom's side strives to bargain so that they can pay lesser bride price.

Inasmuch as this maybe not be regarded as a major disagreement, there is always serious bargaining which leads to a situation of give and take by either side. Women who are regarded as peace makers in the Bukusu community are consequently brought into the scenario so as to plead for a compromise and ensure a more harmonious relationship between the two sides. From a colloquial perspective, it would be said that 'they go to mend fences'. It

is therefore true that feminine voices indeed calm the hearts of many and bring merry and relaxation to the occasion.

This can also be viewed from a different perspective as a way of role assignment. That means, in the ceremony, both men and women were involved, but at different levels. Whereas men discuss bride price in a separate ceremony, the women go to take and welcome the new bride to the new home through song. More so, since the bride is going to play the role of a wife, it is better for fellow women to receive and welcome her to the new home and clan. This in essence is a way of inducting the bride into the new family. The aspect of role allocation exemplifies the fact that collective participation is not necessarily always rendered at the same time. Sometimes, it means taking up duties in different phases.

One of the ways of making the marriage ceremony achieve elegance is for the bride to move without hurry. Such tempo requires patience and understanding from the accompanying party. In few instances where men appear in such ceremonies, they may interrupt by requesting the bridal party to move faster. Such a request, when not honoured, sometimes ends up in a fight provoked by the bride groom's side. Women are preferred in such situations due to their patience, a virtue that the bride would need in her new home that comprises of people who are not related to her. Such a ceremony, therefore, demonstrates certain ideals in society including being patient and understanding. The people who accompany the bride teach her that in the new home, such virtues will be essential.

Apart from the social perspectives already discussed, the ululation (*Lukalakala*) was a special musical component that typified a marriage ceremony. When a girl is accorded a traditional marriage ceremony, ululation is the sign of victory – that they are happy with her. While ululation is done when any music is playing, it is socially informed given that only women are supposed to, and allowed to perform it. Presumably, allowing men to perform in a marriage ceremony would be a mistake because they cannot perform this special musical component of ululating. Women, therefore, stand out as the best suited performers in this occasion in order to give it the desired ululations and effectively colour the ceremony.

The preceding discussion on the role of women at marriage ceremonies also affirms their position as natural peacemakers. Their feminine voices have the ability to "penetrate people's hearts," bring joy and merry, and consequently peace in society. As the ululators of the community, women give it their best for the sake of merry making whether it is to celebrate an even year (a year of happiness) or any other happy occasion. In a marriage ceremony, the

diversity of roles played by different members of the society are exemplified in the way women induct the bride as one of their own, to become a member of their clan. In performing the songs in a marriage ceremony, they bring to life the hidden ideologies of the Bukusu that are peculiar and only manifested in this rite. Therefore, participation of women in rituals is informed by philosophies that differ from the ones of the marriage ceremony.

The beauty of the music, therefore, lies in who performs it. Only those allowed to perform it are able to manifest the philosophy behind the ritual. The aesthetic of the music is in part vested in the ideology behind the ritual that is manifested through the requisite players. A change in the role of who sings at a marriage ceremony would therefore negatively impact on the musical output. Arguably, this is a role for women who are able to depict certain characteristics that men cannot. The deployment of men would attract a sense of resentment due to social implications as well as musical output that is not characteristic of the occasion. The stigma created as a result of wrong participants would have a negative impact on the aesthetic relevance of the music.

Behavioural tendencies

Behaviour is yet another important aspect of how contextual music making is among the Bukusu. This is especially with regard to non-verbal communication that includes gestures, movements, facial expressions, miming, dance patterns, styles and formations. Apart from observation, such communication is also passed through explanations that are given by the respondents with regard to how music is performed in given contexts. A focus on such tendencies is based on the fact that Bukusu music is largely composite in nature. Therefore, it is not possible to render selected musical features separately. A unique observation about these behavioural tendencies is that, they are also contextual in nature. They impact on the aesthetic significance of a music performance.

During the initiation ceremony, the pre-dominant dance formation is circular, where the initiate/s are at the centre. The singers or dancers perform in circular motion, moving around the initiate/s with varied dance styles, mimicry, and in a celebratory mood. As discussed in the previous section on philosophy, the ideology behind this ceremony was to deafen (*khuminya*) the initiates. By performing in circular motion, all the musical actions focus on the initiate/s. This dance formation and motion is, therefore, supposed to achieve a certain

acoustical impact on the initiate/s, thus validating the belief in deafening the initiates. The behavioural tendency in this case facilitates how the philosophy is executed.

The phase where the initiates were escorted from the river back home for circumcision was different, though within the same ceremony. The people accompanying the initiates lined up behind them, but with a remarkable distance, as they sang *Sioyayo*. This linear formation allowed for the song to be heard as far away as possible, especially by the mother/s at home. It notified them to sit in the correct position (on the ground with feet straight). Keeping distance from the initiate/s was supposed to alert them that the time was nigh for them to be on their own and bravely face the knife. Furthermore, it meant that they were growing into independent adults, and that is why they were gradually being left on their own.

At this point, the initiates are not allowed to play *Chinyimba* or any other musical instrument. They are supposed to only walk on alongside the music makers. Absence of any musical activity for the initiates helped them to focus on what was ahead – circumcision. Music performance was only done by other participants in the ritual. The performance here is characterized by minimal dance, but more on singing, as a way of preparing the initiates for the final rite. The mood of the people is more aggressive in character, supported by enhanced vocal energy. Seemingly, the linear formations, non-use or use of musical instruments, distance created between initiates and other participants, and vocal rendition are features worth regarding as changing behavioural tendencies that characterize different phases of the ritual for certain desired purposes.

The descriptions above bring to fore certain behavioural tendencies that are unique to different phases of performance in a ritual. They seem remarkably different from each other yet facilitating communication and the function of the music. Such predispositions impacted on the aspects of the musical sound acoustically and textually, among others. This in essence led to varied aesthetics in the course of performance. Therefore, a change in contexts impacted on the behavioural tendencies as well as the resultant aesthetic appeal of the music performance.

The preceding discussions prove the contextual nature of Bukusu music. The analysis focuses on aspects of traditional contexts such as place, ceremony or ritual, time, gender, age or status, behavioural tendencies and the guiding philosophy of the music. These aspects of context have an impact on how music is performed and its acceptability in, and to the society. The freedom of expression achieved during music performance influences the effectiveness

of its rendition. In summing up, contextual aspects are significant work because they determine the aesthetics of music performance among the Bukusu.

Communal nature

Music performance among Babukusu is largely communal in practice. Many examples show that hardly do people make music individually. In any given gathering for whatever reason, all the attendees participate in the music making process. Participation may be by means of singing, dancing, offering moral support, dramatizing, clapping, playing instruments or performing ornaments such as whistling, yelling, cheering and shouts. Whenever an informant demonstrated a song during the fieldwork, it was common for the people around to voluntarily join in the performance without prompting.

Among the Bukusu, such joint effort is not unique to music making alone. It is a philosophy that is common in most activities in the life of Babukusu. Notably, food is communal, so is work and the upbringing of children; these are duties shared by the entire community. To bring the ideology to reality, the Bukusu make use of a number of proverbs that advocate for combined efforts. Proverbs are used mainly to emphasize and pass on knowledge in different ways so that people understand the desired concepts better. For example, the proverb, *Luluchi lwichulilanga kimikhula,* means that a river mainly draws its waters from the path overflows. This proverb exemplifies the fact that a river is not independent. It needs support from even the miniature sources to accumulate water that in turn benefits humanity. Without the path overflows the river cannot have sufficient water. Joint effort, therefore, irrespective of the social status of the contributors yields more than individual attempts.

To further demonstrate the concept of the communal nature of Bukusu music, consider the initiation song *Sioyayo.* This is one of the songs that always attracted the most audience participation. As described in the previous chapter, *Sioyayo* was performed for initiates on four occasions. Notably, when the song is performed, it attracts the attention of all the people in the homestead. It is acknowledged as the song of the ancestors which when sung; even the unseen members of the community come down to join.

Seemingly the mystic power in the song always changes the mood of the initiate/s to focus their attention to the circumcision ahead of them. The combined efforts by all the attendees at a homestead make the song more effective in achieving the desired purpose. The beauty of this song, therefore, is solely in the combined performance of as many people as possible, so that it deafens (*khuminya*) the initiate. Therefore, a solo performance of such a song would

basically sound misplaced. The song would be malfunctional, lack the charm required to appeal to the audience or fail to elicit a sense of aesthetic relevance that comes with group participation.

With regard to instrumentalists, it is common practice that in the course of performance, they invite selected members of the audience to alternately make their contribution alongside the music, an aspect that is well captured in Excerpt 3. Instrumental performance was not solely for the player/s. It also involved other people who participated through performing sung or spoken text. In such instances, the audience did not just talk; it also complimented the thematic development of the song. Such practice makes the performance both interactive and a collaborative effort.

In instances where the instrumentalist does not invite member/s of the audience to speak, they fondly talk about the members of the audience, who acknowledge in a loud response, *orio muno* (thank you). By the instrumentalist talking about a member of the audience, they remotely make them part of or incorporate them into the performance. This characteristic further exemplifies how strong the philosophy of communal participation is among the Bukusu.

In most cases, there are no ideal spectators in Bukusu music performance. All members who are present in a ritual, function or occasion qualify to perform, at different levels of interest. While some are talented instrumentalists, lead singers or dancers, all the others participate by responding to songs, dancing at whatever level of ability, offering moral support, commenting and commentating, or awarding and rewarding the specialized performers. Therefore, this was a community performance, made up of music makers with varied responsibilities and specialities (whether assigned, assumed or ascribed). They all jointly perform assorted roles to make the music performance aesthetically appealing. Clip *Vc.5* shows a typical example of this communal concept in music making among Babukusu. Figure 8 below illustrates how the typical community formed a performance ensemble.

Figure 7: A typical community performance ensemble[71]

From **Figure 8**, we can see that there was always a focal lead performer/s who specialized in playing an instrument/s, or singing. Such persons performed among other members of the community who played other pertinent roles for the music to be complete. However, the role allocation was not distinct; the relationship between the performers was complementary because they all derived from each other cues, motivation and meaning. Therefore, the roles were both independent but also dependent because they all contributed to the whole. Ostensibly, the lack of or abdication of any role would short-change the whole, rendering the music malfunctional and lacking in aesthetics.

The above discussions on the communal nature of Bukusu music further confirm the fact that group performance is a predominant characteristic of music making. As shown in **Figure 8**, participants in an event form the performing ensemble alongside the specialized instrumentalists or singers. Given that attendees differ from one occasion to another, it can be deduced that the organization of the performing group or ensemble is not musically oriented. Instead, the organization is based on the activity, function or occasion. When the occasion is over, the performing group winds up.

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[71] Source: Developed by the researcher based on the study findings.

In another occasion, a new performing group – relevant to the occasion – is formed with different specialist lead singer and/or instrumentalist. The common denominator for the performing group is, therefore, the lead musician, be it an instrumentalist or a singer. The aesthetic endowment of Bukusu music is, therefore, in part derived from the communal performance that is typified by participation of all people in attendance. The people take up and/or assume different roles in the group performance. A person who performs music on his or her own sets himself or herself aloof from the rest of the community. In such a scenario, certain roles, whether assigned or assumed would definitely miss, hence denying the music the beauty that comes with communal participation.

Creative process

Music making among Babukusu involves a creative process that is achieved via a dynamic development of musical features. Such dynamism is especially realized in the development of song text which is a significant way of communicating messages. Additionally, the dynamic process draws from the reasoning that in any given occasion, the musician derives their song text from the context of that particular event. The previous section described varied dimensions that characterized contexts which formed basis for song texts. Such song text is created in the process of performance, what is referred to as *khuroma.* The process of *khuroma* is meant to expand the existing songs, which are characteristically short, so that they can last as long as they may be required or until the ritual is over. Some scholars regard these short songs as 'established musical constructs or ideas.'[72] Although the aim is to expand a song, a task that is collective, individual musicians also use their personal creative genius to achieve a sense of uniqueness. Some do so by using their ideas and music identity to fiddle with the existing constructs.

To contextualize the creative process in music consider for instance the words used in a song in one marriage ceremony. It is quite obvious that they drastically change when performed in another marriage ceremony. The lyrics of the song change to suit the audience, occasion, time, the couple and clans. Therefore creativity is essential because of the need for relevant song text to fit each situation. In such a scenario, the creative process is only necessary during the performance and ends with the end of the ceremony. But then, the established construct

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[72] Established constructs here means an existing musical idea upon which individual musicians built their ideas on. By the respective musicians using their personal creative ideas in an existing construct, it in many ways contributes to the beauty of the music (Nzewi and Omollo Ongati, 2014).

will be used again in another similar event. Given the uniqueness of each event, use of the construct will be largely altered, which results in an alternative creative process.

From an idiomatic perspective, songs are not notated. Therefore, they cannot be reproduced with exact precision. But most fundamentally, experiencing new environments comes with changed ideas and/or features, which influence the thematic composition of the songs. More so, they are performed by different musicians who arguably have different musical abilities and identities. Apparently, the beauty of Bukusu songs is in part vested in how the music is created and re-created in varied contexts, as a way of generating novelty and innovativeness.

Moreover, the creative uniqueness of respective musicians is essential in a performance as a way of giving the music the desired character. It is presumed that if a song is performed the same way on different occasions, it would be rendered un-aesthetic, given that it not only falls short of relevance and the novelty that comes with changing contexts, but also the needed uniqueness of personal genius, music identity and creative character.

Among Babukusu, listenership is composed of both the merely excited to those keen to learn the pertinent issues that are raised in the songs. Such listenership mainly learns from song texts that carry the messages. Whereas the above argument emphasizes the significance of song text, the way the message is presented is fundamental to how the performance is considered aesthetically relevant. Apparently, musicians who use a distinct style in presenting song text that ingeniously communicates the intended message, appeal more to their audience than those who are inept. For example, the song *Maayi muro* in Excerpt 4 uses a hidden story and allegory which likens change of political allegiance to the false love of a step-mother. This is a typical way of using song text but with a creative presentation style to achieve more beauty.

Apart from style, the use of stylistic devices such as metaphors (*Lukaato*), proverbs (*Lusimo*), riddles (*Kumunayi*) and humour (*Chingacho*) to embellish the message in a song, makes it more aesthetically appealing. In an analytical study of the people of Southern Nigeria (Osakue 2013: 17) refers to such devices as;

> "Symbolic language and artistic embodiments that can engage, provoke, evoke or produce human thoughts/ideas tangibly and intangibly depending on the speaker/listener and native intelligence interfaces."

When used, such symbolic language makes the listeners long for the hidden message. In an attempt to decipher such hidden messages, symbolic language makes the process more interactive and attracts more interest in the performance, hence making it aesthetically appealing.

Admittedly, performance of a song in which the musician uses a creative style to communicate the message, derives a better aesthetic relevance. A style that especially keeps the listeners anticipating the musician's intention is more appealing. Additionally, such a message could only be communicated effectively when certain stylistic devices were used. Such a creative process that involves many features simultaneously is achieved during the performance process, but not from memory. It is debatable whether presentation of song text in prose form without any/or all of the characteristics discussed so far would make a song unaesthetic.

The aesthetics of music performance among Babukusu, in many ways lay in features of its dynamic creative process as described in the above discussions. A unique aspect of the creative process is how artistic features are re-deployed with significant alteration for them to be relevant in given situations. The act of alternative re-deployment of artistic facets has been referred to by earlier researchers as recycling (Wa Mukuna 1997, Nzewi 2003, Masasabi 2010). However, it is good to be cautious when using this terminology. It is advisable to seek to further understand whether the concept is used only in music performance or other aspects of Bukusu life.

Arguably, recycling in most cases refers to industrial processes where an object is broken down, deformed and its material used to make the same or another artefact. With reference to the way music features are used in this case, they are never broken down or deformed. A section of the song (melody and words of the chorus) is always repeated, whereas the words of the soloist are altered. Since recycling entails breaking down (reduction), using such an analogy to refer to music making can only mean embellishment of existing musical constructs.

The process of alternative re-deployment is not unique to music. Many other aspects of Babukusu life use this ideology. It may for example, be likened to the way an earth pavement in front of a house, *Luuyia*, (see Plate 2) is used in varied instances. Naturally, it is an extension of a house that enhances its beauty, yet can be an arena for entertainment, a

circumcision venue or a grain seasoning place. Such functions are, however, possible only when *Luuyia* is altered in a number of ways for it to be relevant.

Arguably, using it without effecting the required change will not give *Luuyia* the desired significance for an alternative function. The concept of re-deployment with a difference may, therefore, be regarded as a philosophy that is entrenched in the activities of Babukusu. Whereas it is a form of re-deployment of varied objects, processes and acts, it essentially impacts on the resultant significance of the whole.

From a generic view, such engaging with a difference (using existing music constructs with alteration) may be regarded as a process of resignification. The term resignification carries with it the philosophy behind the reason why the existing construct is being recycled, as opposed to seeing it from a surface perspective of song text alteration. Such terminology accommodates not only performance, but other aspects of Bukusu life that use the same philosophy. Based on the findings of the research, I recommend the use of the term resignification in instances where constructs are re-used, but with contextual renewal of its music material.

Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS)

Music performance in the Bukusu community carries with it varied knowledge systems, without which the music would be desolate. Such knowledge systems ensure better use of music to achieve its functions, which in turn makes it more aesthetically appealing. With regard to Bukusu music instruments, it is common for the players to start with a narration section, where they introduce themselves (*khukhwetacha*) in context with what they are supposed to present. As already discussed, a unique aspect of the introduction is that they mention their clans in certain phrases that reveal the history of the clan, virtues, talents, virtues and their pride. Within their performance, they also identify with members of the audience (*khulaa*) in a similar style of narration, where historical and cultural aspects of their clans or origin are emphasized.

Apart from narrative sessions, song texts sang in various rituals are knowledge-filled repositories of the Bukusu culture. For example, Excerpt 6 is a social satire about a young member (girl) of the community who went against the social grain by marrying an older man. While the song is satirical, it is supposed to enforce a form of social control. It was performed for people who needed to learn about marriage, before they were ripe for it.

In reference to their dances, Babukusu show specific mannerisms that are permitted and even those that are forbidden, depending on the occasion. The behavioural tendencies exhibited in dance movements not only show but teach the people about morality as a virtue of the community. To make the dances more appealing, they make use of dresses. Such dresses are designed not only for work, but they are also effective costumes worn for musical performance. The design of these multi-purpose dresses confirms that music can hardly be divorced from daily activities of Babukusu. That is why they need an attire that can be used both for work and music performance. The design and use of the multi-faceted attires is a manifestation of indigenous knowledge. That is why it was possible to use the dresses in varied instances.

Apart from entertainment, the songs that marked the different phases of respective rituals such as initiation and marriage showed varied cultural features. The rituals were characterised by certain philosophies, which cannot be fruitful without the knowledge that is carried by the music that accompanies them. In reference to the initiation ceremony, Babukusu sing to encourage the initiate/s, but in the process, teach them many things about their community and especially the role of an adult man in the society.

We have already seen that music was supposed to psychologically, physically and spiritually prepare the initiate/s to courageously face the circumcision procedure. To achieve such preparation, Babukusu, as already stated, performed *khuminya*, a process of deafening the initiate/s. The entire initiation process of Babukusu is filled with knowledge systems that ranged from musical performance, acoustics, spirituality, morality, biology and chemistry. These knowledge systems essentially bring taste, beauty, character and substance to the ritual process.

The above discussion, together with the examples drawn from selected ceremonies, demonstrate how the performance of Bukusu music carries with it indigenous knowledge systems. Such knowledge is most appreciated because it is part of the beauty of a performance. The introductory rites and song texts carry historical and cultural facts about the Bukusu. Therefore, by only listening to a Bukusu musician perform; one can gather considerable information pertaining to knowledge systems of the Bukusu community. On the other hand, lack of such information in a performance renders the music devoid of any significant aesthetic values.

Apart from the introductory rites, musicians also immensely contribute to the success and proper functioning of the rituals, functions or occasions in the community. This is possible because they possess knowledge about the procedures and or liturgies of how the varied rituals of the community are supposed to be conducted. Such knowledge enables them to select the requisite music for the respective ceremonies, phases, and times, while observing the correct philosophies that govern them. For instance, in the case of an initiation ceremony – which has different phases – the musicians do not require a checklist to remind them about what to perform and the order of performance. They know each phase from memory and which unique music goes with it. None of the songs is interchangeable; therefore, they ensure that they sing the correct music.

The musicians, therefore, in many ways maintain the contexts of the rituals so that they can retain the required significance. This is because they possess the requisite knowledge systems. The application of indigenous knowledge in the respective rituals, most of which are music-oriented, ensures their contextual relevance. Using the right context enables the participants to pay full attention to, not only the sonic aspects of the performance, but also appreciate and internalize the knowledge being communicated in the songs by the musicians. The place of IKS in determining how respective music-based rituals take place, therefore, not only facilitates the manifestation other aesthetic features, but also knowledge as one of the features.

Language use is an essential component of communicating messages in songs, which further determines the beauty of a performance. Language is used in certain ways for it to be captivating and to deliver the essential aesthetic value. Use of stylistic devices such as riddles, metaphors, proverbs and humour makes the music more interesting. Communicating a message or telling a story requires design and a unique style of presentation for it to be understood. An example is given in **Excerpt 5**, where the musician likens the upcoming leader to an older one. He goes ahead to compare the transition to the germination process of a potato. The way agricultural knowledge systems in this case are given a position in art is interesting. The comparison facilitates effective communication of the desired message.

The manner, in which language is used in Bukusu music to achieve effectiveness, reveals the need for good mastery of the language, especially its knowledge systems. Based on the way musicians use such language patterns adeptly with ease, to be a good Bukusu musician, one must master the Bukusu language knowledge systems. Language as a knowledge system,

therefore, when used in performance further facilitates a song's aesthetic relevance. The beauty that comes with the use of such knowledge systems enables better understanding of the artistic discourse in communication, hence drawing more beauty and enjoyment of the music.

Morality

One of the focal aspects of the daily lives of Babukusu is how morality, ethinicism, respect and decency as virtues foster good relationships and tranquillity among members of the community. The previous section alluded to a number of aspects that demonstrate how such attributes are achieved in the Bukusu community. For instance, younger persons always address older people by title, not by name. A case in point is when a child addresses their father as *Paapa,* not by his real name. All other people of almost the same or similar age as the father are addressed in a similar manner.

Apart from addressing people, certain dress codes are permissible for people of particular ages. In the earlier days for instance, young boys were supposed to put on an animal skin cloth called *khamolo.* An old man would similarly put on a dress from animal skin (*Likutu*), but bigger in size. Women were expected to sit in a certain specific manner that was different from the way men sat. It was called *khulambisia, meaning, sitting* on the floor with straight feet. The purpose of these differences was to maintain morals in the community.

Interestingly, whereas the beauty of a woman was appreciated, her character was essential in acquiring a marriage partner. This was demonstrated in the proverb, *Omukhasi omulayi omumanyila emaika, omubi omumanyile ekhukenda*. This proverb means that a good woman is known for her ability to take up womanly responsibilities as opposed to showing off her beauty.

Music making as a process and product of culture has rules that ensure that morals are similarly achieved, maintained and practiced. One of the issues discussed in the previous chapter is how the people behaved during dance sessions. As mentioned earlier on, dance movements above the waist were most encouraged and advocated for in public performances. Shaking of shoulders was thus their main dance style. The three versions already discussed were *Kumukongo, Bitenga* and *Kumuchenje*. However, dance movements below the waist (*Bukhwana*) were prohibited. As pointed out earlier, anyone who practised this dance style – except in the context where it was allowed – was censored by other participants. Apart from

dance, a musician with a good moral standing was appreciated. However, ill-mannered musicians were disregarded and hardly invited to perform their music.

The aesthetics of music making is, therefore, partly determined in how performers manifest themselves with decency, decorum, respect, and acceptable attitudes, aspects that are meant to foster good moral/ethical standing in the society. Use of motor expressions that were beyond the acceptable norms for instance, denied a performance its beauty because, that was ethically incorrect. If dancing below the waist for this case was aesthetically appealing, then it would have been accepted and entertained. The desire to maintain ethicism would not admit such movement as acceptable and, therefore, unaesthetic.

Such aspects of morality in the Bukusu community are closely related to a stance taken by radical moralists and the ethicists. In advocating for radical moralism, Tolstoy (1995) for instance argues that the worth of art is entirely determined by its moral character. With regard to ethicism, Gaut (1998: 182) holds a similar view when he states that;

> "If a work manifests ethically reprehensible attitudes, it is to that extent aesthetically defective, and if a work manifests ethically commendable attitudes, it is to that extent aesthetically meritorious."

Whereas the standpoint of the two authors is largely radical, it in some ways highlights the bearing that morals and ethics hold on how aesthetics are manifested and evaluated. Similarly, among Babukusu, morality plays a central role in determining the aesthetic relevance of a performance.

Aesthetic appraisal

A unique dimension of music making in the Bukusu community is how excellence, conformity and relevance are appraised. Inasmuch as all members in a given ritual participate in music making, their involvement is not limited to song, instrumentation and dance related facets only. They are also conscious of merit, standards and quality of performance (what and how it is performed) of not only the lead musician but all other members present. Notably, lengthening music entails creating and generating newer text during performance (*khuroma*). Such a process needs creativity where style is complemented by other devices to make the music appealing. In the process, the musician is supposed to maintain the rhythm and flow of the song as well as synchronizing with instrumentation.

It is noteworthy that the process of *khuroma* is a complicated; it requires meticulous attention to detail. In the event that a musician grossly lets these properties stray, the participating audience would voice their discontentment, a scenario that prompts another musician to be called upon or volunteer to perform. Such reaction to distortion of music can well be regarded as evaluation in participation.

As described earlier, people understood the tuning of instruments and ability of singers. Therefore, the audience had knowledge about how music was supposed to be performed. This knowledge was a product of continuous learning they underwent during participation. Aesthetic appreciation may well be regarded as a product of collective cultural knowledge and training processes, where learnt constructs and patterns are assimilated. Such acquaintance qualifies members of the community to critique musical performances especially in relation to what makes it achieve efficacy and/or aesthetic relevance.

With regard to the audience, we noted that apparently, certain dance styles and their magnitude are permissible whereas others are not. A case in point is the dance to celebrate the birth of twins (*Bukhwana*) where movements at the pelvic area are allowed. However, such dance styles are not permissible in public spaces due to its censored social implications. It is, therefore, an assumed duty of all members who are present to recognize such malpractice and condemn the concerned member/s.

Inasmuch as it is general knowledge that such dance is not permitted except during *Bukhwana*, it requires evaluative skills for one to tell that a given dancer is straying. More so, the evaluator must be able to appreciate accepted dance styles as well as the forbidden ones. Besides identifying norms and misnomers, dancers who show exemplary ability are complimented.

Apart from the general assessment of the performance process, the audience keeps stock of performance levels and abilities of the respective musicians. In situations where more than one musician is present in a function, the audience determines who plays and who does not or otherwise who plays first and who plays last. Such preference is based on assessment and judgment of the musicians' prior performances and their status by the audience. That is say, who is preferred against the others, or who should perform first and last. A similar characteristic where the audience evaluates a performance among Babukusu is pointed out by Nzewi (2003:28) who in a parallel study notes that;

"The African practice of spontaneous and practical artistic performance of evaluation offers emphatic solidarity to a performing group. The assessor becomes included as a factor of, and participant in, creativity. Such practical evaluation may be emotionally prompted, but it is an artistic component of a musical arts presentation. It is a proactive evaluation philosophy that makes the performance art the collective experience of performers and audience."

From the above, it is imperative that the assessor is not set aside from the performance. He or she is part and parcel of the artistic endeavour. By evaluating the performance, the audience is incorporated, thus, further affirming the communal nature of Bukusu music performance. The role of the audience enhances solidarity with the other music makers and complements the creative process of making music.

Another way of showing appreciation of musical performance is through motor response – dancing. Given the communal nature of Bukusu music, it is common for the attendees to dance when music is played. Levels of how the people dance, however, varies according to the quality of the music being played. Arguably, performance of an artistically appealing musician always keeps people on their feet dancing in the arena. Conversely, music that does not appeal to the people attracts minimal dancing. The magnitude of how people dance is, therefore, an indicator of how they appreciate the artistic worth of the music.

An interesting observation about performance is that music making is not a full-time job where the artists earn a defined salary or wage. Bukusu musicians are remunerated in the form of gifts, tips and benevolence from their patrons. During performance, musicians are offered gifts depending on how captivating and artistically appealing their performance is. Instances where one is overwhelmingly appreciated is an indicator that their music is *par excellence*. On the contrary, lukewarm appreciation implies that the performance is not appealing. The level of material response towards a performance is, therefore, based on aesthetic appraisal as a measure of its artistic worth. More tips confirm that the audience appreciates the music.

An exceptional and higher level of aesthetic judgment is in terms of performance of the ululation (*Lukalakala*). Earlier, we discussed the three scenarios in which *Lukalakala* was uniquely performed in the Bukusu community. That is, the birth of a child, initiation and marriage, occasions that are informed by varied philosophies. A unique aspect of the three ululating situations is that it signifies victory. But such victory can only be recognized at an

achieved climax of a given task. For instance, the climax in a marriage ceremony, is the breakthrough to have the bride allowed to leave her parents' house. For a pregnancy, it is marked by the successful bringing forth of a new-born. During initiation, a climax is the point at which the initiate/s brave the circumcision procedure.

Musically speaking, the victory of a musician happens when they touch the hearts of the audience, by delivering essential artistic components that bring efficacy to music. A climax in music is a sign of victory and that is why it is accorded an ululation as a form of aesthetic appraisal of the performance. Seemingly, such ululation at the point of climax drives as many people to the dance arena, as well as challenging them to appreciate and offer musicians gifts. An ululation is, therefore, another level of aesthetic appraisal of music performance among Babukusu.

The above discussions show that aesthetic appraisal is based on qualitative assessment, the result of which is measured by quantitative actions and indicators. Qualitative ones include appraisal of the sonic character of the performance, the artistic development and rendition of textual components, versatility with and of knowledge systems and sensibilities to contextual significance. Quantitative actions are mainly a result, response, and/or measure of the qualitative actions. This is demonstrated for instance in long the people dance, ululate (the sharpness and intensity of ululation) or offer gifts as an appreciation of the artistic worth of a performance.

Musical excellence is measured by how much the community is drawn into participation of a given performance. Participation in this is sense means dancing, cheering, ululating, offering gifts to lead musicians, dramatization and other actions that point to the success of the performance. Such varied levels of participation are what are considered as performance indicators that are necessary measures of artistic merit among Babukusu.

Apart from performance indicators, artistic merit is also measured by voicing of certain phrases (verbal complements). As noted in the previous chapter, whenever one performed *par excellence* they would say, *akho khalulu,* (he is hot) a phrase that is meant to qualify and approve one's meritorious musical presentation. Given that it is based on aesthetic appraisal, such phrases may be regarded as 'appraisal modes'. That is, phrases that are appraisal-based to communicate how the audience feels about the music performance.

Composite nature

A fundamental characteristic feature of Bukusu music is that during performance it embraces many arts for it to achieve the desired character, be aesthetically relevant and/or appealing and meaningful. As already discussed, whenever a respondent was requested to sing during the field study, at most basic level, they would start by dancing followed by singing. In some instances, they performed the two actions simultaneously.

In some scenarios, it was interesting the way the respondents lamented the lack of instrumentation whenever they were requested to dance. They instead sang and/or clapped as a way of complementing the dance in order for it to be relevant. As if that was not enough, the instrumentalists hardly played their instruments without shaking/nodding the head, or stamping the foot on the ground. Apart from the body movements, the instrumentalists also sang as they played their instruments. In instances where song was not possible, they had speech surrogates assigned to their instrumental tendencies.

Several demonstrations of Bukusu music performance showed that, hardly did the informants play an instrument without the support or complement from another. For instance, the *Litungu* player made use of *Bichenje,* and would also be supported by *Luengele and Siilili* players. In instances where there was no instrument, they clapped, stamped their feet or improvised something to tap. Such performances were not also complete, until a song was incorporated. In the course of performance, the instrumentalists used spoken words, made gestures and dramatized selected scenes. The use of more than one instrument, song, narrations, gestures and drama further strengthens the argument that indeed Bukusu music thrived on the composite nature.

Apart from the performing arts, visual arts and works of craft are also used to enrich the outward look of a performance. Dresses with specific designs are for instance worn to make dance movements achieve more gracefulness as well as create patterns when many people perform together. As already noted, the dresses are designed in such a way that they are worn when going about daily activities, and also during musical performances.

The skirt-dress (*Chinyinja*) traditionally worn by girls, is a typical example of a dress worn for daily work yet works perfectly for dances. Such dresses were befitting in the sense that most of the activities then were supported by music making. Given that music performance was done by all the people in attendance at any ritual, occasion, function and/or work, one did not need to change the dress to participate. It was natural for people to wear the available

'dress or costume' during performances. Wearing of costumes as works of visual art, seemingly exaggerated body movement, showed uniformity among the many performers and made the performances look more elegant.

Male performers traditionally kept long hair that was curled and smeared with ochre. While this hair style (*Buyuni*) was part of their lifestyle, it also worked well in music performance. In the case of the dance, *khusuna singorio,* the long hair exaggerated the movement of the head and how high the dancers jumped. When performed in a group, *Buyuni* created patterns which added to the aesthetic appeal of the dance. The red ochre made the performers look more colourful during performance. Such hair styling was another feature of visual art that contributed to the composite nature of Bukusu music where several arts interacted in performance.

It is evident that for Bukusu music to be complete and relevant, the performers use many facets. A singer can only make sense when their songs are accompanied with instruments and dance. The dancer on the other hand always listens to the instrument and also sings as well. One plays an instrument, while also singing along and dancing. The three musical facets are inseparable. That is why reference to song includes dancing and playing instrument, and so are the other two. For the three facets to make better sense, the performers also use other aspects such as narration, drama, gestures, facial expressions and visual arts to make the work artistically complete.

The aesthetic experience of Bukusu music is essentially embodied in its composite character and nature. When one aspect of performance is not well rendered or is missing, the entire piece of work is regarded as un-aesthetic. While respective facets or dimensions separately contribute to the aesthetics, the aesthetic experience is achieved when all of them are rendered together, accordingly. For example, if a *Litungu* player plays the instrument very well without singing, the performance would lack an essential aesthetic component. If on the other hand the *Omukhupetungu* sang very well but distorted the rhythmic flow of the instrumentation, the entire performance would be un-aesthetic. But if they played and sang *par excellence*, yet the dancers lacked vigour or danced badly, the entire performance would again be aesthetically deficient.

In Bukusu music, the aesthetic experience is, therefore, a consequence of fullness and completeness of performance. All necessary facets must be incorporated in desired proportions as well understanding the style and context of their deployment. The interaction

of different facets is necessary to establish relationships that bring about the desired aesthetic experience. The interactive nature of varied facets may be likened to Pinto's (2018) concept of the 'total music facet' that results from the relationship between different means of expression and modes of performance. The means of expression include gesture, sound, speech and movement, while modes of performance include dance, theatre, instrumentation and singing. This concept is a departure from the conception of music as basically sound.

Arguably, a conscious or unconscious seclusion or distortion of any of the features in a given performance, short-changes the whole. Therefore, the aesthetic experience of Bukusu music is largely vested in its composite nature that is achieved through relationships or interactions of different facets that lead to wholeness. Such aesthetics essentially impact on and/or influence how the meaning is created and effective functioning of the music in a given context.

5

Bukusu Music in Contemporary Contexts

Change is an inevitable process that occurs in varied ways. Its occurrence with regard to contextual relocation of music presents a unique phenomenon that challenges how aesthetics of performance are manifested. Like music many other communities in Africa, the aesthetics of Bukusu music are subject to such change when performed in contemporary contexts. Most of the new or alternative contexts have been created consciously or unconsciously to fill the gap of dwindling traditional contexts that such music was initially meant for.

The new contexts have ensured continuity of the music that would have otherwise become extinct due to lack of performance opportunities. The main trigger of the change is the gradual diminishing of traditional social institutions that provided opportunities for performance. The new contexts include competitive festivals within educational and non-educational institutions, cultural revival centres such as churches and cultural centres, and enterprise development centres such as restaurants and cultural nights.

These contexts are regarded as new or relocated because they provide an alternative platform for performance of music that was initially meant for other situations. This chapter discusses the music performance practice in these new contexts and subsequently how aesthetics of Bukusu music performance are manifested therein.

Competitive festivals - KMF

Founded in 1927 by British settlers, the Kenya Music Festival (KMF) is an annual fete that brings together participants from all learning institutions in Kenya. The age ranges from as young as three-year-old kindergarten children to tertiary students. The festival also offers categories for teachers' clubs and university lecturers, respectively. KMF features performances drawn from African traditions, Western classical and oriental music, in areas of vocal (solo and choral), instrumental and dance.

Apart from music, the festival also showcases elocution in African languages, English, Kiswahili, French and German language. Both music and elocution have been classified into smaller categories based on peculiarities and/or similarities of their performance idioms. Bukusu music features under African music where instrumental, folk and dance music are exhibited.

Given its magnitude, diversity and educational orientation, I found it important to review the performance practice of Bukusu music at the KMF, given that this is one of the major contemporary contexts. The purpose was to ascertain how aesthetics of performance are revealed therein. Additionally, the festival has nurtured and inspired music practice by many other contemporary institutions, where notably, many of the musicians in Kenya today are regarded as products of KMF.[73]

Furthermore, many music festivals in Kenya are designed and organized with sizeable borrowing from the structures of KMF. KMF is, therefore, provides a unique point of reference for many other music performing contexts in Kenya. This chapter discusses the findings drawn from several performance sessions that I attended during the three KMF levels.[74] Apart from attending the music festival, I also reviewed the KMF syllabus and guidelines on adjudication, as resource materials that were necessary for proper adjudication at the festival.

I attended three levels of the KMF 91st edition. The first level was from 8th to 13th May 2017, the Bungoma County KMF, held at Miluki Secondary School. The second level was from 4th to 10th June 2017, the Western Region KMF held at Lwanya Girls High School in Busia County. The third level was from 10th to 22nd July 2017, the KMF national level which was held at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) in Kakamega County.

Attending the three levels were important for the purpose of a comparative assessment of the festival trends and practices. At the lowest level (county), there were many Bukusu music performances, but they reduced at the regional level, and at the national level where they were even fewer. This trend was important to assess whether similar characteristics were manifested in the performance practice, especially when subjected to stiffer competition as well as participation by other Kenyan communities.

The venue of the festival performances was mainly the school multipurpose, dining, or lecture halls. The buildings were mostly rectangular in shape, with a raised podium on one end that was used as a stage. Inside the halls, the audience comprised of invited guests, lovers

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[73] Gabriel Musungu (2016) in unpublished paper, presented during celebration of 50 years of Kenyan independence.

[74] The KMF is organized so that participants compete from the lowest level, and the winners ascend to the next high level. The levels are; sub-county, county, regional and national level, which arguably features the best performers.

of music, teachers, students and pupils who sat still as they waited for choirs to perform. The audience observed silence, watched keenly and applauded at the end of the performances.[75] Performance was reserved for the participants on stage only. The other people in attendance only watched and listened, at the end of which they appreciated the performers by clapping and cheering.

KMF has defined categories within the traditional music. That is; "folk song, traditional cultural dance and traditional African instruments."[76] The KMF syllabus defines the categories mentioned above as follows;

> *Folk song* – A song with a specific theme performed within the respective cultural idioms in relation to; the singing styles, instrumentation and accompanying movements, etc. However, emphasis should be on singing.

> *Traditional cultural dance* – A dance with a specific theme performed within the respective cultural idioms in relation to; the singing styles, instrumentation, accompanying movement etc. However, emphasis should be on the dancing, formations and synchronization of all the musical aspects of the presentation. Participants are encouraged to articulate decent movements in the presentation. Dances with movements that may appear obscene or unacceptable in public should not be performed at the festival.

> *Traditional African instruments* – this is a class for traditional instruments performed in the idiom of the community they are chosen from. The use of improvised instruments such as bottles, tins, jerry cans, metallophones and tambourines should not be allowed.

Participants at the respective levels of the festivals considerably adhered to the above definitions and rules. Dance was peripheral to singing in the performances exhibited in the folk song category. However, the traditional cultural dance category was characterised by emphasis on dance movements and pattern formation. The singing and instrumentation only played an accompanying role.

In the third category, traditional African instruments, the performances focused on instrument playing skills. Singing and dancing were used only at subordinate levels. In the three categories, however, singing, dancing and instrumentation were concurrently manifested, although in varied proportions.

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[75] Observation of performances at Bungoma County Kenya Music Festival, on 11th May 2017 at Miluki Secondary School, Bungoma South Sub-county.
[76] Kenya Music Festival syllabus 2017, page 13.

To further understand how the respective categories were performed, I focused on ascertaining the visual difference with regard to how the participants arranged themselves on stage. In the folk song class, the performers walked onto the stage in two lines and formed a semicircle. For mixed choirs, girls were in the front line in most cases. During the performance, they maintained this formation as they sang and danced. Plate 19 below shows a choir on stage performing a folk song at the KMF. Clip *Vc.8* also shows a choir on stage arranged in similar formation as well as how they started and ended their performance of the song.

Plate 19: KMF folksong[77]

In the dance class, most of the participants lined up off the stage, where they began the performance with a definite entry formation. Few of them, that is, the instrumentalists and lead dancers were positioned on stage from where they started their performance. Adorned in multi-coloured costumes, décor and props, they made numerous patterns and often changed dance styles. They also creatively made use of gestures that flowed into the ongoing dance.

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[77] Picture taken by Anderson Merklein (research assistant), at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, on 13th July 2017.

During performance, many of the performers on stage sung and danced. In few cases, singing was left to a smaller group set aside for that purpose. The smaller group danced less compared to the large group of the participants who took up the main role of dancing without singing. It was also a common practice for the lead singers in the dance group to double up by playing instruments (*Litungu* or *Siilili*) as well. In a few instances though, the lead singers did not play any instrument. Plate 20 below shows an example of a group performing a dance on stage.

Plate 20: KMF traditional dance[78]

The participants shown in Plate 20 above are performing *Kamabeka,* a Bukusu cultural dance. In the picture, the four dancers in front form a pattern where two of them face opposite directions. The other dancers make two lines on the sides as they assume a forward movement. On the left side is a *Litungu* player (wearing a head gear) who also doubles up as the soloist of the group. He positions himself on the side of the entire group, to allow for a better view of the patterns made by the dancers.

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[78] Picture taken by Mariano Gonzalez (research assistant) at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, on 13th July 2017.

Changing of patterns and dance styles was a common practice in the course of the performances. The formations included linear, circular and other varied geometrical shapes. An intriguing observation was that several songs were sung during the dance. Transition of the songs signalled the change of dance styles and patterns. A unique aspect of the dancing was that participants showcased rehearsed movements. Whenever they were required to change, they all did it at the same time. The measure of energy, vigour and articulation of their actions was almost similar among the performers. The five-minute performance ended with definite formation as the performers went off the stage.

Still in the process of dancing, whenever they sung, they also made gestures that alluded to the meaning of the song text. Dance and gestures were done interchangeably and in some instances simultaneously. During the National Kenya Music Festival, I watched a performance by Friends' School Bukembe Boys High School from Bungoma County. They performed *Kamabeka* dance in which one of the accompanying songs was called *Owang'i* (a bird called the crane).[79] The song is transcribed in **Excerpt 7** below;

Excerpt 7: *Owang'i*

Bukusu words	**English Translation**
Inputter: *Ee Owang'i*	Eh the crane
Receivers: *Owang'i*	The crane
Inputter: *Ee Owang'i*	Eh the crane
Receivers: *Owang'i ne sikumba, Owang'i*	The crane with a bone, the crane
Inputter: *Icha mulole Owang'i*	Come and see the crane
Receivers: *Owang'i*	The crane
Inputter: *Cha mulole Owang'i*	Come and see the crane
Receivers: *Owang'i ne sikumba Owang'i.*	The crane with a bone, the crane.

The song is calling on the people to come out and see the crane (*Owang'i*) carrying a bone. In performance, the participants danced as they simultaneously put their hands in a position to imitate the crane. The use of gestures is well demonstrated in a clip *Vc.6*. Using their hands,

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[79] Observation of Kamabeka dance performed by Friends Secondary school Bukembe at KMF on 18th July 2017 at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology.

the dancers made gestures that imitated the words being communicated in the song *Owang'i* in Excerpt 7.

Apart from song and dance, instrumental category featured solo and ensemble performances. The solo performers took the middle position of the stage from where they played from the start to the end of their performances. On stage, they danced and used sizeable space, but with no definite formations. Given their limited numbers, those who performed in small groups stood in a single semi-circle line formation. Some of the groups danced and made patterns as they played the instruments whereas others remained in the same position without moving throughout their performance. To demonstrate the above attributes, clip *Vc.7* shows an instrumentalist performing at the KMF.

According to the KMF syllabus, the participants were expected to perform either in solo or ensemble categories. In the solo performances, two instruments were mainly performed, that is, *Siilili* and *Litungu*. Only few participants featured in the categories of drum and wind instrument solo performances. In the solo class, individual participants appeared on stage with an instrument to perform with. For instance, a *Litungu* player appeared on stage alone where he played with *Bichenje* accompaniment. For the ensemble category, the participants combined instruments from the Bukusu and other communities of Kenya. In one category, the ensemble comprised of instruments from outside African communities. In other ensembles, they brought together almost all instruments from the Bukusu community.

A unique aspect of the three categories of performances described above was that the performers introduced themselves before starting the performance. In the introduction, they mentioned the name of the school or participants on the stage, then the title of the performance and the ethnic community from which the instruments originated. They further explained the context in which the song, dance or instrument was previously (traditionally) performed. The person who introduced the song then invited the audience to enjoy the performance. Below are some of the typical introductory remarks[80] captured during the festival performances;

> "Honourable adjudicators, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, under class 811J is Bungoma School with a Bukusu folk dance. It is called *Kamabeka*. It is

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[80] The introductory remarks were transcribed as per how they were presented at the festival. Punctuation of the sentences was also as presented by the performers. This was necessary to establish the intended meaning.

performed on happy occasions such as during harvesting or at parties. More from the dance, enjoy with us…"[81]

"Honourable adjudicators, ladies and gentlemen, on stage is St. George Nyamira secondary school, ready to present to you a Bukusu cultural dance, entitled *Kamabeka*. It is performed by men, women and children during happy occasions under class 811J, welcome…"[82]

"Honourable adjudicators, ladies and gentlemen, welcome and enjoy an African cultural dance entitled *Kamabeka*. It is performed by the Bukusu of Western Kenya during happy occasions. Now brought to you by Friends' Bukembe Boys High School, under 811J. Be our guests…"[83]

The introductory remarks were made to disclose the identity of the performers, the nature of artistic work that they were about to present and the context in which it was traditionally performed. In some instances, they described who (gender and age) initially performed the music then welcomed the audience to enjoy the presentation. The introduction was mainly meant to help the adjudicators identify the performers and understand the context of the work being presented for the sake of fair evaluation.

Apart from the three categories; folk song, dances and instruments, KMF further categorized them into different strata.[84] Due to the many ethnic communities in Kenya, the festival grouped them according to idiomatic relationships to reduce the number of categories for the sake of better adjudication and ranking. The Bukusu folk songs and dances were for example grouped the same cluster with those of the Luo and Suba people.

According to the syllabus, the three ethnic groups are referred to as 'closely related' in terms of music performance. That is why they are grouped in the same stratum. Figure 9 below is an extract from the KMF syllabus. It shows the respective categorization of the ethnic communities for the sake of adjudication at the festival and ranking performance. Each category is assigned a code that identifies them.

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[81] Performance by Bungoma Boys High School, on 19th July 2017, KMF National level at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kakamega County.

[82] Performance by St. George Nyamira Secondary School, on 19th July 2017, KMF National level at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kakamega County.

[83] Performance by Friends Bukembe Boys, on 19th July 2017, KMF National Level at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology.

[84] The Kenya Music Festival syllabus is a booklet containing rules and regulations that govern the festival. It also describes the categories of items for performance.

(b) *African Traditional Cultural Group Dances (Each not more than 5 minutes)*

Description and Entries

P Entries (Each Class)	Number of Entries Per Class and Region								Direct Entries
	Nya	Wes	RV	Nbi	Cen	Eas	Coa	NE	
811H 811J – Luo,Luhya, Suba	4	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	811K, 811LA, 811LB, 811M
812H 812J – Gusii,Kuria	4	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	812K, 812LA, 812LB, 812M
813H 813J Kipsigis,Nandi, Keiyo, Sangwer, Turgen, Sabaot, Ogiek	1	4	4	2	1	1	1	1	813K, 813LA, 813LB, 813M
814H 814J – Turkana, Pokot	1	1	4	2	1	1	1	1	814K, 814LA, 814LB, 814M
815H, 815J – Somali, Borana, Nubian, Orma	2	1	2	3	1	4	1	4	815K, 815LA, 815LB 815M
816H 816J – Kikuyu, Meru, Embu ,	1	1	3	2	4	4	1	1	816K ,816LA, 816LB, 816M
817H 817J – Mijikenda, Taita, Pokomo,	1	1	1	2	1	1	4	1	817K, 817LA, 817LB, 817M
818H 818J – Maasai, Samburu, Njemps, Rendile, Taveta	1	1	4	2	1	1	4	1	818K, 818LA, 818LB, 818M
819H 819J – Iteso, Marakwet	1	4	4	2	1	1	1	1	819K, 819LA, 819LB 819M
820H 820J – Akamba, Mbeere, Tharaka	1	1	1	2	2	4	4	1	820K, 820LA,820LB, 820M

Figure 8: KMF traditional dance[85]

The first column contains names of the ethnic communities based on their respective categories. Each one of them is assigned a code for ease of identification. The third row of column one shows the category of Luo, Luhya, and Suba – where Bukusu music is categorized.

To adhere to the KMF performance rules, one 'folk song' comprised of several 'songs' joined together, to last four (4) minutes. The songs are joined together because separately, they are very short and cannot last the required duration. Therefore, many songs are joined together to achieve the prescribed duration. Clip *Vc.8* for example, shows a performance of songs at a

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[85] The KMF syllabus 2017 edition.

KMF from the Bukusu initiation ceremony. In the clip, a total of nine (9) "songs" were combined to make a full song.

The song titled *Lukembe,* had other "songs" including *Lukembe, Chabuyabuya, Mbalule, Lukembe, Sioyayo, Mawe Yo'mwana, Amba Mutalia, Kumuchenje.*[86] On average, each "song" lasted 26 seconds, which totalled up to four (4) minutes. Apart from duration of the song, keen listening to clip *Vc.8* shows that the melodies in the KMF folk song were meant to create variation. The songs exhibit different melodic, textual as well tonal tendencies.

The KMF syllabus also requires that the 'songs' that make up a KMF folk song should have the same theme.[87] A careful listening with different informants revealed that within one song, some choirs presented songs with different themes. In other instances, songs from varied ceremonies, rituals or functions were joined and presented as one song. Another example is the case where songs sang at different stages in a given Bukusu ritual were presented as one song. In the traditional perspective, different phases of a ritual were independent of each other thematically, functionally and musically.

In clip *Vc.8* for instance, one of the songs, *Chabuyabuya,* is not an initiation song. When Christopher Wanyama watched the video, he observed that the song was performed during post-burial ceremonies to commemorate a departed elder. This ceremony was called *Khulotia,* which meant escorting the departed elder to his (eternal) home. This ceremony was only performed in odd years, as already noted. On the contrary, the songs sang at the KMF were both from the odd years (also regarded as sad years) mixed with those from the even years (regarded as happy years).

People who performed *Chabuyabuya* were supposed to be dressed in traditional animal skin regalia (*Likutu*). Plate 7 shows an example of this traditional regalia that was worn during a post-burial ceremony. The regalia was worn on such important occasions to show the royalty and power vested in elders. During the performance, the elders also carried spears and shields. They used these gadgets in a warlike mimicry to signify sending off the spirit of the departed elder to his eternal home so that it does not hound people in future.

The song *Mbalule,* which is in the same video clip *Vc.8,* was not from the Bukusu community. It sung by the Bakisu of Uganda. The Bakisu are believed to be first cousins of

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[86] The songs were listed in the exact order in which they were presented. Note that the song *Mbalule* in this text has been repeated because that was the way it was performed.

[87] Kenya Music Festival syllabus 2017 page 13.

the Bukusu. Their eponymous ancestor (Mukisu) was a brother to Mubukusu (ref: migration of Babukusu). The two communities are also neighbours and have similar cultural practices. Bakisu's initiation ceremony has parallels with the Bukusu initiation, but also differ significantly in a number of ways. One of the remarkable musical differences is that the Bakisu use a set of twelve (12) drums called *Kadodi,* as the initiates play ankle bells (*Bichenje*). In contrast, Babukusu use wrist bells (*Chinyimba*) that were played by the initiates only.

Many respondents in the villages listened to the recorded songs that were performed in the festival. Their responses confirmed that songs from different ceremonies among the Bukusu competed against each other. For example, some schools presented initiation folk songs, whereas others performed marriage songs in the same category, just for the sake of the competition. For instance, during the Bungoma County KMF primary section, fourteen (14) schools participated in class 271 (Luo, Luhya and Suba folksongs). Out of the 14 schools, eight (8) performed initiation songs, four (4) performed beer party songs and only two (2) performed wedding songs.

The issue as to whether within class 271, songs from different ceremonies, rituals or occasions can be performed separately is not clear in the KMF syllabus. In essence, the songs were of different themes. They also evoke varied emotions. Songs for diverse ceremonies communicate a different message, meaning the emotions will vary. So, when such songs are performed at the same time, it is confusing for the audience. They are treated to a cocktail of moods.

In terms of who performed the songs, the respective ages were well distinguished. Young children had their categories and so did the older ones. The youngest children (pre-primary and lower primary) uniquely performed the singing games. These were typical activities that children participated in as they played while accompanying them with song, dance and play objects. Folk songs, dances and instruments were reserved for the older learners in upper primary, secondary and tertiary institutions of learning.

About gender, boys competed against girls on an equal footing. In other scenarios, a group comprising of both boys and girls competed against other groups with boys or girls only. This was on the backdrop of songs that were in some instances meant for male singers only or vice versa. Gender notwithstanding, it was also evident from the introductions made by the

participants that some of the songs were meant for elderly performers yet they were being performed by school-going children.

A typical example is the *Kamabeka* dance that drew most songs from the beer parties. Beer was known to be drunk by the adult members of the society. Consequently, they performed the songs sang during the drinking ceremony. In this case, school-going children performed the beer party songs in the festival for the sake of competition. That meant altering or producing new aesthetics.

In terms of duration of performance, the KMF syllabus indicates that folksongs are supposed to be performed for not more than four (4) minutes, whereas dances are supposed to take a little longer up to five (5) minutes. Solo instrumentation is presented within four (4) minutes, while the duration of ensembles ranges from five (5) to seven (7) minutes.

Within these stipulated times, participants strove to achieve repertoire, variation in terms of melodies, rhythm, intensity, and song text as well as artistically rendering the works. In many instances, most of them worked towards achieving a climax by increasing the tempo and enhancing complexity of the rhythms. The most captivating performances were seen to entice the audience who applauded at the end.

The purpose not only to know how the participants executed their duties on stage but also gauge their level of understanding of the songs they performed. In an interview with students from Bungoma High School[88] who won the folk song category for class 371 (Luhya, Luo and Suba communities), it was established that they learnt the words of the folk song they performed from a visiting trainer. Seemingly, they sang the song the way it was learnt without addition or subtraction of any words. More so, they used the accompanying dances that they learnt from the trainer without addition of their own, whether before or during the stage performance. Their soloist intimated that he strictly followed the script of their trainer. That brings about new aesthetics that are different from the traditional ones that encourage individual creativity when making music.

Further interrogation revealed that most of the students did not understand the words of the song except for a few who hail from the Bukusu community. Sadly, even majority of them did not demonstrate clear knowledge of the song texts. The focus of the performance was,

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[88] Personal interview with choir students from Bungoma High School on 10th June 2017, during the Western Region KMF, held at Lwanya Girls High School in Busia County.

therefore, to reproduce the song as much as the participants could. They diligently observed a strict unity of their actions on stage as well as being expressive in terms of voice, facial expressions, gestures and dance. An interview with students from four other schools (Bukembe Boys, Bukirimo Primary, Sikusi Primary and Namwela Secondary)[89] revealed similar characteristics to those of Bungoma Boys'.

One of the interesting and creative categories of performances in the festival was the adaptation and arrangement of African melodies. The KMF syllabus defines the category as:[90]

> "An adaptation and development of existing African folk and pop "*Zilizopendwa*" (both sacred and secular) melodies. The arrangements of these songs should incorporate the treatment of musical elements consistent with, and appropriate to the idiom of choice through vocalization. Only organized and decent dancing that enhances the performance will be accepted. It should be an arrangement being presented for the first time in this festival.

In this class, folksongs were adapted and re-arranged in a style quite similar to Western classical art music. Characteristics of art music were evident in the way choirs performed in three or four-part (Soprano 1, Soprano 2 and Alto or Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass) style. Based on such voicing, each section was assigned the role of singing either the existing melody and its harmony or a counter melody. This was rendered in a way that voices sang independently or they interacted homophonically or polyphonically. In terms of quality, the voices were executed with nasal rounded tones that could be likened to oratorio or operatic renditions of the Western classical music.

Before performance, it was observed that the choir directors selected pitch from the piano or any other pitch instrument as a basis for tonality in which the choirs performed. In some of the songs, they performed in the same tonality from beginning to the end. But in others, they employed tonal changes, but in most cases ended in the original one. Closely related to tonal system, was that performances in this category also exhibited use of harmony based on modes and choral progressions. A dominant harmonic rendition was when voices sang at tonal intervals of thirds and fifths that were as result of use of counter melodies. In instances where they performed in homophonic style, it was evident that they employed choral

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[89] Personal interviews with participating choirs at the Bungoma County KMF, on 11th and 12th May 2017 at Miluki Secondary School.
[90] KMF syllabus 2017 page 34.

progressions that resulted in rich harmonic renditions. Such consonances typified evidence of influence from Western art music.

In terms of form,[91] most performers used the Western Classical A: B: A design, whereas others employed rondo as well as theme and variation styles. Although performed in the traditional idioms, the performances further employed Western classical rhythmic treatment of diminution, augmentation, counter rhythms, and change of meter. African elements like use of solo parts, instrumental accompaniment and ornaments, were also evident in this category.

In this category, arrangements drew raw materials mainly from Bukusu music. Even its development borrowed styles that were similar to those of Babukusu. Interestingly, the performance of the music on stage was a mirror image of the songs that were transcribed and written in Western staff notation. Excerpt 8 below, shows a sample song, that in many ways depicts characteristics of the adaptation and arrangement as described in the above paragraphs.

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[91] From Western classical perspective, form refers to the overall structure of a piece of music.

BAKHEBA CHIKURE!

Excerpt 8: KMF adaptation and arrangement[92]

Excerpt 8 demonstrates how an arrangement of a folksong from the Bukusu community was notated for the sake of performance in KMF. From the song that was performed in the key of C major, page three of the notation shows evidence of harmony sections that made use of homophonic and polyphonic textures. More so, they used cross and fragmented rhythms. Development of the music was largely based on dynamism of the melodic, rhythmic and harmonic aspects of the song.

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[92] Source: An arrangement by Elijah Muliro.

In terms of structure, the song in part made use of solo-chorus, but it was developed further so that in some instances, the solo part was taken by an entire group (voice) of singers. More so, is that the solo was performed simultaneously with the chorus, which enhanced the textual and structural formation of the song.

This being a competitive festival, all the groups performed before a set of two judges, best referred to as adjudicators in KMF parlance. The adjudicators were charged with the responsibility of watching and listening to performances, at the end of which they critiqued, commented, awarded marks and ranked the participants.

To render their task effectively, the adjudicators are usually trained in an annual one-week workshop that is organized and managed by the KMF executive committee.[93] Apart from the training, the adjudicators also use guidelines that are published by the KMF executive committee. The guidelines contain rubrics of the criteria the adjudicators should consider when assessing a performance.

Besides the guidelines, the adjudicators also rely on the KMF syllabus, which contains rules, regulations and the class structure or categories of the intended performances. For a typical KMF situation, Plate 21 below shows the position of adjudicators at work.

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[93] A committee of music technocrats that is appointed by the minister for education. They are responsible for the daily administration and management of the Kenya Music Festival.

Plate 21: KMF adjudicators[94]

The two adjudicators are seated at a table, observing as a choir is being arranged on stage. The duty of the adjudicators is to watch, review, critique and pass judgement on a performance. The adjudicators in this case sat about five (5) to eight (8) metres away from the performers so that they can have a good view of the presentations. This also allows for enough space for proper listening.

In an interview with Isaac Shitubi,[95] he revealed when assessing folk music, the adjudicators consider how well performers execute idiomatic characteristics of the community from which songs were drawn. Instrumentation and dance movements are similarly important in capturing the idiom of a given community. The adjudicators also consider the artistic endowment of the performers. They assess attributes such as unity and uniformity in terms of vocal and physical manifestation. More so, the need for variety as pertains to the melodies used, dance styles, patterns and variation of song texture is also considered. After analysing the above attributes, Shitubi[96] indicated that the adjudicators assess the participating teams to

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[94] Picture taken by Anderson Merklein (research assistant) at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, on 11th July 2017.
[95] Personal interview with Isaac Shitubi, a KMF National adjudicator, on 18th July 2017 at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology.
[96] Isaac Shitubi, Ibid.

ascertain who rendered the performances better than the other. Such comparison leads to rating and ranking of the participating teams.

At the KMF National level, Isaac Shitubi and Gibson Mawira adjudicated[97] the category for Luo, Luhya and Suba communities, a class where Bukusu music features. The two adjudicators indicated that they did not come from the Bukusu community. Therefore, given their lack of knowledge of the Bukusu language, is obvious that the adjudicators do not understand the song texts and the cultural relevance of the songs. However, they explained that they rely on their experience as music performers or prior participation in adjudication. They also have a working knowledge of how a given community practiced their music. This, they opined, is sufficient for them to review and assess the respective music genres. Understanding the language is, therefore, not a pre-requisite. Instead, idiomatic and artistic perspectives are essential in determining how participants are rated at the Kenya Music Festival.

Shitubi[98] further explained that the adjudicators make their judgement based on the rubrics from the KMF syllabus. The rubrics are explained to participants in form of an oral presentation. Before releasing the results, they describe to the audience the attributes they considered in arriving at the judgment. In the presentation, they briefly explain the rubric and demonstrate where the participants rendered the performance correctly or wrongly. The adjudicators also highlight the gaps in a performance and advise the competitors on how they can improve their performance in future. After these remarks, the adjudicators announce the marks each team attained and the respective position of the participating choirs.

Besides the adjudicators, role of the audience in the judgment process is very important. Interaction with the audience revealed that they too had their feelings about how the participants rendered the performances. However, according to the rules of the festival, only the adjudicators' remarks, decisions and judgment matter. The audience's opinion about the performances is inconsequential.

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[97] Isaac Shitubi from the Kisa community of the larger Luhya community and Gibson Mawira from Meru community. Adjudicators of Luo, Luhya and Suba dances, KMF 2017, at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology on 19th July 2017.
[98] Isaac Shitubi, Ibid.

On the question of whether the magnitude of applause at the end of a performance influenced the adjudicators' decision, Esther Gakenia[99] avowed that it was probably never the case. She intimated that in most cases, the adjudication was usually complete even before the end of the performance. The applause, therefore, hardly sways the opinion of the adjudicators. It was only a show of appreciation by the audience to motivate the participants.

However, in some instances, the decision of the adjudicators reflected how the people applauded the performances. Some of the performances that were applauded more also scored high marks. But in some instances it was the opposite. During a performance, the adjudicators constantly refer to the rules and regulations stipulated in the KMF syllabus as well as music scores provided in instances of the adaptation and arrangement of songs. Perhaps the material at the disposal of the adjudicators such as music scores and syllabus may have been responsible for differences in the way they evaluated the performances. The audience, therefore, had no say in the adjudication process and the result accorded to the participating groups.

The above discourse shows how Bukusu music was presented in the Kenya Music Festival. It describes the categories in which the music was presented and how they were presented. The descriptions confirm that, while performance practice of Bukusu music at KMF followed the rules of the festival, there was evidence of traditional practices of Babukusu. In both contexts, there were similarities and differences, which will be discussed in the next chapter. It will specifically focus on how the aesthetics of Bukusu music performance were revealed in the festival context.

Cultural revivals

Cultural revivals are establishments that play a role in offering alternative space for performance of Bukusu music, as a way of preserving it further. Supposedly, some of the organizations are consciously set up as cultural repositories. But others unintentionally accommodate and offer opportunities to musicians to perform Bukusu music. In the process, they also serve as alternative conservancies. Such establishments are regarded as cultural revivals because they bring to life that which would otherwise be extinct.

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[99] Personal interview with Esther Gakenia, member of the audience, on 19th July 2017, during the National KMF at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kakamega County.

Three main organizations that play the role of reviving cultural activities in Kenya are considered here. These are, institutions of learning, religious establishments, and cultural centres. These are discussed below.

(a) Institutions of learning

Institutions of learning, also referred to as educational establishments, included mainly primary and secondary schools. The study focussed on a number of primary and secondary schools in Bungoma County. In selecting the sample, the main consideration was distance. Therefore, the schools selected were those that were closer to where the traditional musicians were being researched on lived. Unfortunately, they seemed not to learn or practice music activities. Many schools do not teach music because is an optional subject in the curriculum. The end result is that many schools hardly practiced music activities. They, however, indicated that they took part in music festivals as a form of co-curricular activity.

Within Nairobi County, two universities where music courses are offered were considered. These were Kenyatta University (KU) and the Technical University of Kenya (TUK). African music is taught in these two institutions in the three areas of song, dance and instrumentation, with a focus on both theory and practical musicianship. Unfortunately, no Bukusu music was being taught there at the study. Music from other Kenyan communities was, however, being taught. Therefore, the study did not gather any information pertaining to performance of Bukusu music in learning institutions.

(b) Religious establishments

The other cultural revival centres that were considered were religious establishments. Here, the church was the main focus because it allows use of traditional music in their worship. According to the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) choir, traditional songs from the Bukusu community are sang as a way of drawing worshipers to the church. The use of common and well-known songs attracts more active participation of the faithful. Three churches (Catholic, PAG and Friends' church) were studied to assess the extent to which Bukusu music was practiced. The first meeting with members of the Friends' Church took place during a funeral service where the choir was leading mourners in singing. The subsequent meetings with the choirs from the three churches were during Sunday services in their respective places of worship.

The church choirs comprised of both male and female singers, few of whom could also play instruments. In the PAG and Friends' Church, they played traditional drums from the Bukusu

community and a metallic ring. The Catholic Church played Conga drums, *Kayamba,*[100] shakers and an electronic keyboard. The instruments were mainly used to accompany singing, playing preludes, interludes and postludes. The common instruments used in the three churches were drums and shakers. In terms of performance, the instruments were substantially controlled to the effect that they acted as accompaniments to the songs.

The churches exhibited almost a similar impression as that at the festival auditorium, but the performers (choir) sat among the congregation at specific reserved positions. In some instances, the congregation stood to sing with the choir whereas in others they sat as the choir performed. The choir played a lead role in all aspects of performance. The congregation sang and danced based on what the choir did. But free musical expression among the worshipers was remarkably limited.

In many instances, the singers used song books to refer to the song text. This was noted in the case of Bukusu songs which were written in hymnal style. The song book was important given that the worshipers were not able to sing all the stanzas from memory. In other instances, songs that depicted folk style were sung from memory where the lead singer articulated the stanzas while the choir and congregation sung the chorus.

In terms of performance, the singers combined song, dance and instrumentation. Songs were mainly rendered in solo-chorus structure that was largely in unison. In few instances though, there was evidence of harmony that occurred mainly by singing at tonal intervals of thirds and fifths. The performance in the Catholic Church was unique given that it featured some songs that were in full choral harmonies. With regard to dance, the congregation mainly followed the movements of the choir members. Most of the time, they swayed from side to side in a coordinated manner to bring out a dance style. The dance was accompanied by hand gestures that mainly imitated the songs texts.

(b) Cultural centres

The only cultural centre considered was the Bomas of Kenya found in Nairobi. The Kiswahili word *boma* means a homestead. Imitations of many traditional houses, homesteads and villages of Kenyan communities are found at this centre. The name of the institution is, therefore, derived from the word *boma,* and given that they were many, the plural form 'Bomas' is used. The cultural centre was established in 1971 with of the purpose of

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[100] *Kayamba* is a wooden rattle made from raffia reeds that is played by shaking. It originates from the Mijikenda communities of the Coastal region in Kenya.

preserving the cultural values of Kenyan traditional communities, as a means of enhancing both local and international cultural tourism.[101] The traditional houses, homesteads and villages have various artefacts from the respective Kenyan communities.

According to the schedule of the centre, the villages are opened to the public from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm daily. Kenyans tour the Bomas of Kenya with the intention of reconnecting with their cultural backgrounds as well as knowing about the diverse cultures of other Kenyan communities. Many foreign tourists also visit the cultural centre. On the lower side of the cultural centre is an open space with manicured grass and tree-shades for recreational purposes. At the heart of the Bomas of Kenya, is *utamaduni* (Kiswahili word for culture) restaurant where food from the diverse Kenyan communities is served. Food is regarded as one of the cultural products that visitors usually partake of.

The cultural centre has an auditorium that is used for conferences, corporate functions as well as performances (also referred to as cultural shows). The bonanza usually displays traditional songs, dances, instruments, theatre/drama, fashion shows, and poetry/recitals to the public who watch them at a fee. The study considered the Bomas of Kenya so as to establish how Bukusu music was practiced there. The main focus was on the shows and there aesthetic endowment.

The auditorium where performances take place is round in shape, a kind of amphitheatre. A sunken performance podium is located at the centre of the auditorium. The seats are arranged in a circle and the performers present their pieces from the centre of the circle. The shape of the auditorium resembles many of the traditional huts at the cultural centre. The resemblance is not only in terms of the shape, but also the roof which is made from special grass called *Makuti* in Kiswahili (coconut tree fronds).

Furthermore, a big part of the wall and the floor of the auditorium is made from wood that is hand crafted. The description of the Bomas of Kenya auditorium is illustrated in Plate 24 below.

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[101] Retrieved from www.bomasofkenya.co.ke

Plate 22: Bomas of Kenya auditorium[102]

With regard to participation, in most cases, the audience sat still, listened and watched until the end of the performance when they clapped as a form of appreciation. In some instances, though, whenever the performers showcased anything spectacular, the audience applauded them long before the end of the performance. It was interesting at how the younger members of the audience also made noises (a kind of screaming effect), as a form of appreciation alongside clapping.

On interacting with some members of the audience, I gathered that majority did not understand the song texts that were presented in the performance. This was due to the fact that the audience comprised of people from diverse language speaking groups. The few that talked about the performances indicated that they appreciated the voices of the singers, dance styles, patterns, instrumentation and the character of the participants. But they missed on the meaning of the words.

Further interaction with members of the audience revealed that their intention was to sample the cultures of Kenya and as a form of leisure. To this end, they did not mind the standards but rather the cultural manifestation of the performances. Apparently, the audience never

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[102] Picture taken by Esther Gakenia (research assistant) in Nairobi County, on 23rd August 2017.

volunteered any observations to the musicians or management of the cultural centre concerning the standards of performances.

In terms of participation, the performance was entirely done to the singers and dancers. All the other people in the auditorium were only spectators. The main purpose of the shows is exhibition, so the audience did not come up to participate in the dances. At the same time, all the people looked forward to attending as many per performances as possible in order to sample, appreciate and learn. A big population of the attendees were school-going children who were on an excursion to what they may not be privileged to see in their daily lives, given that they lived in the urban areas.

The thirty (30) performers at Bomas were drawn from different communities of Kenya. The dance from the Bukusu community was thus performed by people mainly from other communities of Kenya, not Bukusu dancers. The management explained it maintained the number at 30 so that they can perform all dances. This made economic sense since the cultural centre did not have the financial ability to employ sufficient sets of dancers who can perform selected dances only from their communities of origin.

Therefore, not all the performers understood the meaning of the song texts that were performed in the Bukusu *Kamabeka* dance. As noted, the dancers were drawn from different communities. However, few like the soloist who was a *Litungu* player had vague knowledge of the songs. He seemed to understand the song text better. Furthermore, they performed the songs the same way that they were taught by their resource person. Therefore, they added or subtracted nothing during performance.

In terms of content of songs, the group performed songs from beer parties of the Bukusu community. The songs highlighted themes ranging from history, culture, vices and virtues of Babukusu. In a single performance that lasted slightly over five (5) minutes, they combined nine (9) songs. The change from one song to another signalled change in the dance steps, styles and patterns. In the performance that featured song, dance and instrumentation, the participants referred to it as a dance given that they extensively worked on changing dance styles, patterns and formations. To them, songs and instruments played a subordinate role to dance, which was the main activity.

Before starting the performance, a member from the participants introduced the work, announcing that the dance was called *Kamabeka* from the Bukusu community of Western

Kenya. It was also mentioned that it was performed by both men and women on various occasions such as marriage, merry making, beer parties and at social gatherings. The audience was then invited to enjoy the dance.

During the introduction, the instrumentalists (*Litungu* player and drum players) were on stage as the other performers lined up off-stage ready to enter the arena. The dancers came onto stage after the instrumentalists started playing and singing. The entry onto the stage was marked by a linear formation. The male singers followed each other on one line and so did the female dances on another.

In terms of dress code, the female performers wore sisal skirts whereas male performers wore shorts as costumes. Both gender put on tops that were decorated and slightly lifted to exaggerate the movement of shoulders given that they were the focal part of the dance. The dancers mainly shook their shoulders but in some instances also shook their waists. Apart from the waist, they made turns with a kind of sway, as well us moving the position of their backs. This last dance style resembled some aspects of the *Isukuti* dance that was performed at the KMF National level held at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. Asked why they moved other parts of the body, yet this was mainly a "shoulders dance," they replied that they executed the dance as per the instructions of their resource persons.

Asked how the performers maintained their standards and relevance of the dances, their responses indicated that they maintained fitness and practiced quite often. For them, this was a sure way of ensuring that they kept dancing at all performances to the best levels. They explained that continuous rehearsals focused on perfecting the learnt dance styles as well as achieving uniformity of the patterns they created as a team. In terms of learning new aspects of the dances and any necessary changes, they further explained that the resource persons who were their trainers took up such responsibility. To this end, the trainer of the dance played a big role in how it was prepared and eventually rendered on stage.

The dancers at Bomas of Kenya also indicated that there was another cultural village in Kenyatta University (KU), which seemingly no longer existed. It was, however, interesting to have met former members of the dance troupe for the KU culture village. Blasto Owuor revealed that at the time, they never practiced Bukusu music inasmuch as they did *Sikuti* dances from the larger Luhya community. Bomas, therefore, was the only cultural revival centre that I depended on for requisite data to address the concerns of this research.

Enterprise development

More information concerning relocated contexts was gathered from people and/or places where music as a cultural artefact is exhibited as a form of and/or to support entrepreneurial activities. The people included freelance musicians who moved from one occasion to another to entertain people. The places where music supports enterprise development included hotels, restaurants and night clubs, and tourist attraction sites.

In Bungoma County, two freelance bands – *Miluki* and Nalung'unyo – that play Bukusu music were studied. In Nairobi County, one restaurant that is known to play Bukusu music was visited. Wedding ceremonies in which Bukusu music was practised was another context that was considered. From the above contemporary performance contexts, varied practices were observed with regard to how they manifested and influenced aesthetics of music performance.

Acapella groups

For a detailed understanding of the entrepreneurial ventures, the study sought out artiste groups that performed in such functions to ascertain how they rendered the music. Five groups were selected for the research; Kayamba Africa, Cheche, Kayamba Fiesta, Ninga Flames and Banjo Acapella. These are male ensembles only with up to twelve (12) members, who seemingly had developed a niche for performance in weddings and at corporate events. They mainly drew their songs from Kenyan folk music and old pop songs, which they adapted and re-arranged for performance. Notably, many of the performers in these bands were products of KMF. They, therefore, drew some of their material (like adaptation and arrangements) from KMF, which the bands rearranged and performed. Some performances were typified by acapella singing whereas others were accompanied by instruments and/or recorded soundtracks.

Pertaining to where the bands performed, observation showed that wedding ceremonies mostly utilized open-air environments. In these settings, the arena of the occasion was put up in a way that musicians were given a specific area to perform from. An interesting observation though, was that in some instances, the musicians left their area and provoked the audience to join in the performance. It was also noted that in other cases the musicians made processions through the arena to challenge the audience to in the performance.

Bryan Menya[103] offered that different occasions dictated how the bands challenged the audience to join a performance. In instances where dignitaries were in attendance, they were given first priority, mainly because of protocol. Unfortunately in such situations, the rest of the audience did not have a chance to dance, where seemingly the subordinates shied off from participating in the performances.

With regard to restaurants, they had a specific place (in some instances it was a raised platform) that was set up for the musicians to perform from, as the patrons watched from the comfort of their seats. A small space next to the band was set aside (dance floor), where in selected instances, the patrons came forth to dance from. The foregoing descriptions of the arenas reveal a predominant concept of performance practice where there existed distance between performers and the audience. This was achieved by creating a podium for performers, as the audience sat back to watch and listen. In few selected instances though, the distance was narrowed as the two groups joined together in performance, as was the case in wedding ceremonies and restaurants.

Besides the performing venue, an interaction with members of the Kayamba roots band revealed that they choose songs that entertain people regardless of the message they convey. To them, a song with a captivating rhythm and melody, especially one that is easy for the audience to sing along is best suited for performance in the events they are invited to. It was even more fulfilling in instances where the songs provoked members of the audience to dance. The study therefore concluded that the ability for a song to entertain and draw the audience to the dance floor was above everything the most fundamental consideration for such bands.

In terms of Bukusu music repertoire, I came across one common medley (what they called a song) comprising of five songs. The song was titled *Mulongo,* which combined *Mulongo, Akwa munda, amba Mutalia, sioyayo, yonga lumelela* and *lubangachi.* It was established that this medley was performed in many different occasions that the band was invited to. In the performances, the band used a playback of the pre-recorded song track to which they sang along.

Given that a big number of the band members were vocalists, it was revealed that the soundtrack was a fair alternative due to their inability to find and sustain instrumentalists

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[103] Personal interview with Bryan Menya on 24th August 2017 in Nairobi County.

within the band. Few members of the band though, could play especially percussions and in some instances the guitar. In exclusive scenarios, they hired instrumentalists to play for them. Bryan Menya indicated that on opportune occasions, they used the piano or keyboard, guitars (lead and bass), drum set, saxophone and the fiddle.[104]

Another attribute that was of interest was the content of the songs that the band played. Their most popular song '*Mulongo*', is transcribed in Excerpt 9 below as an example to show what the song communicates. The transcription is the song text of how *Kayamba* Roots Band performs the song.

Excerpt 9: *Mulongo*

Bukusu words	**English translation**
Inputter: Mulongo	Mulongo
Receivers: *Hahoo*	Ah!
Inputter: Mulongo	Mulongo
Receivers: Mulongo *mwana wa Ma*	Mulongo child of Ma
Inputter: *Hahoo*	Ah!
Receivers: Mulongo *mwana wa ma*	Mulongo child of ma
Receivers: *Hahoo*	Ah!
Inputter: Mulongo	Mulongo
Receivers: *Hahoo*	Ah!
Inputter: Mulongo	Mulongo
Receivers: *Hahoo*	Hahoo
Receivers: *Hahoo, tsi, tsi, tsi hahooo*	Hahoo, go, go, go, ah!
Receivers: *Hahoo, tsi, tsi, tsi hahooo*	Hahoo Go, go, go Ah!
Inputter: *Mwana wa mama otinya*	Child of mother keep on
Receivers: *Hahoo*	Hahoo
Inputter: *Mwana wa mama oluma*	Child of mother be strong
Receivers: *Hahoo*	Hahoo
Receivers: *Bali abele khulaini,*	She was on the line,
Khane ekhafu esalile	the cow gave birth
Bali abele khulaini,	she was on the line,
Khane ekhafu esalile	the cow gave birth
Olili, olala	Olili, olala
Olili, olala	Olili, olala
Inputter: *Omusinde oteremaka*	The one who trembles (the cowardly)
Receivers: *Haaho*	Haaho

Inputter: *Ocha'ebunyolo*	Go to the uncircumcised
Receivers: *Haaho*	Haaho
Inputter: *Ocha'ebunyolo*	Go to the uncircumcised
Receivers: *Hahoo*	Hahoo
Inputter: *Lubangachi mayi we ndalila ko*	Lubangachi my mother I cry
Receivers: *Haa lubangachi*	Haa Lubangachi
Inputter: *Lubangachi mayi we ndalila ko*	Lubangachi my mother I cry
Receivers: *Haa lubangachi*	Haa Lubangachi
Receivers: *Lubangachi haa Lubangachi*	Lubangachi haa Lubangachi
Lubangachi haa Lubangachi	Lubangachi haa Lubangachi
Lubangachi haa Lubangachi	Lubangachi haa Lubangachi

The first part of the song (*Mulongo, hahoo*), is meant to scold and scare off Mulongo for the irresponsible act of sexually exploiting school-going girls (*tila omwana omukhana Mulongo*). The song goes ahead to tell Mulongo to go and never to come again (*tsi, tsi, tsi, tsi*). But then the second part of the song is contradictory in the sense that it tells the same man to keep up.

The third part (*Bali abele khulaini, khane ekhafu esalile*) is a different song from Mulongo. It sarcastically mocks a lady who knew well that a certain man had many women in his life, yet she followed him only to realize later that she was pregnant. The lady is, therefore, likened to a cow which does not know what happens but at one point finds herself giving birth to a calf.

The fourth part is a designate song that was performed when initiates were escorted from the river back home for circumcision. The band performed this song in a short stint that sounded like a bridge to the next one. The last song, *Lubangachi,* is a name of a man in the Bukusu community. In the song, they keep saying '*Lubangachi* I cry, my mother I cry'. The song does not show exactly what is wrong with *Lubangachi*, and hence the message is obscured.

Given the above explanation of the song, I sought the clarification of its meaning from members of the Bukusu community. In a session with Ronald Masinde who listened to the song, it was explained that it was a social satire against a man by the name Mulongo, for having impregnated several school-going girls.[105] Babukusu used the initiation period to rebuke the irresponsible act through the song. The second part was another social satire against a woman who knew well about the trends of a certain man yet blindly followed him and got pregnant. According to one of the respondents, pregnancy out of marriage was a social failing in the Bukusu community.

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[105] Personal interview with Ronald Masinde on 22nd August 2017 at Kasarani, Nairobi County.

Ronald Masinde[106] further lamented the use of the song *Sioyayo* in combination with the others. He explained that *Sioyayo* was an independent song that was never sang in combination with any other due to its unique deployment in an initiation ceremony. Concerning the last song, he indicated the tune was different from the known song by the title '*Lubangachi*.' The next transcription shows how the song *Lubangachi* is traditionally known to the informant and how it was performed in contemporary contexts.

Transcript 7: *Lubangachi* **(a)[107]**

[106] Ronald Masinde, Ibid.
[107] Transcribed by the researcher on 3rd October 2018.

Transcript 8: *Lubangachi* (b)[108]

Transcript 7, which is the original song in simple triple meter, was performed in unison. **Transcript 8** is an illustration of the way the song is performed in contemporary contexts in compound duple meter, with the melody largely altered and performed in parallel harmonies. The solo-chorus structure is, however, maintained. The explanation by this informant revealed varying contexts in which the above song was initially performed, as well as its

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[108] Transcribed by the researcher on 3rd October 2018.

meaning. But given its captivating nature, the song is of late sand in wedding ceremonies, oblivious of the message it conveys and the context in which it was initially performed.

Apart from the meaning of the song, the informant pointed out that some of the words (as performed in this context) were not in the Bukusu language but from the Luhya community at large, which may well be a shared heritage. He could not exactly tell from which sub-nation among the Luhya, but suspected Wanga, Kisa or Tsotso. Examples of the words he noted were *tsi tsi tsi,* meaning go, go, go, which in Bukusu would be *cha, cha, cha.* The other was *Mulongo mwana wa ma,* which did not make much sense but attributed to *Mulongo* child of my mother, which in Bukusu would be *Maayi.*

The last one was *Lubangachi ndalila ko,* meaning *Lubangachi* I cry, which in Bukusu would have been *Lubangachi nalila koo.* Mixing of languages was thus evident in this performance, not only in terms of the text, but also in the speech rhythm and tonal inflection. The informant cited an example of the phrase *"mwana wa mama oluma",* the last word was supposed to be on monotone in Bukusu language. But in this case, the syllable *"lu"* in this word was raised, which made it not to sound Bukusu, hence meaningless.

Performance of Bukusu songs within enterprise development also showed varied characteristics. In the above example of Kayamba Roots Band where a pre-recorded song was used as they sang along, proved that the performers hardly sang. They instead mime or otherwise lip-sync into the microphones. Clip *Vc.9* shows this band performing a song titled *Yonga lumelela* (make a procession like safari ants). One of the performers was clearly seen dancing yet not singing. When he retreated to the line, it was also visible that the other members of the team were not singing either, yet a song could be heard in the background. The performance of the band members was not manifested in singing, but rather in the dancing.

Apart from lip-syncing, it was interesting to observe that when the audience joined the band in the performance arena, one of band members came forward to direct them on how to dance. The audience, therefore, only followed the dance movements that the lead dancer made. Alongside dancing, they also moved around the arena in a procession. This clearly showed the dominance of the band or otherwise dependence of the audience on the band in the music making process. Plate 25 shows Kayamba *Roots* Band performing. Note that one of the band members (holding a microphone) is leading members of the audience in dancing.

Plate 23: Director dancer[109]

The audience keenly followed and imitated his dance steps. It there looks like a choreographed version where the style is uniform for all the performers.

Instrumental-vocal bands

Away from the wedding ceremonies and corporate functions, I was further drawn into finding out how performance of Bukusu music was practiced in restaurants as another form of enterprise development venture. A thought-provoking observation was that in some instances, Bukusu instruments were not employed at all. This was evident for example in a live performance by Steve Kay band, at Samba Restaurant in Nairobi County.

The band played entirely Bukusu music, but not even one instrument from the community was evident. They instead made use of keyboards, drum set, bass guitar and metallic shakers that sounded like jingles (*Bichenje*). Even without instruments, the band managed to achieve Bukusu idioms in their performance. To effectively reach out to the audience, the band played with full amplification of public-address sound systems.

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[109] Picture taken by Bryan Menya (research assistant) in Nairobi County, on 29th August 2017.

The ensemble also comprised of designated vocalists led by Steve Kay, the band leader. In terms of percussion, only one was available to accompany the singers as the other instrumentalists played other instruments. This was the arrangement of the band as a form of role allocation and specialization for the sake of effective rendition of their respective characters.

Apart from the instrumentalists and lead singers, there was a team of three ladies that were designated to dance. They, therefore, did not sing or play instruments. These dancers were scantily dressed, with short free skirts and tight garment to cover their breasts. Their dancing mainly emphasized the waist movement, as they employed varied styles and patterns that seemed well rehearsed. In terms of dance, it was seen that they employed styles that were typical of Congolese and Luo pop music.

The dancers were an attraction to the audience, which was pre-dominantly male. Whenever the dancers showcased interesting movements (for instance shaking the waist), the audience applauded them by way of clapping and cheering. Clip *Vc.10* shows a band performing. Note that one person has taken up the lead singing role but performs no other activity such as dancing or playing instrument.

In the same ensemble, three female members can be seen dancing but not complementing it with any other duty like singing or playing instruments. There were also a set of instrumentalists playing, as they sway a bit, but not quite involved in dancing, neither were they singing.

Notably, the audience in this restaurant was relatively diverse in terms of age, language, education, political and religious affiliation. The demographics were further affirmed by one of the Samba restaurant attendants, Soy Odongo.[110] Odongo indicated that patrons who dominated their establishment were mainly from the Luhya and Luo communities. They were attracted by the fact that the restaurant plays mostly Luhya, Luo and Rhumba music. They also served food that had its roots from the Western and Nyanza regions of Kenya, from whence majority of the customers came from.

In addition to Bukusu music, the band that played on Wednesday nights incorporated music from other Luhya communities as well as Swahili music (Taarab) to cater for their diverse audience. The challenge of satisfying the demands of a cosmopolitan audience was also

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[110] Personal Interview with Soy Odongo, on 5th July 2017 at Samba Restaurant, Nairobi County.

addressed by playing songs from other music cultures but in Bukusu rhythmic idioms. More so, while performing Bukusu songs, they also used Kiswahili words. The aim was for the audience to understand what the song was talking about, as well as to identify with the people who were in attendance.

It was interesting when my name was mentioned on selected occasions. *"Bwana* Wafula *kutoka Technical University karibu sana,"*[111] meaning, welcome Mr. Wafula from Technical University [of Kenya]. In instances where Kiswahili words did not feature, the audience still enjoyed the music. On interacting with few members of the audience, I gathered that they were drawn to the performance by the beats of the songs more than the words.

In terms of song choice, the performers revealed that some considerations were preferred. Most of the songs had a chorus, or otherwise a form of a 'hook' that the audience responded to. There were instances where a song that employed long solo sections rendered the audience dull. The band, therefore, made great effort to ensure as much audience participation by singing songs that had points of response.

Apart from the structure of the song, the band also considered current issues in the choice of their songs. An example is where a song titled *Bindu bichenga* (things do change) that was performed repeatedly. Wycliffe Obiero, a member of the audience pointed out that it was an electioneering period and one of the political parties was using it as their theme song.[112] Given that many members of the audience supported this political dispensation, it was rewarding to repeatedly play the song. The ideological support was quite evident in the zeal with which the audience participated in singing and dancing to the song.

The bands were also conscious of the themes that were tackled in the songs they performed. That is why the songs were drawn from a variety of occasions such as beer party, circumcision, history, marriage, war and many other social aspects of the Bukusu community. Members of the audience agreed that this was an opportunity to partake of such songs because they live in urban areas. The songs brought life to what they never had an opportunity to listen to and actively participate in. Their listenership was, therefore, not restricted to the traditional contexts in which the songs were performed. It was also a chance to relate with what they know, a characteristic that was evident in the way the audience

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[111] Steve Kay performing on 5th July 2017 at Samba Restaurant, Nairobi County.
[112] An interaction with Wycliffe Obiero on 5th July 2017 at Samba Restaurant in Nairobi County.

participated in singing and dancing as the songs were performed. Clip *Vc.11* shows members of the audience and I participating in the music making process. In the video, there is clear evidence of active and conscious participation of the members present in both song and dance.

On keenly listening to the music, I was contented that the band made use of harmonies in their songs. This was mainly revealed by the bass guitar that articulated three chords. From a Western classical music perspective, they were chords I, IV and V, as was evident in the song *Nikhwelola* in Clip *Vc.12*. Harmonic renditions were further experienced when the vocalists sang at tonal intervals of thirds, where the melody was at the top or lower part. Continued interaction with Wycliffe Obiero[113] revealed that many of the listeners (especially in the urban areas) were used to non-African music that employed harmonies. Use of harmony in this instance was, therefore, a way of bringing them closer to their preferences and/or prejudices.

Besides the use of harmonies, textual variations were used in the performances. This was achieved in instances where all the other instrumentalists were stopped while the bass guitarist continued to play. It was interesting in one instance when all the other instruments resumed playing and the entire audience stood up to dance. The music was thus characterized by momentary breaks of silence, after which the band resumed playing. The breaks helped to vary texture of the music and crating tension and release that also facilitated the dancers in changing patterns as well as dance styles.

Beyond the song texture employed, transition of songs was of interest to this study, where notably no breaks were evident. In some instances, such transition affected the participation of the audience, a scenario that challenged the researcher to find out why it happened. Khaemba Sirengo,[114] a member of the audience mentioned that subdued participation of the audience was because rhythmically, some songs did not sound the way they were known to them.

Further interaction and listening revealed that the band played in a similar time line pattern through all the songs that were performed. This metrical formation was thought-provoking to this research, which further sought to establish if all the Bukusu songs that were presented there were of the same time line pattern. Interaction with members of the audience revealed

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[113] Wycliffe Obiero, Ibid.
[114] An interaction with Khaemba Sirengo on 5th July 2017 at Samba restaurant, Nairobi County.

that not all songs were in the same timeline, but were adapted to fit. A case in time was the song *Siombo,* which is typically in a time line pattern of 6 (six) cycles of 8 (eight) rhythmic units, yet it succeeded one that was in 12 (twelve) cycles of 16 (sixteen) rhythmic units. The altered configuration was in a way new and confusing for the audience, who did not dance as much.

Litungu ensembles

Away from performance venues, there was engagement with musicians from different bands that played in various occasions, but with a speciality on *Litungu* music ensemble. There where similarities in the performance of the ensembles to what is discussed in the previous section. However, it was important to separate it to allow a more focused discussed on the role of the *Litungu* in these ensembles. This was essential, especially for the analysis which is discussed in the next chapter and the distinctions exemplified.

Muungano Band comprising of twelve members was one of the groups that contributed sizeable information to the study. In terms of instruments, there was a *Litungu, Siilili,* and *eng'oma,* that the band members used to demonstrate performances during the group discussion. They indicated that they also used bass and lead guitars, and keyboards. With these instruments, they traversed many ceremonies and events in which they performed to entertain people. One of the conspicuous aspects of this band was that they had two *Litungu;* one with seven (7) strings and the other with nine (9) strings. Plate 24 below shows the pictorial view of the two *Litungu.*
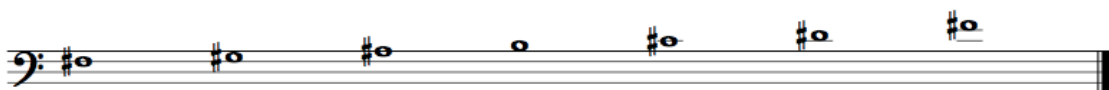
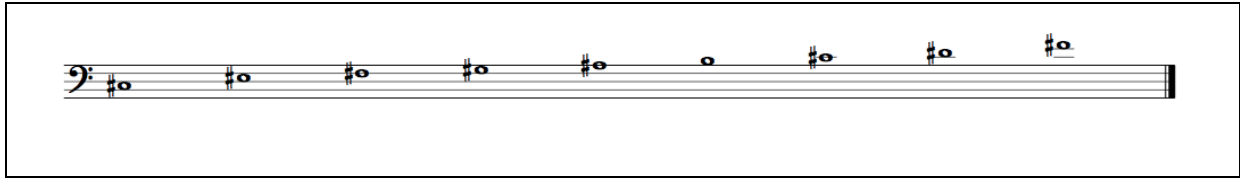| 7-string *Litungu* | 9-string *Litungu* |

Plate 24: Two *Litungu*[115]

The transcription of the tuning of the two *Litungu* is shown in the pictures above. Note the similar frequency variances to the ones shown in Transcript 3, though at a higher pitch level. The transcription of the tuning of the two *Litungu* is represented on the staff as shown in the subsequent transcripts 8 and 9 respectively.

Transcript 9: Tuning of 7-string *Litungu*[116]

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[115] Picture taken by Mariano Gonzalez (research assistant) in Miluki primary school, on 23rd July 2017.

[116] Transcribed by the researcher on 11th October 2018.

Transcript 10: Tuning of 9-string *Litungu*[117]

From the two transcriptions of how the two *Litungu* were tuned, it is evident that the 9-string one had two tones introduced below the starting F#. That is, C# that initially existed in the upper octave and E#, a totally new note. The two notes enhanced the tonal ability of the 9-string *Litungu* so that it could play more and diversified melodies. It was also explained that they used the two *Litungu* separately, but also employed them in combination, so that the 7-string one played the lead role as the other one played what they called "rhythm", in essence a melodic ostinato. Clips *Vc.13* (7-string *Litungu*), *Vc.14* (9-string *Litungu*) and *Vc.15* (both *Litungu*) demonstrate how the two *Litungu* sound independently and in combination.

The purpose of the expanded ability of the *Litungu* with nine (9) strings was to meet the demands of the current audience within the Bukusu community and those from other cultures. This is because the instrument has the ability to play songs from other cultural idioms due to its expanded tonal ability. The bands, therefore, assessed the composition of their audience as a determinant for the type of *Litungu* they used and the choice of music too. In demonstrating how the 9-string *Litungu* sounded, they also played samples of songs in Kiswahili, as shown in excerpt 10 below;

> **Excerpt 10: *Baba yetu***
>
> | **Kiswahili words** | **English translation** |
> |---|---|
> | *Kweli dunia hii* | This world |
> | *Ni mzuri lakini wanadamu huiharibu* | Is good but humanity spoils it |
> | *Baba yetu wa mbinguni jina lako litukuzwe* | Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name |
> | *Mapenzi yatimizwe duniani na mbinguni* | Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven |
> | *Utupe riziki yetu* | Give us our portion |
> | *Na madeni utusamehe* | And forgive our debts |

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[117] Transcribed by the researcher on 11th October 2018

Naomba usitutie majaribuni ya ulimwengu	I pray do not lead us into earthly temptations
Bali utuokoe na muovu ibilisi	But deliver us from the evil one
Mimi ninalia kweli, kwako ninalia	I cry to you, I cry
Mimi nalia sana	I cry a lot
Kwako nalia sana	To you I cry
Mungu tusaidie	God help us
Kweli tusaidie masilahi tuyapate	Help us to get our portion
Kweli kuna mdudu ameingia duniani	An insect has entered in this world
Baba kuna mdudu ameingia dunia hii	Father there is an insect that has entered this world

The song in Excerpt 10 was played using melodic ostinatos on the *Litungu*. Sample ostinatos played on the two *Litungu* in Plate 26 are illustrated in the following transcriptions, whose system borrows from Pinto's (1991) notation of guitar playing for Samba music of the Afro-Brazilian population in Bahia. In this case, the vertical line indicates metric pulses (similar to timeline), which in this case are in a twelve (12) pattern. The horizontal lines represent strings of the *Litungu.* From top, the first four horizontal lines are played by fingers of the left hand, whereas the lower three lines were played by those of the right hand. Whereas organologically the *Litungu* strings are equidistant, a wider space had been created in the transcription between the fourth and fifth lines to illustrate that fingers of either hand play specific strings. The notation is read from left to right.

Transcript 11: Melodic ostinato on 7-string *Litungu*[118]

The transcription above shows how fingers of the left hand interplay with those of the right hand to produce *Litungu* music. As shown in the notation, the interplay produces both alternate and parallel finger manipulation, which results in melodic as well as harmonic renditions. To demonstrate the effect of additional strings to the *Litungu*, the melody played on a 9-string *Litungu* has been transcribed, using the notation model above. In this case, however, the left hand fingers play the first five (5) strings whereas the right hand ones play the remaining four (4). On the notation, strings are counted from the top to the bottom. Similar to the 7-string *Litungu* transcription, this has a wider gap between the fifth and sixth string to illustrate the respective roles of either hand.

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[118] Transcribed by the researcher on 11th October 2018.

Transcript 12: Melodic ostinato on 9-string *Litungu*[119]

Transcription 11 shows how the 9-string *Litungu* played a similar melody as the 7-string one, but at a tonal interval of a third below. The 9-string *Litungu* also made use of notes in a lower octave as the earlier indicated. The modes in which the two *Litungu* were tuned are shown in transcriptions 10 and 11. Based on the tuning, it can be deduced that when the two *Litungu* play in combination, the E# accomplishes the parallel harmony created as the melodies are sounded at a tonal interval of a third apart. The lower octave of the 9-string *Litungu* then achieves a sense of bass-line effect due to the lower C# and the new D#.

The combined play between the two *Litungu* provided for opportunity for more melodic innovation in the 7-string one, as the 9-string one maintained an ostinato, which resulted in an enriched tonal sonority. The transcriptions above show both structural as well as melodic characteristics of *Litungu* playing where melodic cycles are continually modified.

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[119] Transcribed by the researcher on 11th October 2018.

This song demonstrates how the world has lost direction because of the actions of humanity. They use the first part of the Lord's Prayer as their chorus for the song to show that the intentions of God for the world were good. In the stanzas, they highlight how man short-changed the positive intentions of God. The respondents also indicated that there existed players who made use of 12-string *Litungu,* which had more tonal ability. I, however, did not come across such a *Litungu.* In one of the group discussions an elderly member (*Omunyange*[120]), advocated for expansion of the instrument but to also maintain the original *Litungu* with seven (7) strings for the sake of cultural posterity.

In terms of using Kiswahili and other Kenyan languages, it was revealed that the bands travelled to meet musicians from other communities as well as organizing for regular meetings with other performers to learn new songs. They also indicated that they listened to music from the radio, which they attempted to play with time. Such initiatives helped them to develop repertoire from within and without the Bukusu community. With such collection, they were able to play in culturally diverse environments.

During the fieldwork, the band combined *Litungu, Siilili* and *Eng'oma,* to demonstrate a performance. They, however, stated that they also incorporated the guitar, keyboard and drum kit; but these instruments were not available on the day of the interview. In their performance, it was evident that at some points, the *Litungu* and *Siilili* produced the same melody. In other instances, the *Siilili* played a counter melody, a tonal interval of a third above the *Litungu.* It was also observed that the *Litungu* player was the lead singer whereas the other two players backed him up as they sang the same melody and in some instances harmonizing at a tonal interval of a third below or above the melody. clip *Vc.16* demonstrates how the band executed their unique harmonic renditions achieved through the voices and instruments.

Recorded music

Recording music on CD and DVD is a form of enterprise development that offers Bukusu music opportunity for performance, away from the traditional ritual or ceremonial-based contexts. Ten (10) recordings by different bands were reviewed during the study. These were; *chapa ilale, Webuye jua kali, Wanyonyi Omukoyi, Wanyonyi wa Kakai, Steve Kay, Isaac Kisache, Wanjala Mandari, Geoffrey Nyongesa, Miluki, and Bramuel Makhapila.*

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[120]Name of the age set of men who were initiated between 1948-1958.

Performance practice in the recorded music showed similarities as well as peculiarities from the other relocated contexts.

A unique character of the recorded music was that the bands featured comprised of mainly instrumentalists. At no particular point did the researcher come across recordings of acapella singing groups. Among the instruments that were used in the music recordings were *Litungu, Luengele, Siilili, eng'oma,* keyboards, guitar and drum sets. There were bands used the Bukusu instruments only, whereas others also incorporated Western instruments. It was also common to see the water jerry can used in place of the traditional drum.

With regard to how the instruments played respective roles, the *Litungu* in most cases took up the lead role. The fiddle (*Siilili*) was played alongside, with a similar role as the *Litungu,* but also created harmony in some instances. The drums and *Luengele* mainly maintained the rhythm, as the bass guitar spelt out chords to provide harmonies. In cases where the keyboard was used, it played the melodies as well as the accompanying harmony.

Performances on the music recordings included instrumentation, singing and dancing. The singers in the videos in part also mimed alongside the pre-recorded songs. In actual fact, they were the same instrumentalists while a few had been set aside to specifically sing. A focal aspect of performance is that they danced and dramatized the meanings of the songs. A predominant dance style in the videos was *Kamabeka.* Even though, in some instances, they also danced other popular dances especially the Congolese which emphasizes movement below the waist. Dancing in the recorded CDs was characterized by choreographed patterns and styles. The performers in most cases strove to achieve uniformity and unity. These performance characteristics are shown in clip *Vc.17,* and the song – *Maayi muro* – transcribed in Excerpt 5.2.2 .

To achieve more uniformity in dancing, the performers mostly wore fabric costumes that enhanced body movements. For the ladies whose most favourite was waist movement for instance, they put on tight trousers, to emphasize their desired dance. Dramatization was achieved through the use of gestures, background scenery and accompanying plays. Other dancers wore shirts with raised shoulders-tops to embellish articulation of *Kamabeka* dance. More so, was that the costumes were bright and multicoloured to make them more eye catching.

In the song recordings, the Bukusu language was predominantly used. In some instances, though, they also incorporated words from Kiswahili, English and other Luhya dialects. The song text was presented mainly in song form. But in some instances, spoken words were also incorporated. Spoken text was used to identify with members of their audience, and to emphasize certain important features of the songs.

With regard to duration, the songs were not time bound. Individual performers presented songs within over what they thoughts were reasonable durations, mostly until they passed across the desired ideas in the songs or the audience was satisfied. In all the songs that were reviewed, the shortest lasted five (5) minutes, while the longest lasted fifteen (15) minutes. Therefore, the artistes use their own discretion to determine the duration of length of a song. Another factor that determines the length of a song is how it was developed. A major influencing factor is the textual development. In most cases, songs are presented in the form of stories. Therefore, the termination of the story brought the song to an end too.

In the videos, there were many onlookers in the background scenes. The spectators also participated in the performances by dancing and singing. From their participation, it was clear that they were not part of the recording cast. This was evident from unpatterned freedom of expression they exhibited compared to the actual performers who looked rehearsed, guided and stuck strictly to the performance script. More so, the onlookers were not adorned in any costumes like the main performers. Therefore, their participation in these music recordings – whether consciously or unconsciously – is regarded as part of the official performance.

Cultural nights

Lately, the Kenyan entertainment industry is characterized by social evenings in the cosmopolitan urban areas. Members of respective ethnic communities come together to sample and celebrate their culture through visual and performing arts, food and drinks. The *Daily Nation* reported that the idea behind these nights was to create an easy rural environment-like atmosphere for busy professionals. These are people who take ages before visiting their folks in rural areas.[121]

A unique aspect of these events is that the poets, dramatists and other lead-role artistes who perform come from the respective ethnic communities. The purpose is to give the public a culturally revealing experience. Individual ethnic communities of Kenya, therefore, have

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[121] *Daily Nation*, Monday, 13th September 2010, 'Cultural nights have advanced tribal pride.'

respective nights that are named in their corresponding languages. The names relate to the identities of the respective communities. Table 1 below, shows names of some of the cultural nights;

	Community	Name of Night
1.	Luo	*Ramogi*
2.	Gusii	*Esagasaga*
3.	Kalenjin	*Kitwek*
4.	Kikuyu	*Mugithi*
5.	Mijikenda	*Swahili*
6.	Kamba	*Kililimbi*
7.	Luhya	*Mulembe*
8.	Maasai	*Esiankiki*
9.	Meru	*Meru*
10.	Somali	*Somali*

Table 1: Cultural nights[122]

Due to its focus, I was interested in the *Mulembe night,* an event that exhibits the culture of the Luhya sub-nations, Bukusu being one of them. The cultural facets that were exhibited in the fete included song, dance, instrumentation, drama, poetry, foods and drinks. Apart from showing the cultural artefacts, the event also seeks to foster integration and unity of the Luhya people through promoting cultural experiences.

To better understand how the cultural nights are named, I found out why the Luhya night was called *Mulembe.* The word *mulembe* in the Luhya language means peace. It is also used as greetings, where, when one says *mulembe,* they mean peace be with you. Informants from the Bukusu community indicated that peace for them was essential for good coexistence in the community. That is why their greetings were always a call for peace. Apparently, the aspect of peace has since transcended the daily lives of the people that they not only say but practise it. They indicated that this practice led to them being referred to as people of peace (*Babandu ba mulembe*).

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[122] Source: Own research

This cultural event was organized by Mulembe FM, one of the radio stations owned by the Royal Media Services (RMS). Mulembe FM broadcasts in Luhya language. The company chose the name *mulembe* for this FM radio station as an identity of what the Luhya people stand for (peace). Seemingly, the use of the name makes the Luhya proud to be associated with the station and relate to its broadcasts; actually they consider it their own. More so, it perpetuates their philosophy of peaceful coexistence in their daily activities.

Concerning venue, the cultural night is mainly staged at the Carnivore Restaurant, which is situated in the western part of Nairobi City, outside the central business district (CBD). The restaurant has a round-shaped grass-thatched auditorium that is used as a restaurant as well as a performance venue. Outside the auditorium, is a large open space with the capacity to accommodate many people, as well as an extensive parking space. At the open space, is another stage (raised platform) set up for music performances.

The restaurant, therefore, makes use of two arenas for performances; that is, the round-shaped auditorium and the other at the open-air grounds. In addition to the spacious nature of this venue, is that the restaurant specializes in cooking assorted foods from all parts of the world. Therefore, it provides the expected tastes to the satisfaction of patrons. The organizers of the event indicated that the restaurant was best suited for this kind of event for three reasons. First, it is located outside the CBD, away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Second, it has expansive space for parking and, finally it specializes in recipes from diverse communities.

Before the performances began, I randomly approached some of the attendees speaking the Bukusu language. This was a strategy to ascertain whether they understood the language, which subsequently would reveal identities of the attendees based on their spoken language. On average, out of every ten (10) people, eight (8) were from the larger Luhya community as two (2) were from other Kenyan communities. This was determined by the way some responded in Bukusu whereas others did in other Luhya dialects.

Very few responded in Kiswahili, an indicator that they did not come from the Luhya community or did not understand the language. This brief interaction revealed that a majority of the attendees came from the Luhya community. Only a minority were from other communities of Kenya. I chose to interact with a few members of the audience in order to determine whether they understood the song texts, which arguably had a significant bearing on the aesthetic manifestation of the performances.

As pertains to staging of the performances, the artists took positions at the designated points on the respective raised platforms. On stage, the performers made use of a public-address system that enabled them reach out to their audience with ease. The stage was decorated with disco lights that changed colours often. It was also observed that there were assorted instruments on the stage including, *Litungu, Siilili,* drum sets, guitars, and keyboards.

Performance practice during the cultural nights further exhibited varied characteristics as described in this section. Concerning participation, ten (10) different sets of bands played that night where each was given sufficient time to play the best of their repertoire. The order of performance was guided by stage managers who also acted as disc jockeys (DJs) and emcees (MCs). They ushered the bands onto the stage after elaborate introductions. An interaction with the guides revealed that they made the schedules in a way that kept the audience entertained yet always anticipating better performances.

It was clear that the bands comprised of instrumentalists, lead singers, backup singers as well as dancers. In most cases, the instrumentalists (*Litungu* or *Siilili* players) were also the soloists. In other instances, there were performers designated only to lead the songs but not to play instruments as well. Backup singers supported the lead singers at points of response or chorus. Apart from instrumentalists and singers, other performers were only designated to dance, but did not sing or play any instrument. The band set up and performance in this event was similar to what was experienced in the restaurants as shown in clip *Vc.10.*

In terms of ensemble combination, it was noted that the instruments played in harmonic renditions based on choral progressions. The keyboard for instance was played in form of choral accompaniment that harmonized the *Litungu.* In other instances, they used a bass guitar that mostly played bass notes of chords I, IV, and V, to harmonize the melody played by the other instruments. It was also clear that the singers sang at intervals of thirds to create a unique kind of parallel harmony. This character of harmony which was achieved by use of tonal intervals of thirds was also evident in the way the *Siilili* was played against the *Litungu. Vc.12* demonstrates how the varied harmonic aspects were rendered in such bands that performed in the cultural nights.

With regard to performance, it was clearly seen and heard that most of the bands used pre-recorded music, which was played as they sang along. Together with the recorded music, it was evident that the musicians also appeared on stage with instruments which they seemed to play alongside the playback music. It was also interesting to observe that they had memorized

the song text so well that they sang along without distortion of any words, entries or rhythmic harmony. Statistically, three (3) bands out of the ten (10), utilized live instrumentation and singing.

An interesting observation was that as the bands sung alongside the recorded music CD, the lead singers especially managed to make use of some Kiswahili words. The study considers these words as short-spoken-phrase (SSP). The SSP was mostly meant to identify prominent people in attendance, request the audience to applaud *wapi nduru waluhya* (give me a shout Luhya people), or to ask them to lift their hands up (*mikono juu*). Such SSP happened in instances where there was an instrumental interlude or when they were singing the chorus.

I was also concerned about establishing the different dance styles, how they were executed and the perception of the audience. The lead dancers mainly moved their waist and sometimes their shoulders. Most bands made use of female dancers who executed the waist movement gracefully. In the case of male dancers, they also moved their waists mainly. Plate 25 below shows a dancer down on her back to show off her waist movement as the fans cheer her on.

Plate 25: *Mulembe* **night lead dance**

The dancers made use of fitting costumes to enhance their body movements. It was also apparent that the waist movement was in some instances used with sexual undertones. An example is where a male was dancing behind a female dancer while mimicking sexual movements behind her (what was locally called "bend over") to the amusement of the audience. Plate 25 above shows the female dancer making use of tight pants that helped to exaggerate her waist movement. On ethical grounds, the picture in Plate 27 is blurred to conceal identities of the many people, all who could not be reached to request for permission to have their images included.

With regard to participation, there was hardly what would be referred to as an audience. All the people present shared in the singing and dancing. In instances where the performers called on them to cheer or applaud in an SSP manner (*wapi nduru*) they responded effectively with *uuuuuuuu*! It was also evident that in some instances, some members from the audience climbed onto the podium (where the musicians were performing from), to showcase their dancing prowess. The entire occasion of the cultural night was characterized by attendees who were clearly united in performance. Plate 26 below shows a lead dancer being supported by the audience in his dance steps. Communal participation was a character that was well demonstrated in this event.

Plate 26: *Mulembe* **night audience participation**

In Plate 26 above, members of the audience led by the lead dancer can clearly be seen dancing to the music. The faces of the people have been blurred on ethical grounds. This is a big audience; the researcher would not have been able to approach and seek permission from each person to show their images. Though blurred to conceal the identities the persons, it shows the impression of the ensuing corporate dance. Of importance was the fact that we can deduce from the picture that the audience was actively involved in the music making process.

Participation by the audience was further noticed in instances where they welcomed performers on stage, supported them to continue playing or also requested for a different artist to play. This was the case when a band was not captivating or entertaining enough, hence members of the audience shouted out for another musician to perform. A point in time is when a Sikuti[123] Band came on stage and the audience did not like it. They shouted out their discontentment saying, *toa hiyo* (literally remove that one). To appease the audience, the stage managers had to stop the band and bring in Namatete Band, which played *Litungu* and *Siilili* to the satisfaction of the audience. Seemingly, the audience knew their musicians well. This was observed in the way they chanted names of certain musicians, who were eventually allowed onto the stage to perform.

Apart from public performance, I also sought to understand the content of the music that was presented. In a session with the leader of *Chapa ilale* Band, it was clarified that they performed numerous songs drawn from varied contexts.[124] They ranged from children, initiation, marriage, post-burial, historical, topical, political and religious songs. The explanation was that they sought to perform as many songs as possible, with wide-ranging themes and contexts to give the urban dwellers a treat to music that they had not interacted with for a long time. Apart from the musical renewal, it was also to remind the public about the ceremonies and rituals that exist in the Bukusu community and occasions that they may not have attended lately. Given the far-reaching context and content of the music, the bands without inhibition enjoyed long durations of performance, for as long as the audience was entertained.

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[123] *Sikuti* are single-head goblet-shaped drums from the Isukha, Maragoli and Idakho sub-nations of the Luhya community. They are usually played in a set of three drums.
[124] Personal interview with Wilbert Wanyama, band leader for *Chapa ilale* band on 5th June 2017 in Nairobi County.

7

Aesthetics in Contemporary Contexts

Aesthetics of Bukusu music performance are manifested in contemporary contexts by way of total validation, mis-interpretation, or re-interpretation to form neo-traditional artistic products. In some instances, completely new aesthetic principles and experiences are created. This is as a result of the change of the initial venues, actors, intentions, and the overriding philosophy behind the intended performances. This chapter will discuss the different ways in which aesthetics were manifested.

Individualism vs communalism

The term communalism is used in this context to mean collective, joint or shared participation in a music making activities. This clarification is necessary because the same terminology means something else in political science. A dominant performance practice that accounts for aesthetics of Bukusu music in the traditional contexts is that all people gathered in a ritual/occasion/ceremony were eligible and/or participated in the music making process.

Within the contemporary contexts, this aesthetic was evident in some instances, but missing in others or upheld with notable re-interpretation. In the case of competitive festivals (KMF) and cultural revivals (Bomas of Kenya) for instance, performers used raised and sunken platforms respectively, which were placed several metres away from the audience. During performance, the audience kept quiet. Any attempt to react to the performances was censored by the event organisers. At the end of the performance, the audience clapped and/or applauded the performers.

The above description shows that distance (both physical and participatory) was created between the performer and the audience, who did not actively participate in the performance. Involvement (clapping) of the audience was realized after the performance. Inasmuch as members of the audience could have been participating during the performance, the subdued nature of their involvement rendered them as good as non-participants. This in essence may be interpreted as inactive involvement, which broke the tradition of inclusive participation by all gathered members as it was in the traditional contexts. In this case, the communal nature of music performance among Babukusu was lacking. Appreciating participants at the end of

the performance could be regarded as a new way of participation where the audience were involved at a later stage.

Consequently, participation of the audience by clapping at the end of the presentation relegated them to appreciators but not active music makers. Inasmuch as the composition of the audience may have been culturally diverse, meaning limited understanding of certain musical components, their level of participation by clapping only was not sufficient to warrant them being referred to as active performers. It can be argued that alienation of the audience from active participation amounted to individualism. Only a select few participated in the music as opposed to communal involvement that is characteristic of Bukusu music performance practice in the traditional contexts.

With regard to church as a cultural revival, the choir (church musicians) sat among the congregants from where they played the lead role in the music making process. The choir intoned songs after which the congregation joined them in performance. In terms of dance, the congregation mostly followed and imitated what the choir performed. In this case, the character of music being a communal activity was to a considerable extent affirmed in the sense that majority of the people who gathered in the churches were involved in the performances.

An interesting dimension, however, was that the congregation mostly imitated actions of the choir. In a way, the gathered members depended on the choir, hence, limited self creativity. It can be conjectured that communal participation was upheld in such scenario, but with a sense of re-interpretation. That is because a specialized group – the choir – that was well rehearsed with perfected predispositions led in the musical activities while the congregants merely imitated and/or joined in.

It is, however, arguable that the congregation could perform as well as the choir which made use of specialized performers who had also rehearsed their act. The choir in essence led the rest in performance but similarly exhibited a level of expertise compared to the congregation. This was a way of affirming the communal nature of Bukusu music. However, its re-interpretation may be viewed as individualism in communalism, given that whereas the specialised group led the whole, they also displayed proficiency among the rest.

With regard to enterprise development scenes, there was a specific place set aside for performers. The performance arena in such scenario was also located at a distant from the rest of the people attending the function. This can be likened to the audience-performer concept at KMF. It was, however, notable that corporate performance was still evident. For instance, in public functions and weddings, the musicians beckoned members of the audience to join them (see Plate 25). By seeking participation of the public, the artistes broke the void between them and the audience to make it an audience-participatory concept.

The concept of audience-participation may be argued from the point that their existed an audience which was attentive but at some point was invited to join the performance. The audience, therefore, left their role as attendees to join the performance, what may be regarded as audience-participation.

A unique aspect of such participation, however, was that a specialised member of the band led and showed the public how and/or what to dance. Given that the public imitated the lead dancer, this turned out to be a choreographed (on-choreography) performance due to the uniformity of the actions. Such performance could be likened to that in the church where the choir led and directed the congregation on how to accomplish selected musical activities.

The intention of the lead person/s was to guide the public in performance. Nevertheless, their pre-rehearsed proficiency gave them an edge over the rest. Therefore, they also un- and/or intentionally showcased their prowess at the expense of the rest. Like the church choir scenario, such outstanding performance compared to the rest of the performers further affirmed the thought of individualism in communalism, as a form of re-interpretation of the largely shared character in the traditional contexts.

Such dominance of the lead performer may be viewed as different from the Bukusu philosophy of democratized communal participation, an attribute that is supported by Nzewi, Anyahuru, and Ohiaraumunna (2001:102-103) who in a parallel study observes that:

> "The African performance arts principle requires that, the master musician or dancer is not an expert who dominates a presentation with overt, psychotic ego-displays. Rather, the lead artist endeavours to democratize ensemble action, and credits as well as involves empathic, emotional performers. The master performer mediates the performer-audience rapport. As such, evoking human sensing as well as sentiments in a creative contextual process is imperative, whether the performance need is music-specific or music-intrinsic. Most non-musical contexts inevitably demand musical-

arts processing in the African rationalization of human interactions, in which music invariably mediates varied emotions, conducts attitudes, and structures actions."

Communal performance was also evident in restaurants and cultural nights where the patrons joined in singing and dancing as the bands played on. A remarkable difference in the performances at restaurant was that the people enjoyed freer participation in the music making, compared to the specialized-dancer-led performance observed in the two previous contexts. More so, selected members of the audience did not dance but offered moral support by cheering on those dancing and/or encouraging the musicians to play on. Inasmuch as there was a designated dance floor, and a stage for musicians to play from, the patrons made their musical participation and contribution from the comfort of any other part of the restaurant.

In most of the songs, the performers also used a short-spoken phrase (SSP) that were always taken up by the audience as a form of a 'hook'. The use of SSP can be likened to the phatic function of language as proposed by Jakobson (1960).[125] The phatic function of language exemplifies instances where the focus is not to communicate content, but ascertain whether the recipient is still listening to the addressor by use of phrases such as "are you there" or "hallo" in a telephone conversation.

Similarly, the relocated contexts used the same concept through SSP to check whether the audience was still listening or attentive to the performance. This was done as the music played on as a form of breaking up texture. The process also helped to incorporate the audience into the performance as well as enhance music development. Therefore, it can be argued that although the characteristic of phatic function in language was evident, in music; it went beyond merely checking on the attention of the audience. It in real sense sought collaboration that was performance oriented.

Performance of Bukusu music in relocated contexts brought to life and affirmed the concept of communal participation as an aesthetic, where people gathered and partook in the music making process.

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[125] Jakobson, R., "Linguistics and Poetics", in T. Sebeok, ed., *Style in Language*, Cambridge, MA: M. I. T. Press, 1960, 350-377.

Apart from using the SSP as described in the above paragraphs, the same concept could be compared to the way musicians in the traditional contexts invited members of the audience to talk during a performance. Traditionally, besides being a strategy to involve the audience in the performance, they also contributed to the thematic development of performance.

In the relocated contexts, the SSP did not compliment the subject matter of the song. Arguably, the relocated contexts were characterized by multicultural audiences that may not have been in position to linguistically contribute to, especially songs that were presented in Bukusu language. Apart from being heterogeneous, such audience was also expansive hence the difficulty of choosing who to invite into the performance.

In essence, the SSP was more effective and acted as a re-interpreted way of fairly incorporating the entire audience without them necessarily contributing to the thematic elaboration of the performance. A significant consequence, however, was that the process facilitated and sustained the ideology of shared participation as an essential aesthetic of Bukusu music performance.

Comparatively, shared participation was more evident in the restaurants compared to other relocated contexts. While such were beer drinking places, not all attendees were partaking of the same yet they participated in the music making process, hence dispelling the notion that beer could have been the main influencing factor, much as it may have been to a considerable proportion. It could also be argued that this environment was not guided by rules and ideological restrictions like it was in festivals and church contexts. Therefore, it allowed freedom of expression. All reasons notwithstanding, participation in the performances at the restaurants brought to life the largely shared nature of Bukusu music as an aesthetic.

The above discussions on communal performance as an aesthetic were evident in the relocated contexts in which Bukusu music was performed. On one hand, within the competitive festivals and cultural revivals, it was found to be largely missing except for the fact that the audience applauded at the end of the performance. On the other hand, cultural nights and enterprise developments showed active and all-inclusive participation of the people in attendance. Communal participation in music making, however, was in some instances done with a sense of re-interpretation where on-choreographed and structurally-determined participation led by specialized performers took place. Such re-interpretation may

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be regarded as individualism in communalism given that few person/s assumed the role of guiding and at the same time showcasing their ability. Over and above, the communal nature of music making as an aesthetic was to a considerable extent reaffirmed, but also missing in some relocated contexts in which Bukusu music was performed.

Context

One important factor that determines and influences how music is practised in the Bukusu community is the context in which it is performed. It is common for instance, for music to be performed at the place where the ritual, occasion or ceremony takes place. In relocated contexts, however, the music is performed in an environment without the respective ritual, occasion or ceremony. More so, in a single festival or cultural night, songs from almost all the known occasions of the Bukusu community are performed. This can be defined as "a ceremony of all ceremonies."

Specificity of a respective occasion is disregarded when performers in the relocated contexts join several "songs" in succession to form one a complete song. This happened at the 'KMF folk song' (see Clip *Vc.8*) and also at the enterprise development context (see Excerpt 9). Some performers join songs from different traditional occasions and perform them as one song for various reasons. In other situations, groups perform songs from one ceremony but drawn from different phases of the ritual. The songs are also performed regardless of the time that they are supposed to be sang, as dictated by the ritual from which they are drawn.

Interestingly, the same medley is performed from one relocated event or occasion to another. A typical case was observed in the enterprise development scenes, where the song *Mulongo* (see Excerpt 9)*,* an initiation song was performed in wedding ceremonies, corporate functions among others. Such occasions are informed by differing objectives, yet treated to the same song. It can be contended that apart from the musical sound and accompanying performance features, the songs thematically contributed nothing to the occasions due to misplaced contexts.

It can similarly be contended that combining songs negatively impacts on clarity of the messages the songs are supposed to communicate. Traditionally, such songs are performed separately with a focus on melodic and mainly, thematic development. The themes are dictated by the situations in which the songs are performed to achieve a particular function.

Besides, they are performed within specific occasions, times, phases, stages and contexts that determine their character, substance and value of the music. Notably, specific songs are sung in certain rituals so that the themes can draw respective moods, communicate relevantly and achieve the desired function.

When performed together as it was in the relocated contexts, it is challenging for the people to choose the mood to adopt. The confusion created as a result of contextual misplacement short-changes the aesthetic relevance of the music. Combining songs and performing them in occasions different from their initial intent as observed above, denies them the beauty of thematic as well as contextual relevance.

Aesthetics of Bukusu music are also short-changed in instances where texts, which essentially carry the message of the songs are misinterpreted. This was evident in the use of words that were not Bukusu (drawn from other Luhya sub-nations). For example, in Excerpt 9, the words *tsi, tsi,* were used instead of *cha, cha.* More so, Bukusu words were used but with a speech rhythm and tonal inflection that changed the meaning of the words. A case in point is the Excerpt 9[126] where the word *oluma,* was articulated with a rising inflection on the syllable *lu,* instead of monotone, which rendered the word meaningless.

It is apparent that lack of, obscured or altered meaning as a result of misplacement of tonal inflection, distorts the speech rhythm. Also, mixing of languages negatively impacts on the creative process, and consequently the aesthetic appeal of the music. Wa Mukuna (1997:243) in whose study of creative process in Afro-Brazilian music raises a similar concern on linguistic distortion when he states that;

> "The total concept of creative process in the vocal music of Africa is contained in the different levels of its languages and that the demise of African languages in the new world rendered musical elements vulnerable to modification or replacement by others with different principles of organization."

A focal aspect of Wa Mukuna's argument is that the creative process largely draws from structures of African languages. In this case, the alteration of Bukusu language in some ways alludes to systematic shifting of its aesthetic factor in music performance. Text viewed in terms of contextual as well as creative use is, therefore, an aspect of concern in the relocated

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[126] Excerpt 9, Ibid.

contexts given that it short-changes the creative process, which is deep-rooted in the Bukusu language and its knowledge systems.

With regard to gender, age and status, it is notable that in the festival for instance, young children perform beer party songs that are meant for old men. In other scenarios girls, and/or worse, boys, perform wedding songs that are traditionally performed by women. Traditionally, the separation of who is supposed to perform given musical tasks is informed by certain philosophical reasons especially in terms of how the music functions in specific situations.

In essence, old men singing in a beer party are obviously under the influence of alcohol, which is responsible for certain behavioural tendencies that are manifested in musical performance. Furthermore, old men exhibit different vocal qualities from school-going children who are also not under the influence of beer. The musical and otherwise experience of old men is equally different from that of school-going children.

In the case of the traditional marriage ceremonies, ululations are largely performed alongside singing. In situations where boys perform marriage songs as was happened in the KMF, it is difficult to achieve the feminine character of the songs as well as ululate to give the songs the desired character. To this end, the two examples above of changed roles as was seen in KMF, adulterated the expected substance, aesthetics and meaning of the songs.

Gender, age and status as contexts in this situation is a factor that is mis/re-interpreted, which in turn changes the initial aesthetic dimension that is based on vocal qualities, behavioural tendency and philosophy informing why certain people are required to perform the songs. It, however, can be interpreted that with regard to musical sound and performance mannerism, a new aesthetic is generated by the younger performers to give music a new life, inasmuch as social aspects have been compromised.

The research on which this book is based was carried out in the year 2017, which is traditionally regarded as *Sikumenya,* an odd year. During such years, Babukusu perform ceremonies to remember the deceased members of the community. In traditional settings, songs from celebratory occasions like initiation are not allowed to be sang for whatever reason or situation. On the contrary, such songs are performed in many of the relocated

contexts that I encountered. Apart from the year, certain songs are only performed at night like the case of the initiation ceremony, which is marked by specific phases.

Within the new contexts, such songs are performed in broad daylight to entertain people. Acoustically, sound travels differently during the day and at night. More so, musical emotions differ from time to another. In essence, selected times for performance influence and affect the aesthetic appeal of the music. Changing the time that certain music is supposed to be performed similarly affects aspects such as acoustics, tone colour, behavioural tendencies and so would be the resultant aesthetic.

Relocated contexts largely make use of 'concert halls', that is, social, dining, multipurpose and restaurant halls that are converted into performance venues. In these 'concert halls' they perform songs that traditionally are presented in outdoor environments, by the riverside, on farms, by the grave side among other specific situations. In the traditional settings, the place where a ritual is supposed to take place is also a performance venue for the music. Most of such venues are characterized by a free atmosphere that allows for as many who are gathered to perform. Importantly, the venues have a significant bearing on why and how the rituals take place, including their ancestral and spiritual sanctioning.

In relocated contexts, it is notable that venues are mainly enclosed, with a specific place for the musicians to perform in the presence of an audience. The new environment characterized by enclosure and distance between performers and the audience is arguably limiting and intimidating for the participants. More so, the acoustics of such situations are different from those of outdoor situations. Freedom of expression is similarly to a large extent curtailed due to the keen eye of the audience, especially adjudicators. In such cases, the resultant aesthetic appeal of the music is generally affected. It could be lacking, changed, or otherwise new, given the unfamiliar environmental factors.

Two processes of translocating music account for how aesthetics of Bukusu music are alternatively appropriated. In some instances, the music is transferred directly from the traditional settings to new contexts. In others, music is transferred from a traditional context to a new context. The result of the new context is then relocated to another alternative context. The second scenario was realized for instance where KMF adaptation and arrangements were performed in enterprise development centres by adding an accompanying

soundtrack to the already arranged music. The two situations may be regarded as recontextualization and transcontextualisation respectively as demonstrated in Figures 10 and 11 below.
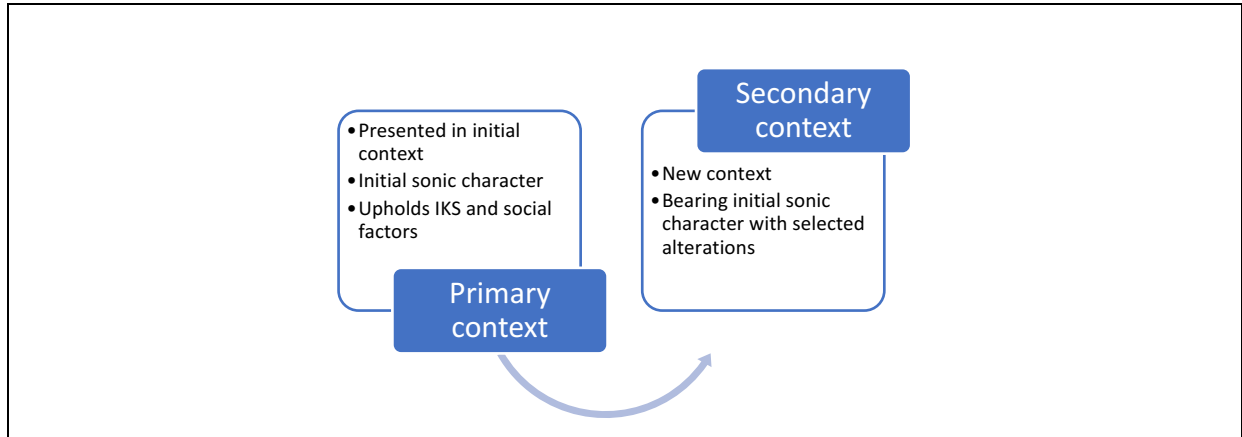

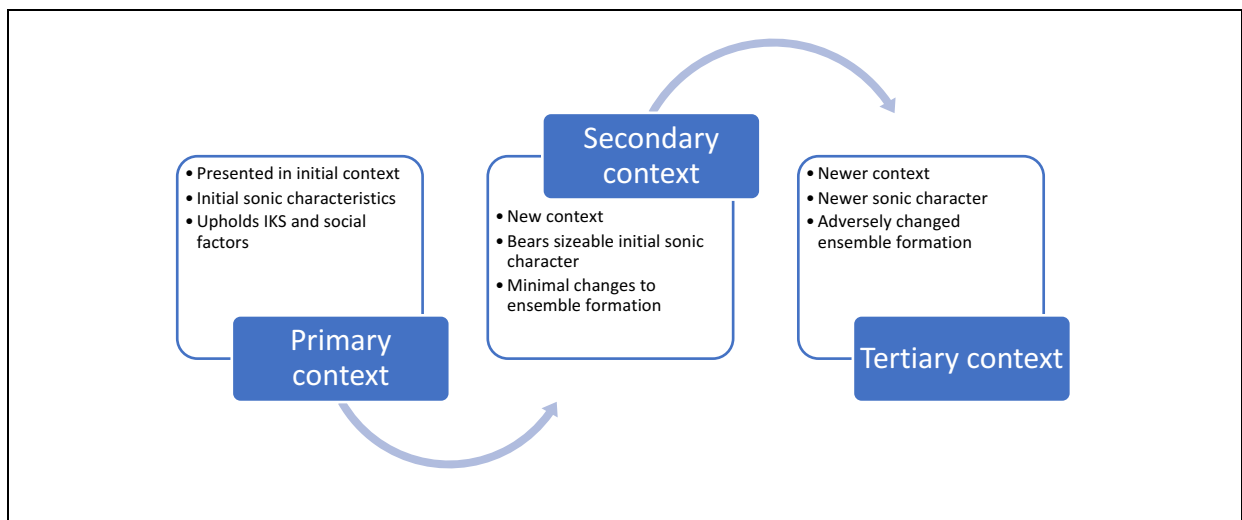**Figure 9: Recontextualization**[127]

Figure 10: Transcontextualization[128]

Figure 10 shows recontextualization because it involves the transfer of music from an initial context to a new one. Such a process is affirmed by Mudundu (2005) who argues that

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[127] Developed by the researcher.

[128] Developed by the researcher.

recontextualization occurs only when music is in an existing context. In the new context, the music is performed with remarkable differences from the original, but bears a fair amount of characteristics of the initial song. Figure 11 illustrates a case where music is moved to a new context, and then to another context again. This results in music that shows characteristics of the second context as well as the original. The transfer through more than one context necessitates treatment as a transcontextualization process because, the music has already been moved and is outside its initial context.

Musical arts vs Composite

Performance of music in traditional contexts of the Bukusu community is largely characterized by combination, interaction and communion of varied artistic (both visual and performing) facets, what is regarded as a composite. Within relocated contexts, performance is approached in ways that uphold the combined ideology but also shows change, editing and addition of new concepts. It is common for performers to employ song, dance, instrumentation, dramatization and visual arts. The respective contexts, however, feature remarked differences in the way the artistic facets are employed in combination during performance.

Within the cultural nights and enterprise development centres for instance, the performers divide themselves into singers, instrumentalists and dancers. In some instances, instrumentalists play as they sing, yet in others, they play instruments only as the lead singers sing. Dancers mainly focus on their body movements. The other roles are played by the rest of the band members. The lead singers sing and also make some body movements, which could be regarded as dance. Inasmuch as the roles are distinct, there are instances where the performers assume all the roles. Based on such arrangement, it can be deduced that while they combine several facets, the performers seem to have developed a concept of role specialization, but they in the process end up partaking of all.

With regard to competitive festivals and cultural revivals, it is clear that there is a tendency to separate the art forms, that is, folk song, dance and instrumental categories. Performance of the 'KMF folk song' category showed that inasmuch as song was emphasized, dance was still necessary to substantial measures. For the dance category, the participants sang as others played instruments and danced. Within the instrumental classes, they played instruments, sang along, and made body movements in form of dance.

In essence, the categorization created a kind of 'dominant factor' that was the point of focus versus the 'supportive or subordinate' roles which could not be done away with. Despite the fact that such organizations developed different strata with the aim of emphasizing certain aspects of performance, they ended up combining the three facets, though in varied proportions. The main difference between folk song and dance for instance, was that the former assumed a semicircle formation for the entire performance, whereas the latter largely embarked on altering of patterns. In the end, performers in both categories sang, danced and played instruments.

While the organization of the festivals focused on creating a difference in the way the respective art forms were rendered, performance on stage showed quite close relationships. Perhaps the difficulty in exhibiting remarkable difference was because of the fact that traditionally, such performance facets were inseparable. Inherently, that is what the performers have grown up to know and believe.

Another art that was fused with song, dance and instrumentation was dramatization of messages. In KMF for instance, Excerpt 7 shows a song in which the performers endeavoured to demonstrate the neck of the crane carrying a bone. Dramatization of the behaviour of this bird was achieved by use of hand gestures. Whereas the KMF syllabus discourages dramatization of the performances, acts such as use of gestures to communicate certain messages showed that indeed, it was employed.

The presence of the 'forbidden' dramatic effects in the KMF performances further confirms the difficulty of separating artistic facets of Bukusu music. Apart from the festival, use of gestures was also evident in the churches. Gestures were used to facilitate communication of the message in the songs. For instance, when they sang 'Hosanna is the highest' they lifted their hands up and also waved.

Drama was further enhanced by use of narration, that is, spoken discourse as the music performance is ongoing. To identify with the audience, the performers indulged in a speech-like session specially to recognize the spectators, after which they reverted to song, scenes that made the performances dramatic. The evidence of drama as a facet among others further enriched the composite nature of Bukusu music, which is a pivotal aesthetic dimension of the music making process.

Works of craft such as costumes, paintings, props and visual arts were also used to complement the performing arts. At the KMF and cultural revivals, multicoloured costumes of varied designs were used, especially when performing folk songs, dances and instrumentals. The costumes were used to exaggerate movement of the respective body parts as well as making the performance more appealing. When worn by a group of performances for instance, the dresses add to the overall image and beauty of the presentation.

These costumes used in contemporary settings are specifically meant to be worn in musical performance. However, those used in traditional settings were also worn while people went around their daily duties. It can therefore be argued that, use of costumes and props to complement performing arts is an aesthetic characteristic that was also manifested in the relocated contexts. However, the difference is that it was done in a more specialized manner. That means, the costumes were designed to the standard fit for performance only, but not for wearing as one went around the daily activities and duties. Such specialization was characterized by use of colour variations and artistic designs to create more eye-catching and dramatic effects.

The separation of art forms described above, shows a unique character of having been pre-choreographed and rehearsed. In terms of dance, all the KMF and cultural revivals exhibited specialized dancers that showed pre-choreographed dance patterns and movements. Skill perfection was achieved by recruiting competent performers who trained to achieve the new standards. During performance, the focus was not on accommodating many people with the ability to perform and create a bigger community of participants, but on those who had mastered the art of performance best. Such perfection of skill then accounted for precision of formal aspects such as uniformity, unity, patterns, variety, texture and balance, as the basis for new aesthetics of performance.

The performances at cultural nights and enterprise development not only used pre-choreographed dances but also incorporated choreography. This was evident when they invited the audience to join them in performance and in the process one of the specialized dancers led the public in dancing (see Plate 25). This gradually resulted in a unified and patterned dance that essentially was as a result of choreography in performance (on-choreography). This to some extent resonates with the traditional contexts' approaches where dancers met in the arena and ended up making a patterned dance formation.

However, the difference is that in the traditional context, there was no lead dancer to guide the rest, but rather mutual consensus in the process of performance. Whether pre- or on-choreographed, dance was not separate from performing arts. Instead, it was presented in combination with other arts. This affirmed the composite nature of Bukusu music, the evident re-interpretations notwithstanding.

The two examples cited above drawn from the relocated contexts show how embedded song, dance, drama, instrumentation and visual arts are in Bukusu music. One cannot exist without the other. They are dependent on each other inasmuch as they are independent entities. While they complemented one another in the traditional context, in the relocated situations, some were subdued. They only offered subordinate or accompanying roles to the others. This was exemplified in the churches where instruments were employed as accompaniments to play preludes, interludes and postludes. It was also evident in the competitive festivals where in some instances, song was subordinate to dance and or instrumentation, and vice versa. Such arrangement led to perfection of the dominant artistic feature, as a way of making it achieve newer aesthetic dimensions.

Of importance, there was evidence of the respective musical facets existing together, an ideology that is typical of traditional contexts of Bukusu music performance. It is clear that the composite nature of Bukusu music was still evident within the relocated contexts. The composite ideology was, however, employed with variations and re-interpretations to achieve certain goals set out by the respective institutions. The editing of how the facets were employed in the performances in a way altered the aesthetic appeal of the music to certain levels but also maintained it to a large extent. In selected instances, the achieved artistic and aesthetic dimensions showed characteristics of both the traditional as well as the new contexts. However, they bore features of the traditional contexts – what can be regarded as neo-traditional artistry.

Creative process
Music making among Babukusu is also characterized by a self-driven dynamic approach to the artistic creation and recreation of ideas during performance. Text is generated depending on the context at hand as basis for development of a song. Melodic and rhythmic modification and embellishment which are achieved in both song and instrumentation further complement development of the performance.

Dance as a part of the composite is also developed over time with intricacy of body movements, patterns and formations. The entire composite is dynamically transformed from one context to another. The respective circumstances are characterized by unique features that influence the choice of musical material. Such is appreciated as the creative process that in part characterises the aesthetic embodiment of their performance.

A review of performances in the new contexts indicated alternative approaches to their creative processes. Concerning the learning as a foundation for the development of the creative process, participants in KMF (competitive festivals) and Bomas of Kenya (cultural revival) largely depended on their teachers and resource persons who taught them the songs, dance steps and the entire performance plans. On stage, the performers executed what they were taught to the letter, arguably for the sake of precision and uniformity. More so, strict adherence to what had been learnt was achieved to ensure minimal or no chances of making mistakes. This was another form of skill perfection to achieve certain formal and expressive aspects as the focus of performances in most of the relocated contexts.

Apart from reproduction of the rehearsed constructs, many of the performers did not understand the meaning of the song texts. This has already been alluded to. They, however, vaguely understood the contexts especially from the introductions that were made ahead of the performances. In terms of duration, such performances were stipulated to be performed for not more than four (4) or five (5) minutes and some instances up to eight (8) minutes for the instrumental categories.

These disclosures show that development of performances in KMF is not based on self-driven dynamic and creative generation of song text, dance, instrumentation and melodic modifications in an existing situation. On the contrary, it is based on reproduction of complete, rehearsed and internalised patterns. It can therefore be postulated that given opportunity to perform in a different occasion, such works would be rendered the same way as they were performed in the festival. Arguably, lack of understanding of the song text in use makes it difficult for performers to achieve any form of textual development especially during performance.

Focus on reproduction, execution and unity of the rehearsed patterns, may also be viewed as impediments to freedom of expression by the participants. Owing to the fact that performances are supposed to be executed within stipulated time, chances of adding new ideas were also minimal. The performers fear the negative impact it would have on the

prescribed duration. Development of newer ideas during performance did not also happen due to the fear of distorting or making mistakes if they deviated from what they had learnt.

It can be asserted that performances as described in the above paragraphs used a fixed creative process, not a self-driven dynamic creative process. The process is considered as fixed in the sense that its creativity is reproduced the way it was learnt. The performers do not generate any new ideas of their own especially during performance. On the contrary, traditional contexts thrive on self-dynamism of musical ideas during, but not before performances, making the process of music making more creative.

The beauty that comes with the creative dynamic generation and development of artistic facets during and/or in a specific performance as is typical of traditional Bukusu contexts was either missing in the relocated contexts, or re-interpreted. The purpose was to accommodate the young and/or non-Bukusu performers who had not, and/or were yet to master such art. In terms of substance, the new way of achieving the creative process produced new aesthetics. These were based on formal (arrangement of properties) and expressive aspects, uniformity, precision and mastery of skills within stipulated durations.

Closely related to the fixed creative process present in the competitive festivals and at Bomas of Kenya, was the church setting as a cultural revival centre. It was noted that performers used song books to refer to lyrics (song text). Such reference to written material basically meant that textual development was limited to what existed in the song books. More so, the melodies to this text were also definite and never altered during the performances. Development of the melodies was specific to the song texts. This may also be considered as a form of fixed creative process. This is because the performers relied on what was predetermined by the composers of the songs in the books.

At KMF and Bomas of Kenya, the performers applied the skills that they had learnt and rehearsed. But in the churches, performers relied on what they had rehearsed, complemented by song books for selected performance direction. The church context further affirmed the fixed creative process as a new artistic feature in the relocated contexts.

With regard to enterprise development and cultural nights, some songs were sung in diverse occasions with different themes. For instance, the song *Mulongo* (see Excerpt 9) was performed in weddings, corporate functions, beer parties in restaurants, among others. Interestingly, the song was performed without change of the song text that was recorded on

the original CD. While performing same song text in different occasions or events may be regarded as wrong context, it follows that the creative process was also static to what was previously learnt. There were no new ideas that were generated during performance.

Such characteristic was further affirmed in the way performers sang along pre-recorded soundtrack where in most cases they only mimed in the microphones and indulged in dancing. The soundtrack was then re-played in more occasions. Performers were, therefore, limited to the artistic structure of the soundtrack that was employed in varied contexts, as they accompanied it with rehearsed dances. With reference to such music, the creative process may be regarded as static given that no new material was being generated but reproducing the existing one.

In terms of dance performances, the enterprise development centres and cultural nights made use of specialized dancers who seemed to have well-rehearsed movements that were basically reproduced. Inasmuch as the audience joined the performances to make them communal, in most cases, the specialized dancers led and showed them what, and how to dance. Although learnt during performance (on-choreography), these turned out to be rehearsed dances that were not self-propelled but dependent on an instructor.

This scene then relegated it to a dynamic-fixed creative process, given that there were pre-choreographed performances (by the lead dancer), as well as on-choreographed ones which depended entirely on the learnt practices, not self-created ones. In this scenario, again the beauty that comes with self-dynamic generation and development of ideas within the creative process as is known in the traditional Bukusu context was re-interpreted.

The above discourse reveals that in relocated contexts, the dynamic creative process was not validated but rather mis/re-interpreted in the performance of Bukusu music. This is based on the fact that the performers largely depended on existing musical materials that were established by certain composers/performers/performance-directors. The performances were then reproduced with none, or minimal, extra, self-creativity, a situation that rendered the creative process static to the initial ideas of the performance-directors, composers and/or choreographers. This was the case with dances where a lead dancer showed the public what to do, or a group of specialized dancers performed what had just been pre-rehearsed.

Compared to traditional contexts, most of the relocated contexts made use of new as well as re-interpreted ways of achieving the creative process. In a few instances they achieved the

dynamic process of creating and recreating artistic ideas specific to a given performance as was in traditional contexts. To demonstrate how similar they were, the above discussion concerning the creative processes in relocated contexts is summarized in Figure 12 below.
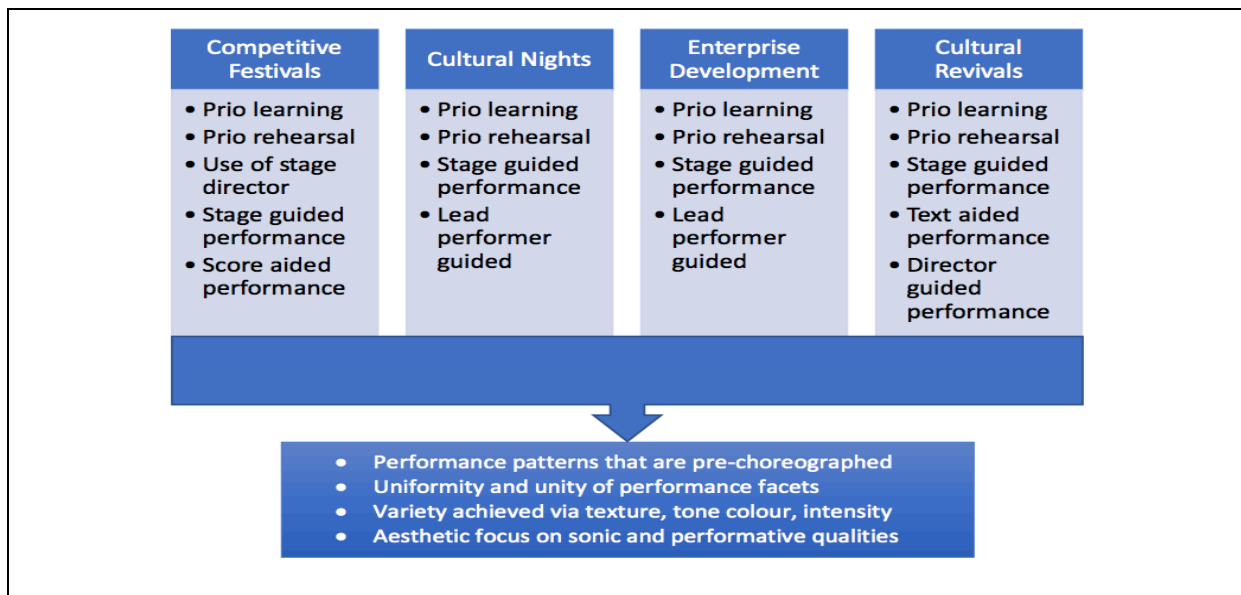

Figure 11: Creative process in relocated contexts[129]

Figure 14 shows the four relocated contexts that were researched on. The four contexts were characterized by differing objectives. From the illustration in Figure 12, it is evident that the contexts share similarities in terms of preparation. Learning and rehearsal were done prior to the performance. During performance, they made use of selected aids such as directors, leaders, song text and the stage. Whereas the aids may have been different in selected contexts, they served a similar purpose of enabling or facilitating the performers to accomplish their tasks more effectively. Such performances rendered alternative aesthetic preferences that may or not share relationship with that of the traditional contexts.

Performance appraisal

A common characteristic in the enterprise development, cultural revival and cultural nights was that the audience was multicultural. Such nature of audience means that not all members understood the meaning of the songs that were performed in Bukusu language. It was, however, evident that whenever music was performed, the audience showed appreciation by dancing, clapping, offering moral support or giving tips to the artistes. In selected instances,

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[129] Developed by the researcher based on the study findings.

the audience loudly requested for different musicians to take up the stage, an indicator that they were dissatisfied with the one performing, or otherwise needed more from musicians, who were also known to them.

Such actions by the audience were similar to what was observed in the traditional contexts that could be regarded as evaluation of performance. It is, however, paradoxical that some members of the audience who probably did not understand the language also participated in the process of evaluation as typified by their actions. Interaction with some members of the audience revealed that they appreciated the sound of the music especially rhythm upon which they judged the performance.

In ideal situations, proper critique entails understanding of the social aspects of the music, its song text, sound and relevant performance aspects. However, it was notable that some members of the audience who did not understand such factors based their evaluation on sound materials only. Presumably, some of them basically followed what their colleagues who understood the language did. The evaluation based on sound materials only, may not have given a fair critique of what the purpose of the music. Such can thus be viewed as a mis/re-interpreted way of evaluation, given that it only considered a thin aspect of performance.

Part III

Novelties

8

New Artistic Facets

Quoting William Rhodes, Anyumba (1971) argues that, as social institutions change, the music associated with them also changes or is replaced by new music more fitted to the 'tempo' and 'temper' of the day. The change of contexts in which Bukusu music is performed supports Anyumba's assertion. Apart from artistic features that were validated, altered or appropriated, it is clear that performance of Bukusu music in alternative contexts also revealed new artistic and aesthetic features, as a form of fitting into the 'tempo' and 'temper' of the day.

The artistic and aesthetic features are regarded as new because they are not the same as the characteristics that were manifested when the music was practiced in the traditional contexts. This chapter endeavours to show how such new artistic and aesthetic principles were manifested during performance of Bukusu music in the contemporary contexts.

Ideological novelty

Five new performance contexts, that is, competitive festivals, cultural revivals, cultural nights, cultural festivals and enterprise developments typified the alternative contexts. They are the basis upon which this comparison is made with the traditional contexts. These contexts showed differing ideologies with regard to the way music was used for competition and exhibition purposes, as opposed to the traditional ideologies that focused on its role, function, social significance and importantly, as living heritage. The divergent philosophies necessitated for new demands, hence the need for restructuring how the music was performed to meet the novel purposes.

In terms of context as a place, stage, platform or space for instance, performances in the new settings were mainly in auditoriums. These were adapted from social, dining, multipurpose or restaurant halls as venues for music performance. Music from all the ceremonies of the Bukusu community was performed in the halls in a single performance session. Previous accounts showed that in the traditional contexts such music was performed in certain and specific places that were mainly determined by the ritual that was supposed to take place. In the instance of the initiation ceremony, a given song, for example, was performed only on the path that the initiates used to go to the river.

When performance of such a song and others that are associated with specific rituals are presented in an auditorium, new artistic and aesthetic features are bound to be exhibited. This is based on the fact that the ambience in the auditorium produces different acoustic preferences compared to that in the open-door arena. In terms of behaviour, the performers walking on the paths for instance, show different mannerism characterized by freedom of expression given that no audience was available to watch them. The would-be onlookers can only join them in the performance. Their walking or slow jogging adds to the rhythmic elements of the music that would not be achieved in an auditorium context. The formal environment created by auditoriums in a way curtails certain freedoms necessary for given behavioural tendencies that are responsible for respective aesthetic attitudes.

But from a different perspective, the performers in an auditorium exhibited features that revealed a different way of making music achieve the desired effectiveness. Some of the new artistic features that were achieved include unity of voices, uniformity of body movements, variation of textures and creating rhythmic and melodic variety. Such artistic features were achieved due to the fact that only specialized performers were employed in the performances. More so, they extensively rehearsed through their works before they were presented on stage. Such preparation and specialization resulted in unified and refined performances that exhibited new aesthetic principles including uniformity of dance patterns, vocal renditions and perfected skill.

With regard to competitive festivals, Bukusu songs competed against those from the broader Luhya, Luo and Suba communities who seemingly were different in terms of culture and philosophies of performance. More so, they speak different languages hence exhibited varied ways of expressing themselves. It is clear that the said communities did not have similar rituals to those of the Bukusu. It is, therefore, affirmative that cultural strangers were made to compete in the same category. Whereas it was argued that they share close relationship in terms of musical idioms, remarkable differences were clearly apparent.

Contextually, Babukusu perform music in their own language during ceremonies. They do not incorporate traditions of other communities given that they are culturally autonomous. The festival context, therefore, in a way short-changed the concept of the uniqueness and beauty of expression of the Bukusu music culture as an entity. Arguably, such exposure could have been responsible for the selected idiomatic expressions that seemed alien in selected performances of Bukusu music. Such idiomatic borrowing also had an impact on the aesthetic

relevance of Bukusu music, evidenced in the dance styles that showed characteristics of the Bukusu idioms with foreign intonations.

In terms of behavioural tendencies, a change in context also impacted on how certain musicians manifested themselves in unfamiliar environments. In discussing status as a context, young boys as players of *Walubende* (the earth bow) did it as they were herding cows. While performing this duty in an open field, such instrumentation came with a sense of play among the boys. Relocating such a boy to an amphitheatre largely changed his behaviour due to the absence of the play environment, the fright of many people watching him, when he is used to the company of his peers and cows.

The rhythm produced when the cows scooped the grass as they grazed partly added colour to the music from by the earth bow. It also reduced its loudness to cover up for the mischief associated with playing the instrument. While *Walubende* was not supposed to make loud sounds due to the mischief associated with it, the performance in a hall in a way amplified the sound due to its acoustics and the still-quiet audience. Such factors affected the confidence of the performers in articulating the mischief associated with *Walubende*, which was essentially pegged on the beauty of the instrumentation.

Organologically, *Walubende* is made by sticking a tuning peg into the earth so that loose soil facilitated adjustment of the tuner, to alter its pitch. In relocated contexts, most of the auditoriums were made of concrete. It was therefore not possible to drive a peg into them and adjust and readjust the tuner. Such circumstances required modification of the instrument, by mounting it onto a piece of timber. Consequently, timber acted as a resonator, which further changed its timbre as well as the acoustics and the volume of the sound produced by the instrument. The unfamiliar sound was also aesthetically new to the player and the ears that know how *Walubende* naturally sounds.

The example of performing on the earth bow shows that the contemporary performance contexts– auditoriums, halls, amphitheatres – in many ways led to new aesthetics. The new aesthetics were a result of the different acoustics in the contemporary contexts. The venues were strange to the players, so they had to change their behaviour. In the end, they were not able to bring out certain hidden behavioural tendencies that ensure effective delivery of the performances. The performers were, therefore, compelled to readjust to the new environment but with a view of creating music that was aesthetically appealing. In the process, they

consciously or unconsciously created artistic features that depicted new aesthetic principles in order to remain relevant in such contexts.

Earlier on, we discussed how context was appreciated in terms of a guiding philosophy that informed why and how the music was performed. The new contexts also presented new philosophies that governed performance of music, which in certain ways resulted in new artistic and aesthetic principles. Within the auditoriums, it was observed that there was always distance created between the audience and performers. This was not only physical distance but also in terms of participation. In some instances, the audience was only involved (applause) after the performance was complete.

In traditional contexts, aspects such as gender, age, status, time were a major consideration in performance in all ceremonies. However, these were largely disregarded in performances at the relocated contexts. The focus instead was more on the sonic components of music and how artistically – form, expression and design – they were rendered. That is why in the enterprise development, the musicians chose the music to perform based on how rhythmically and melodically captivating it was but not its social significance.

The new guiding philosophies meant redefining aesthetic appeal which further altered the aesthetic relevance of Bukusu music. A typical example was the issue of solo instrumental performance in the competitive festivals. In the traditional context, most of the instruments were ensemble-based, irrespective of the size of the ensemble. However, in KMF performances for instance, several performances of *Litungu* were done by lone performers. Yet traditionally, it was supposed to be accompanied by *Luengele,* hence the need for a second player.

During the performances, it was also evident that some components (percussive) of the music were essentially absent. That impacted on its aesthetic relevance. More so, the musical behaviour of some of the players who were used to group performances was also invariably changed given that they were alone in front of an audience, especially adjudicators who were judging them. Such change in behaviour (which is contextual) basically altered the general appeal of the performance.

In instances where ensembles were achieved, they used additional instruments from non-Bukusu cultures. For instance, at the KMF there was a category for use of both Western and African instruments. In the enterprise development and cultural nights, Bukusu music

instruments were supplemented by contemporary instruments such as the guitar, keyboard or drum kits. Two know facts are that, first, foreign instruments are tuned differently, and second, their sound quality is dissimilar to those of the Bukusu. Therefore, playing the instruments together achieved a new sound that was neither Bukusu nor foreign, but a mixture of both.

Perhaps, the new sound required innovative approaches of how to artistically re-adjust the tuning and playing of the Bukusu music instruments alongside foreign instruments. Given the expanded sound that was achieved in the enlarged and novel ensemble, behavioural tendencies of the musicians were also significantly altered hence generating new artistic characteristics.

The preceding discussions bring out the differences in the philosophy of performance between relocated contexts and traditional contexts. While the latter embraces social aspects of who, where, how and when the music was performed, the former focuses more on the internal sound materials of the music such as expressive and formal features of music performance. It completely disregards the related functional purposes of music

The new contexts also benefit from exhibition of specialized musicians with a view of deriving absolute artistry from their respective abilities, but not accommodating everyone who can make music in whatever little way. From the dances that were performed, it follows that the new contexts embraced formal aspects that came with creative choreography, which in essence resulted in novel aesthetic dimensions.

New creative processes in making music
The process of developing music into a coherent, artistically fulfilling and appealing entity in the relocated contexts was variedly characterized. With regard to songs, the performers mostly combined several 'songs' into one. This was the case in the 'KMF folksong' and the many other songs that were performed in the cultural nights and enterprise development environments. Combining of songs for the sake of variety was achieved by variation of rhythms, melodies and idioms of performance. More so, when dances were performed, variation of the songs marked change of dance styles, patterns and formations to dynamically achieve more effectiveness. This was new in the sense that it differed from the concepts in traditional contexts where only one song could be developed over a long time, upon which dancers creatively varied their styles. In traditional contexts, achieving variety in a song was thus attained via textual development and melodic innovation, modification and

embellishment, based on creativity of the musician/s and participants. That was not the case in the relocated ones.

Apart from combining songs, Bukusu music was also re-arranged in a choral style, in a manner similar to the art music in the Western classical traditions. In KMF, this was referred to as 'adaptation and arrangement of folk tunes'. The style was not only manifest in KMF but in many other relocated contexts. They also used pre-recorded tracks or live instruments to accompany it. Whereas in KMF the arrangement was in the voices only, in the other contexts, it was in the instruments and the voices. The creative process of developing such music involved rhythmic and melodic transformations, tonal changes, song text variation, among other Western classical approaches.

Performance of such songs made use of directors (conductors) who guided performers through the complicated musical features. Besides the thought-provoking musical style, the vocal qualities were also changed to accommodate the harmonic demands and expanded sound effects of the songs. Such performances could not be rendered without the use of pitch instruments that were also alien in the Bukusu music.

The use of foreign harmony as a technique of developing and adding beauty to Bukusu music was also evident in the bands that performed in enterprise development establishments and cultural nights. They made use of bass guitars, lead and rhythm guitars, as well as keyboards. These instruments played counter melodies that resulted in elaborated harmonies. The bass guitar was used to articulate the bass notes of the chords that accompanied the melodies. This style again was closely related to the adaptation and arrangement discussed in the preceding paragraphs. Whereas the arrangement in adaptation and arrangement was in vocals, in the band, the same style was applied in playing instruments.

Artistically the songs described above were new compared to those in Bukusu traditional contexts. While the creative process involved in making such songs was based on prior and personalised design and writing, then learning and eventually presenting them on stage, in traditional context, except for the lead musician, learning and performance for the larger community were done at the same time. The structure of performance that was directed by a lead performer (conductor) was similarly new, a process which showed a different design of executing the music. Given the focus of the intricate vocal qualities, harmonies and rhythms, the traditional free performance style that involved song, dance, instrumentation and drama was not clearly evident in such scenarios.

Performing songs with the aid of accompanying soundtracks was another trait that is closely related to the concept of the adaptation and arrangement that was evident in vocal as well as ensemble presentations. In the adaptation and arrangement, the performers presented all the musical materials verbally. However, the soundtracks (instrumental formats) replaced the verbal presentations. In essence, a large section of the arrangement of songs was presented as soundtracks while the singers only took up the melody part.

During presentation of music using pre-recorded soundtracks, the musicians on stage lip-synched instead of singing. They therefore resorted to only creative dancing to the recorded music. This presented another distinctive and new artistic dimension that came with the beauty of quality vocal elements being revealed in instrumental colour as the performers mimed. With the new recorded sound, the artistes complemented it by creative dancing, as they mimed in the microphones. Shifting focus to dancing was meant to achieve alternative aesthetics by the performances.

Aesthetic judgment

In Bukusu traditional contexts, critique of performance is the responsibility of all the members present at an event, ritual or ceremony, where the music is performed. This is done before, during, and after performance depending on the situation. Such evaluation is done randomly by the attendees who voice their feelings that are in most cases resolved via social negotiation and consensus. Apart from individuals expressing their opinions, the intensity of dancing, ululating and offering gifts to the musicians also indicate the appeal of the music. Therefore, they are used to evaluate different dimensions of performance.

In competitive festivals, adjudication, which involves assessment, awarding marks and ranking of performances is done by selected people specifically appointed based on their musical knowledge, practice, experience and training. Inasmuch as other members of the audience may have opinions concerning how they appreciate performances, their desires and input are not considered. The audience only clap at the end of the performance.

Awarding marks and ranking of performances in this case was a new dimension that was not practised in the Bukusu traditional contexts. Notably, evaluation of the performances in competitive festivals was only done by two adjudicators. This is in contrast to performances in historical contexts where all members present participated in a number of ways as discussed in previous paragraphs. While in the traditional setting all members of the community possessed working knowledge of how musical performances were supposed to be

rendered, in the KMF such information seemed unique to few people who were employed as adjudicators.

With regard to the audience clapping at the end, I was not sure to what extent such reflected the worth of a performance. It is possible that due to the influence from certain cultures, the audience clapped because it is customary to do so at the end of every performance, but not necessarily based on artistic merit. The applause that always happened at the end of the presentation in essence meant that during performance, the evaluative practice was either passive or missing among members of the audience. If it was active, then it was not voiced out.

This is also unlike in historical contexts where evaluation and results of the same were manifested before, during and even after the performance. On one hand, the communal active-participant-nature exhibited in the historical contexts enabled the attendees to deliver their judgement at any time of the performance. On the other hand, the individualized scenario in the relocated context necessitated for judgement to be passed only after performance.

As described in the previous chapter regarding what was considered in adjudication of folk music, evaluation at KMF was similarly based on rubrics. As noted, some of the adjudicators did not understand Bukusu language. Therefore, they depended on rubrics and their knowledge about music of the community. While rubrics were the basis for musical evaluation in this festival, the Bukusu historical contexts were informed by indigenous knowledge systems that were learnt and internalized over time. Such IKS facilitated members of the Bukusu community to not only appreciate the sonic aspects of the music, but also the ideologies behind why, who and how it ought to have been rendered. In essence, attendees in the historical contexts were more in touch with the music and its knowledge systems that they could relate with it in body, spirit and mind, what seemingly was inadequate in the relocated contexts (the case of KMF). More so, adjudication mainly regarding sonic and a few aspects of cultural allusions as pertains to the philosophy of Bukusu music, left a lot to be desired.

From the preceding discussions, we can conclude that aesthetic judgement was new and exhibited minimal dimensions that were typical of the Bukusu historical contexts. This is because it was based on formal training, experience, practice and was guided by rubrics as manifested in KMF. While evaluation was done in both contexts, there were remarkable

differences in the processes and results. The evaluation at the festivals emerged as a new concept compared to evaluation in the historical contexts.

The aesthetic judgment in the competitive festivals that is based on rubrics of interrogating sound materials may be regarded as 'surface gloss' that did not attend especially to the IKS embodied in the music. It lacked the Bukusu spirit in the music, which can only be achieved when one understands the language, knowledge systems, cultural practices and the philosophy behind such performance, where appreciating the music is not via the ears and eyes only, but the body and spirit as well. Notably, it enhanced the concept of individuality as opposed to communalism typical of the Bukusu philosophy.

Sexualizing art

Relocated contexts also showed a new way of making music to appeal to their audience by use of sexual overtures. This was seen in the way especially the female specialized dancers dressed (costumes) and the type of movements that were employed. In most cases the dancers who accompanied the bands were scantily-dressed, as they put on small pieces of cloth to cover their chests and waists. The little cover was also tight enough to reveal considerable physical detail of the dancers.

With regard to dancing, they mostly emphasized the waist, what would be likened to what was called *Bukhwana* among the Bukusu. Seemingly, this style of expression was the fashion that endeared to the current society. As shown in Plate 27, the positive reaction accorded to the dancers confirmed that it was appreciated in performance, a sentiment that was confirmed by the attendees. The style appealed most to the audience when executed with a male dancing behind the female's posterior (locally referred to as 'bend over' dance).

The above description maybe construed as sexualizing of art. This is a new artistic expression because music performance practice among Babukusu decried such tendencies, except in Bukhwana, because of morality. It is underscored that in the Bukusu community dance was only permissible above the waist. Dance below the waist was regarded as 'bad manners' (social misdemeanour), except in the case of the dance to cleanse twins. This dance was performed on special occasions by few selected people.

More so, art and beauty were embedded in the daily activities and the lives of Babukusu. Their life is indeed art. That is why issues such as good manners or character were part of their value system and were supposed to characterize and be revealed in their music making.

Notably, rogue musicians were never positively received and, therefore, their music regarded as inappropriate and unaesthetic. As discussed earlier, a woman was married based on her moral uprightness but not necessarily her physical beauty. Morality in music making was thus a fundamental part of the aesthetic attitudes of the Bukusu people.

The use of revealing costumes and gesturing or making sexually explicit movements could be interpreted as sexualizing of performing art. If such happened, it deprived the music performance the morality that was supposed to largely account for its aesthetic value. Conversely, in the relocated contexts, the changed value system opened up space for performers to showcase attributes that were not permissible in historical contexts.

The preceding discussion is similar to Mans (2005) position on recontextualization and the impact of changing environments to performances. The performance and acceptability of sexually suggestive dance movements as was witnessed in the relocated contexts is an indicator of changed value systems and aesthetics. This necessitated for a dynamic system of thinking, choosing, disregarding and creating. To this end, the aesthetic value of the music was not entirely dependent on the moral merits of the performance. This stand is advocated for by moderate moralism (Schellekens, 2007). Consequently, what would be seen as moral flaws in the situations succeeded in being accepted as aesthetic virtues.

9

New Meaning of Music

We have seen how music performance aesthetics in both historical and contemporary traditions were appreciated. The meaning of Bukusu music is largely a consequence or is influenced by its aesthetics. This chapter discusses the new meaning of Bukusu music, given the changing social circumstances and contexts. The aim is to demonstrate the relevance of the music when performed in new contexts beyond the historical, largely ritual-based contexts. Of importance is the reciprocal effect of the meaning on the manifestation of aesthetics.

Organology

Instruments from Bukusu community are characterized by certain organological features, which are culturally conceived and determined to achieve musical and selected non-musical roles. Over time, selected organological preferences have been modified to meet demands of the current society. One such instrument that was structurally altered is the *Litungu,* which historically has seven (7) strings. Plate 26 shows two *Litungu,* one with seven (7) and the other with nine (9) strings. The one with nine (9) strings has more tonal ability. It is therefore plays diverse melodies, not just those of the Bukusu community. This broadened the appeal of the *Litungu* to a more multicultural audience.

In terms of the resonator, the 9-string *Litungu* is covered with plywood instead of animal skin, as it is with the historical one. The use of animal skin on the traditional *Litungu* requires that it be exposed to warm conditions for the membrane to stretch in order to achieve proper tuning and amplification. Adapting to the use of plywood in place of animal skin implies that in case of cold weather, the instrument can be played without the need to warm the membrane.

Relating to acoustics, the plywood-covered resonator produces a sharper sound compared to the animal skin one, which acts on the same principle as the vibration of a drum. More so, in cases of environments that require higher volume, the plywood-resonated *Litungu* can easily be amplified using a pick-up via public address system, a concept that is widely used on guitar playing. In terms of outward look, the *Litungu* with the plywood resonator is painted with different colours hence enhancing its external appearance.

Apart from the *Litungu*, *Siilili* also showed considerable organological modification. Plate 17 shows a 2-string *Siilili*, which was described as the prior organology of the fiddle. Plate 12 shows a 1-string *Siilili* as a departure from the previous 2-string one. Whereas the 2-string one was tuned in a male range, while the 1-string one was tuned in a treble range. The ease of manipulation of the 1-string *Siilili* appropriated it to easily function in ensemble with foreign instruments. This makes it preferred in the current performance scenes than the 2-string one.

Organological shift was also realized in drums. Whereas plate 19 shows a plastic jerry can as an improvised drum, it was also found in other performance scenes as shown in clip *Vc.16.* Seemingly, the plastic jerry can is gradually being incorporated as an option for a drum.

The preceding description of how *Litungu, Siilili* and *Eng'oma* were modified demonstrates their ability to remain functional despite varied weather conditions; their expanded tonal ability, and newer and louder sound. The capacity for these instruments as material culture to lend themselves to such modifications reveals how organologically new meaning is being created in the wake of changing social circumstances. The modifications have made the instruments more functional and relevant outside the Bukusu community, hence adapting to new times.

Whereas the focus is on organological dynamism, such changes equally affect the aesthetics of Bukusu music. Aesthetics are for instance altered with regard to sound quality of the *Litungu*, its expanded tonal ability and the general outward appearance. Consequently, generation of meaning in this sense has an impact on the resultant aesthetic manifestation of the instrument and its music.

In essence, whereas traditionally animal skins, hand curved wood, sisal string, tree backs and animal tendons were used to make instruments, the current society is making use of industrial products such as plastics, manilla wires, cloth and plywood. Such revelation is a confirmation that people appreciate, appraise and make their musical universe based on environmental, historical, social influences among other factors.

Thematic, textual and linguistic dynamism
An interesting characteristic of Bukusu music is how it dynamically adapts to changing times in the current society as demonstrated in song themes. Excerpt 4 for instance presents a song based on how change of political allegiance is likened to the false love of a foster mother. While this was a song that may have been significant when polygamy was widely practiced

among Babukusu, it achieved relevance by adapting it to the face of current party politics in Kenya. In this case, the song was appropriated by making it achieve an alternative thematic dimension hence new meaning based on current issues.

The previous chapter also cited a session at *Samba* restaurant in Nairobi, a place where Bukusu music was played every Wednesday night. On the night I visited the restaurant, one song titled *Bindu bichenjanga* drew most patrons to the dance floor. For the few who remained seated, they participated by singing along. The song meant that 'things do change'. The word *bichenjanga,* was adapted from 'change' in English to phonetically sound as *chenja* in Bukusu.

The title of the song was in tandem with the political ideology (*mambo yabadilika* – things change or have changed) of the then main opposition political coalition in Kenya. This song thrilled the patrons at Samba restaurant because it was not only entertaining, but also affirmed the political ideology that majority of the patrons in attendance subscribed to. The theme of this song further demonstrates how the content of Bukusu music is dynamic to the effect that it consistently achieves new meaning especially with regard to pertinent and current issues.

Apart from making use of current issues as themes for their songs, musicians also go beyond the use of Bukusu as the lone language of expression in their performances. This was true in Excerpt 10, which is in Kiswahili (the national language of Kenya), yet performed on *Litungu.* In another instance, Excerpt 9 showed that the song *Mulongo* made use of not only Bukusu words, but also those from the other Luhya sub-nations. The use of other languages (apart from Bukusu) meant that the songs were understood by a diversified audience. The ability of Bukusu musicians to make use of other languages implies that it can survive relevance when presented to a diversified and heterogeneous audience. Such proliferation of the language use in Bukusu music breaks lingual boundaries to facilitate generation of new meaning, which makes the music appeal and be relevant to the integrated multicultural society.

This discussion concerning thematic relevance and use of language demonstrate how Bukusu music achieves new meaning, which renders it appropriate to the changing times. It can be argued that such meaningfulness especially in the current society, also subjects Bukusu music

to further aesthetic appreciation from a diverse population, alongside achieving wider usage. Presumably, acceptance and appreciation of Bukusu music by people from other cultures implies that the music is appropriate, meaningful and aesthetically relevant.

Melo-rhythmic re-invention

Invented by Nzewi (1974), the term melo-rhythmic refers to rhythm that is melodically conceived, but also melody that is rhythmically born. Melo-rhythm in this sense carries with it rhythmic elements and so does rhythm bear melodic attributes. The change of contexts, however, showed a transformation of how the melodies and rhythms of songs were performed. The process of change of the melodies and rhythms for the sake of new meaning in the alternative contexts was in this case regarded as a form of melo-rhythmic re-invention.

Transcripts 8 and 9 for instance present two versions of a song, showing the original and the new one. The two were quite distinct melodically, rhythmically and metrically. Clip *Vc.17* presented another song that largely maintained the song *Maayi muro* the way it is known except for an elongated coda that exhibited a new melody. From the changes shown in the songs that were analysed, such tendency sought to make the songs more danceable hence enhanced entertainment. They also created emphasis points as was in the coda of clip *Vc.17*. Altered melodies also invited newer harmonic tendencies as a way of creating more interest from the listeners. In instances where songs were played in succession, they also maintained similar timelines for the ease of change from one to the other.

The melodic and rhythmic aspects were not entirely intact in the relocated contexts. They were altered in varied ways to appeal to, and meet demands of the new contexts. Such changes were occasioned where an original melody was maintained whereas the words were changed. In some instances, the words were maintained while the melody was altered. In other instances, the melody and words were maintained as the rhythm, meter and time line pattern was transformed.

Expanded musical facets

Performance of Bukusu music in relocated contexts also showed expanded musical abilities that were achieved by the use of foreign instruments as was the case in many enterprise development scenes and cultural nights. In other scenarios, they made use of pre-recorded soundtracks to act as instrumental accompaniment. The use of new instruments (with foreign timbres) not only played the known melodies and harmonies of the Bukusu community, but

also rendered newer sound due to foreign timbres. Apart from the new sounds brought by such instruments, the expanded ensembles also enlarged the texture of the sound. The expanded musical facets were also supported by technological development where public address and sound systems were employed to amplify as well as alter the sound quality. More so, instances where computer generated soundtracks we employed in place of live band players.

With regard to sang music, certain aspects of performance as dance and instrumentation were subdued for the sake of better vocal rendition as was the case of the 'KMF folksong'. The vocal manifestation was influenced by other cultures hence altered to suit certain musical forms like it was in the adaptation and arrangements in the festivals. The new way of ensemble organization and vocal execution could be likened to the changed sounds of the instruments in the preceding paragraph. In essence, Bukusu music was subjected to new sonorities in order for it to appeal to the current contexts. The effort to achieve new meaning in the intrinsic components of music further affirms how Bukusu music sought to socially and sonically achieve relevance within changing times.

10

Socio-cultural Systems

Apart from the musical purpose, performance also fulfils many social obligations and has a significant bearing on the socio-cultural systems of the Bukusu community. Such importance is largely dependent on and determined by contexts in which the music is performed. The existence of new contexts means that the music is subjected to new or alternatively appropriated aesthetics, meaning and functions. While the focus of my research was to ascertain the extent to which AMP and the inherent IKS embodied in the performance were appropriated in new contexts, it was also concerned that misrepresentation of AMP and the fundamental IKS had the potential to not only influence music's social function, but also the cultural and social fabric of the community. It is on the basis of this transformational process I also identified ways in which socio-cultural systems of the Bukusu community were influenced by the new Bukusu music performance contexts.

Social order

The contextual nature of Bukusu music shows that this community was previously organized in certain ways, despite the evidence of recognizable changes. This was especially demonstrated in how music was performed with due respect to contexts of time, gender, age, status, place, ceremony, governing philosophies and behavioural tendencies. Seemingly, whenever music was sounded, it reminded the people of what needed to be done, hence facilitating enforcement of social order as was demonstrated in the respective contexts that were previously discussed. It can, therefore, be contended that a change of such contexts has the potential to influence the institution bestowed on music to affirm social order in the society.

Notably, the existence of new contexts short-changed the social order of the Bukusu community in varied ways. In many relocated contexts for instance, Bukusu music was performed irrespective of when, who, why and how it ought to be performed. A typical case was during the competitive festivals where songs drawn from different rituals were presented in a single performance. More so, songs that were forbidden on certain years and times were performed without due respect to the season. This shows that the role bestowed in the institution of music making to maintain and restore social order in the Bukusu community had in many ways been short-changed. Such effects trickled down to the community where

order also lacked because they no longer have control on how their music is used especially in contexts beyond their jurisdiction. In essence, the music was gradually moving from being regarded as belonging to Babukusu, due to its wider usage in the heterogeneous society. Lack of such order implied that the community was over time gradually losing its social fabric, with music as the ventilator.

Social control

Music performance among Babukusu is also used to offer teachings concerning pertinent issues in the community. Such public education in turn helps to regulate certain mannerisms, which if not tamed before occurrence has a negative impact on the community. Excerpt 6 for instance presented a social satire against a member of the community who married an old man, against the norms of Babukusu. Since it was performed during initiation, a ceremony that marked the change from childhood to adulthood, the song was meant to teach the initiates the need to observe certain social tenets especially pertaining to choices for marriage.

It was also meant to regulate excesses in the social scene where promiscuity would flourish, especially among people of wide age gaps. The song rained shame on the affected persons hence others feared for their character too, to be a theme for public performance. Such a song was, therefore, a social control precept in the Bukusu community in the sense that it discouraged such happenings in future.

The coming of new context poses a challenge to the institution of music/'s role as a social control measure. In discussing the creative process in the relocated contexts for instance, it was underscored how songs were joined to create variation to the effect that the textual development was given minimal attention yet it carried the message in songs. In other instances, the creative process focused on the sonic aspects of the music, as the thematic ones were given marginal consideration.

Again, this compromised the communicative and/or educative character that comes with textual development of songs. The shift of attention regarding the artistry of a song to sonic material at the expense of textual content as was evidenced in new contexts, in many ways denies the music its social control character and role. Given that the songs are currently performed more in the relocated contexts than in the rituals within traditional contexts, the new ones lack sufficient capacity to carry on music's role of being a social control measure, due to the challenge of dealing with the multicultural society.

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Cultural adulteration

Music as a carrier of knowledge systems is essential for cultural prosperity of the Bukusu community. Music performance is a mirror image of the culture, principles and the social fabric of the community. To affirm this, a typical example was captured in the way Bukusu people introduced themselves during performance by citing their clans, which had certain phrases that described historical, cultural, social and economic aspects of the community.

Additionally, when they performed, their physical manifestation demonstrated virtues and values that the community esteemed. For instance, dance was decent and preferred when performed above the waist but not below. Their performance also carried with it philosophical aspects; for instance, the deployment of women to perform in marriage ceremonies given their ability to make peace and create relationships. Performance in the traditional setting made use of the Bukusu language, which was their main identity and the carrier of cultural knowledge and pride of the community.

Performance in relocated contexts, however, makes use of many other languages other than Bukusu. Disputably, such foreign languages are not able to effectively communicate pertinent issues of the Bukusu community such as the clan system, introductory rites, proverbs and other stylistic devices. More so, if certain non-Bukusu words are continuously used, they would with time be assumed to be part of the language. This in essence means gradual dilution of the Bukusu language that by all means is the main identity of the community, a carrier of their knowledge systems and fundamental to creative process of their music. Lack of identity due to diluted language system is in part a form of cultural adulteration. In this case, music is a window to adulteration of language, which by extension affects the larger cultural system.

In summary, the total disregard of the contexts shown in relocated performances short-changes the cultural identities of the Bukusu community. While this community treats features such as morality, ethics, respect and decency with due attention as demonstrated in their musical performance, the relocated contexts tolerate issues such as sexualisation of performing art. It can be concluded that relocated contexts in many ways failed to nurture posterity of fundamental cultural facets of the Bukusu community.

Finale

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Reflections

It is said that 'a long journey starts with a single step'. The originators of this saying, however, never reveal how many steps make or conclude a long journey. This journey ends with three important steps; summative reflection, conclusive remarks and a suggested theoretical framework based on the aesthetic impact or moving music from one context to another.

All human beings seek to achieve, live and associate with what is satisfying, attractive, fulfilling, appealing, meaningful and relevant. The drive to exquisiteness not only entails individuals, but also the people around them, their environment, material things that they use, performing arts that add value to their lives, spiritual beings they associate with and imaginations beyond their earthly ability. Historical, social, religious, economic, environmental among other factors influence and are responsible for a people's desire to exquisiteness, how they perceive, appreciate, appraise and apply values and knowledge within selected mediums.

Apart from individual aspirations and desire to beauty, relevance and satisfaction, collectively a people can possesses, assume, ascribe or assign themselves what they regard as aesthetic through means such as social negotiation. While each individual strives to achieve their own, they also owe allegiance to corporate ones for the sake of societal relevance. Such aspects of what they collectively stand for and believe in ultimately influences and determines identities that characterize respective societies.

The Bukusu community of Western Kenya is a society who collectively possess, ascribe or assume certain principles that exemplify what is good looking, appealing, meaningful and satisfying to them. In their homesteads, they show ways of how to embellish their environment so that it is not only habitable, but also aesthetically revealing. In their daily lives, they adorn themselves in varied ways depending on their gender, age and status as a way of complementing natural human features so that they achieve identities responsible for enhanced beauty.

In their regular duties, they make use of artefacts, works of craft, tools and equipment to make their work easier. But such objects are better appreciated when they are given faces that make them attractive for better deployment in the respective areas of obligation. Notably, aesthetics of such artefacts is further complemented by how they function in given ways. Aesthetics is, therefore, not just seen, felt, or heard but also functional.

The lives of Babukusu are not complete without rituals/ceremonies/occasions that define them as a people, bring to fore their cultural practices and beliefs as well as fellowshipping as a nation, whether in times of happiness or social/political/economic strain. From their own selves, environment, daily livelihood, duties, language, ceremonies/rituals/occasion and the entire cultural fabric, Babukusu strive to achieve what is beautiful, satisfying, relevant, meaningful and valuable. In essence, one can hardly separate aesthetics from the lives of the people; neither can Babukusu isolate themselves from it. Indeed the culture of Babukusu is an art, a thought that is shared by Kimmerle (2009:103) who argues that "in African cultural life, there is no differentiation between art and other areas of life."

Scholars argue that music making is a process and a product of the people and culture that make and/or produce it. Among Babukusu too, music is a fundamental process and artefact that is embodied in their daily, ceremonial, leisure, spiritual lives, and even the animal world. Music is, therefore, a process and product of the culture of Babukusu, which is aesthetic in itself. In their traditional contexts, Babukusu in many ways demonstrate varied features that characterise what they ascribe to as appealing in performance of their music. Such aesthetic principles are found to be largely influenced by the contexts in which music is performed. Musical sound interacts with contexts and content for it to generate meaning, and give it the desired aesthetic substance.

The strive to bring effectiveness to music making has, however, over time been challenged by the evolving world especially in the wake of cultural interaction, education, urbanization and modernity. Such factors have necessitated movement to alternative contexts where Bukusu music is performed. The new contexts are, however, informed by philosophies that are alien to those of the traditional ones. The presentation of Bukusu music in contexts with such foreign ideologies have in many ways had impact on its aesthetic manifestation and relevance. It is on the basis of this transformative agenda that I sought to ascertain the extent to which aesthetics of Bukusu music performance were manifested in the new contexts. Over and above, the misrepresentation of AMP and the inherent IKS as evidenced in the music of

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the Babukusu showed the potential to influence not only its social function but, also, cultural features, what necessitated through a research on AMP and the inherent IKS, to ascertain in what ways the community continued to hold together its social-cultural fabrics.

Given the collaborative nature of Bukusu music, the ethnographic research design which focuses on interactive strategies in human life and analytical descriptions of social scenes and practices, guided by cultural theories, was adopted as the basis for methodology that informed how data was collected, processed and presented. Performance of Bukusu music in relocated contexts showed that its aesthetics were in some instances validated, in others mis/re-interpreted, or otherwise new principles evidenced.

A unique revelation though, was how Bukusu music generated new meaning that was largely dictated by the changing social demands. Creation of new meaning facilitated continued relevance of the music in varied contexts beyond their initial pre-dominantly ritual-based ones. Given that music among Babukusu is a fundamental component that is necessary for the proper functioning of the community, its presentation to new contexts had varied effects on the social fabric of the people. Notably, social order, cohesion, control and sustenance of cultural features of the community have in many ways been altered to conform to evolving societal circumstances.

Aesthetics experience

The aesthetics of Bukusu music performance is primarily achieved through interaction and relationships of different artistic facets. Given its interactive nature it is conjectured that aesthetics of Bukusu music is largely a process and an experience. While individual facets are recognized and appreciated, they are not complete and/or meaningful until a relationship with other/s is created. Such relationships enhance coherence of meaning, which influences and facilitates aesthetic manifestation.

The foregoing position is supported by the revelation that hardly is any artistic facet performed in isolation but in communion with others. That is, dance, song, instrumentation, drama, panegyrics and visual arts, all combined to achieve a meaningful discourse. It is important to note that the integration of all these facets is not done by mere dumping together of what is easily available. It is informed by knowledge systems that show systematic thought, choice, isolation and creation of what, how and when they are employed for a

culturally revealing and meaningful artistic discourse to be achieved. While such IKS is viewed as the glue (given that it carried the content) to the respective facets employed in performance, it is also found to be an independent one that accounts for aesthetics, but in communion with the others.

Figure 13 below, shows a pictorial illustration of how the different facets interact to form an artistic composite as the 'achieved aesthetic experience' of Bukusu music. I coined the phrase 'achieved aesthetic experience' based on the fact that it is a process but not an end. More so, the music alone may have aesthetic ingredients/factors, but until it is received by the consumers is when it accomplishes its objective. The process of making impact and how it affects the people further qualifies it to be referred to as achieved aesthetic experience. Importantly, the interaction of artistic facets positioned the aesthetic experience into a covert position, which implies that one needs a process too, to locate it. Its creation, perception and appreciation are processes towards its realization, hence the assertion of it as an 'achieved aesthetic experience'.
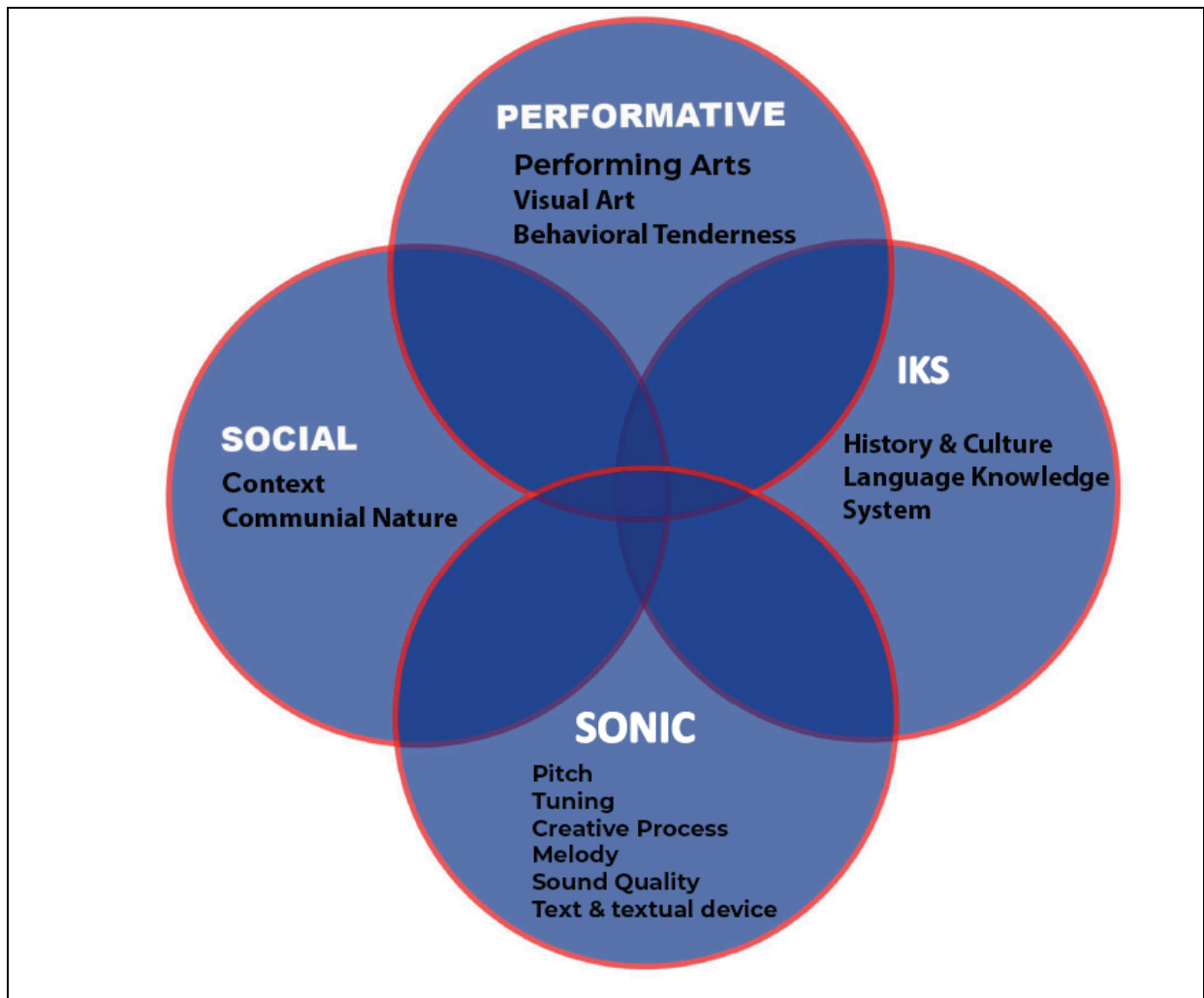
Figure 12: The achieved aesthetic experience[130]

As shown in Figure 15, the achieved aesthetic experience is realized at the point where the four circles merge. This is vested in and a qualification of its composite nature that is realized through a performance process, where, artistic objects/facets, content and functions interact, dialogue and commune within a given social context, informed by the requisite indigenous knowledge systems. The interactive nature of different artistic features leads to the aesthetic experience being covert, a characteristic that further affirms it as achieved. A conscious or unconscious isolation of any of the artistic features would render the performance partially aesthetic or totally un-aesthetic especially to the Bukusu people who know the art based on their shared values and knowledge systems.

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[130] Source: Developed by the researcher based on the study findings.

Aesthetic perception

As philosophy, aesthetics is regarded as a perception of reality. The question of how music performance is perceived is fundamental for it confirms how Babukusu show awareness of existence of their aesthetics, that is, how they appreciate, appraise, apply values and knowledge to their musical universe.

At primary level, perception of music among Babukusu is achieved by hearing (*khuulila*), seeing (*khubona*) as well as tactile (*khukhweulila*) senses. Over and above the three primary levels of perception, is the impact music makes on its consumers. Such impact is qualitatively perceived yet quantitatively (intensity in most cases) manifested as a measure of evaluation. Whereas auditory and sight senses would be easily understood, the tactile one may be unique, hence necessity for a demonstration on how it functions. In an initiation ceremony for instance, the ensemble formation (cyclic) supported by certain character of songs is meant to acoustically impact on all the senses of the initiate/s in a process called *khuminya* (to deafen).

According to Babukusu, deafening during initiation did not only imply impairing the auditory sense, but all other humanly possible ones. In essence, the initiate/s as a performer too, not only hears the music or visually experiences the performance, but feels it with tangible and spiritual senses that necessitate for the deafening process. Yet the process of deafening is accompanied by a learning moment through the songs. In effect the initiate/s surrenders to the circumcision procedure without any form of external distraction, having been deafened, taught, advised and persuaded, a point where they no longer hear, see or feel hence braving the process. Arguably, the initiate/s never feels the pain during circumcision due to the musical seasoning they have undergone.

Tactile perception is further supported by how *Lukalakala* (ululation) impacts on participants. Seemingly, some participants appreciate performance from the comfort of their sitting positions from where they comment, criticize or give moral support. At a point of climax when the ultimate ululation is sounded, such passive participants are awakened into active participation where they also dance and give tips musicians. The hearing and seeing senses were not sufficient until the ululation was sounded to bring selected participants to full realization of the performance potential. Notably, such participants not only dance but they shake in a manner to suggest that they are possessed with unknown spirits. Such reaction further alludes to manifestation of other senses apart from auditory and sight, that is, the tactile ones.

At secondary level, sensibility to aspects of role, function, content, knowledge systems and values are important in seeking for aesthetics of Bukusu music. This is realized for instance when a good song is sung but before the stipulated time. Elders of the community would appreciate the song but decry its wrong time of presentation. In essence, they employ the primary auditory sense to appreciate the sonic aspects of the song, followed by sensibility (at secondary level) on its timing in terms of contextual appropriateness. Beyond sensibility, is the cognitive stage where intuitive evaluation is employed at a tertiary level. At this instance, the primary and secondary are assessed together to result in a full aesthetic perception.

The preceding description of how perception is achieved at different levels relates to Figure 15 concerning interaction of different facets to achieve an aesthetic experience. Whereas the aesthetic experience is a process that results from interaction of varied facets, its perception is hierarchical. That is, at basic level, one can see, hear or develop a sensual feeling. But there is need for sensibility to contexts, content and values, informed by requisite knowledge systems that are ultimately processed in a cognitive stage that results in a full aesthetic perception.

In essence, senses alone are not sufficient to account for a full aesthetic perception, and so are sensibilities. It is at the stage where the two (sense and sensibility) interact cognitively that full aesthetic perception is realized. Figure 14 below demonstrates and summarizes the hierarchy of aesthetic perception as revealed in Bukusu music.
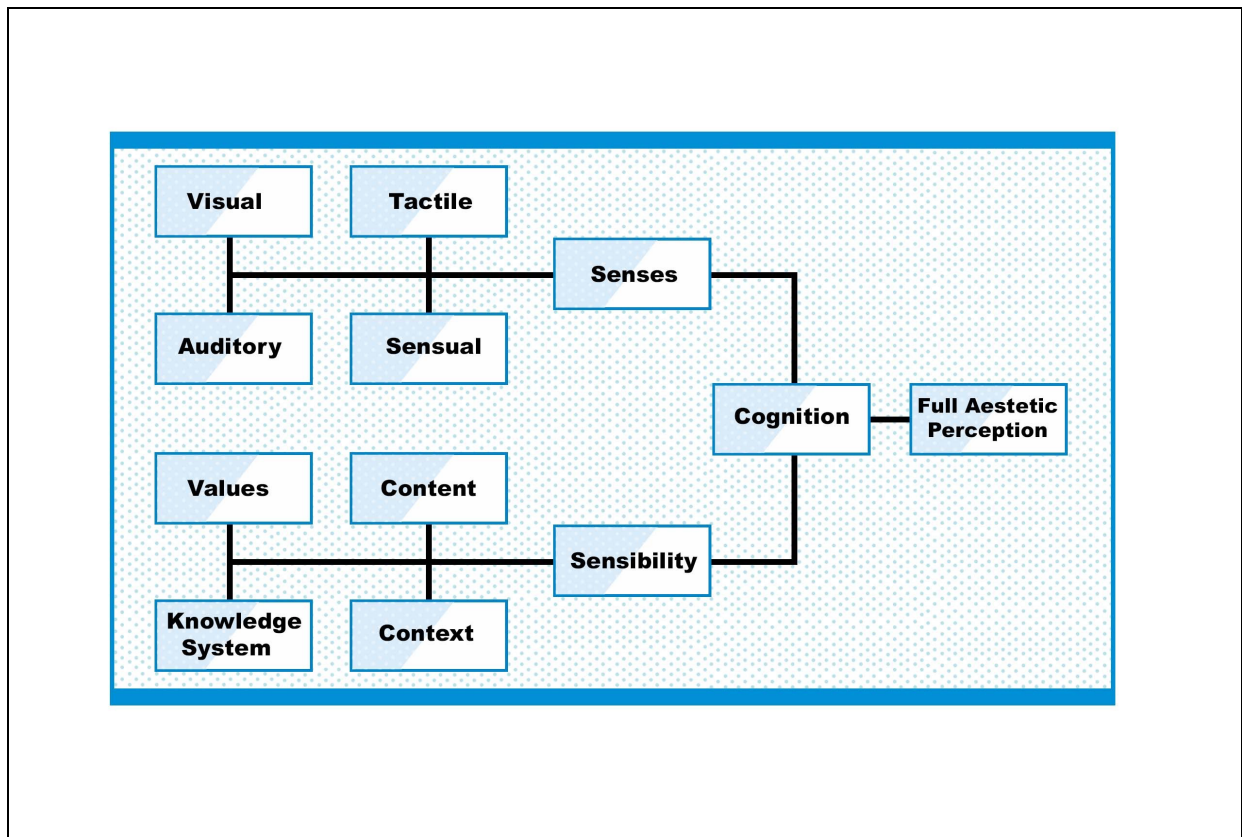
Figure 13: Hierarchy of aesthetic perception[131]

Whereas valuation of performance as a consequence of perception is common in all contexts, there are selected differences in the respective approaches, processes and results. Such not only necessitated for their differentiated description, but a nominal one too. Valuation of Bukusu music in traditional contexts was a form of aesthetic appraisal whereas relocated ones made use of aesthetic-formative (aesthetic one geared towards performative results) appraisal and aesthetic judgment processes. Figure 15 demonstrates features of the three processes of valuing performance in varied contexts.

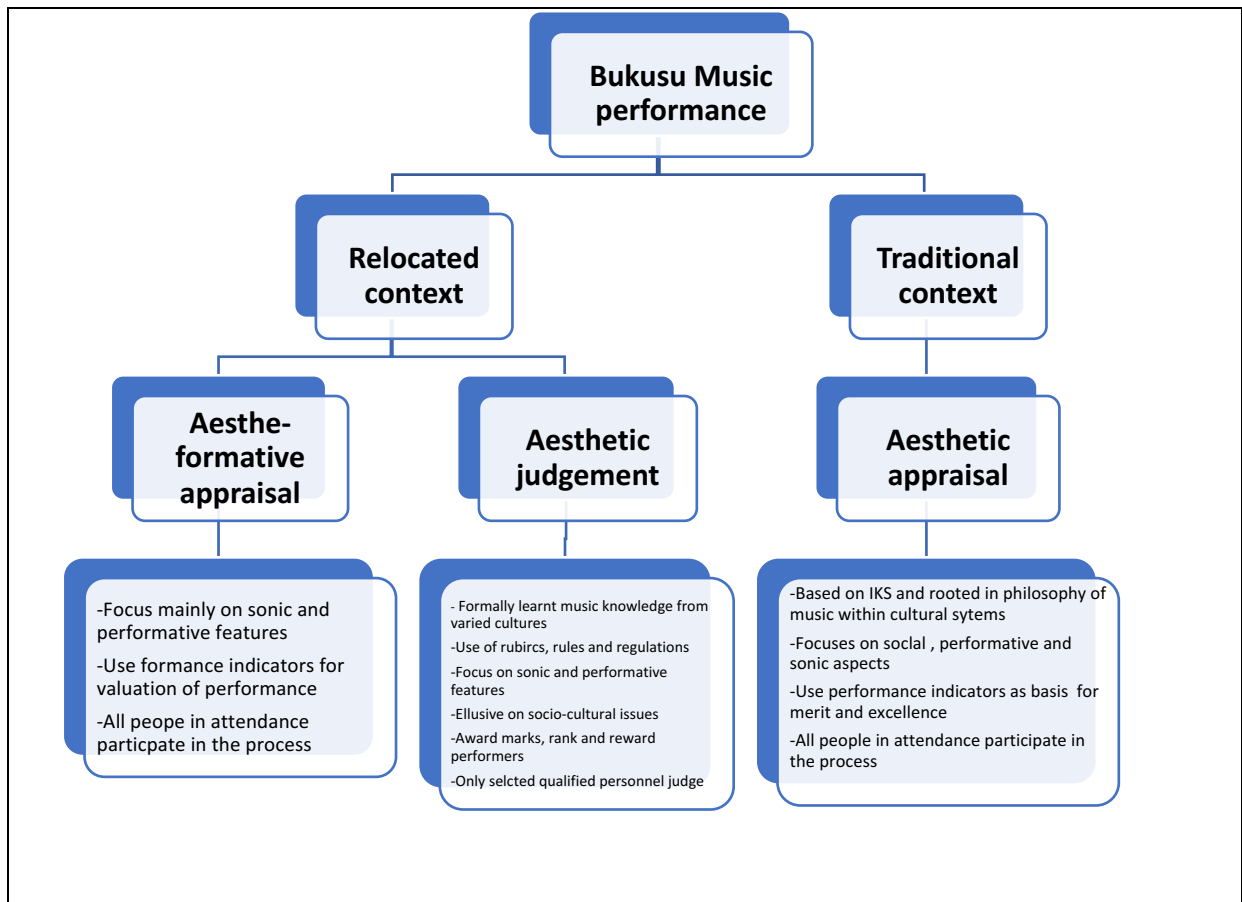[131] Source: Developed by the researcher based on the study findings.

Figure 14: Valuing performance in varied contexts[132]

Aesthetic philosophy

Aesthetics of Bukusu music performance is based on principles concerning contextualism, communalism, sonic character, creative process, indigenous knowledge systems, morality, appraisal and composite nature. These principles are not unique to music making, but also fundamental to the daily life and other activities of Babukusu. A unique feature of all the principles is that they acquire their desired meaning mainly during a creative process, without which, lack of, or multiple interpretations and denotations may arise. The creative process may thus be viewed as the core of expression of their values that is responsible for aesthetic attitudes. In essence, all knowledge systems, artistic objects, principles and processes are only meaningful when practically manifested in a creative process, which is hardly isolated to a single entity.

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[132] Developed by the researcher based on the study findings.

Incorporation, interaction and communion of more than one person, institutions, artistic objects or procedures make the creative process achieve more effectiveness. Such a creative process is further meaningful when its procedures and parties involved are alternatively re-deployed with a sense of variation, renewal and, ultimately resignification. In essence the face of an object or process is not an end to itself but a means to revealing other attributes beneath and beyond its basic appearance especially when alternatively re-deployed in a creative process. The preceding argument affirms that face-value is not an end to the ultimate aesthetic of an artistic production.

The creative process in its situational metamorphosis brings a sense of multi-utility of institutions, objects, practices, procedures, artistic facets and artefacts of Babukusu. Ultimately, such a creative process serves particular functions, whether assumed, achieved or ascribed. The creative process in which alternative redeployment and resignification makes it relevant in varied and specific situations is the core of music performance, an ideology that permeates many aspects of Bukusu life.

Such creative process is, however, not complete until its proceeds serve a utilitarian end. In which case, function is an end that is achieved, assumed or ascribed from respective situational creative processes. The creative process is core, contextually qualified and a means to achieving utility of artistic processes, without which it is rendered un-aesthetic. The aesthetics of Bukusu music is, therefore, vested in its situational creative process that ultimately serves a utilitarian purpose.

Contextual relevance

Aesthetics of Bukusu music performance is largely affected, influenced and determined by the context in which it is presented. Music made for a given context is tailored to suit, function and be aesthetically relevant to its specific situations. A change in the context in which such music is supposed to be performed leads to mis/re-interpretation or creation of new aesthetic principles for it to be relevant to the new situations. There are minimal chances that change of context entirely affirms or validates the initial aesthetic substance of the music. There is apparent need, therefore, for adaptation to the new situations given that in most cases they are based on philosophies that are foreign to the initial intention of the music. To this end, the music has to respectively adjust to fit into the new ideology for it to survive and achieve the requisite relevance in the new contexts.

To broaden the significance of context, it is affirmative that varied situations are informed, governed and characterized by respective philosophies. Such ideologies inform, influence and determine the mode of presentation of Bukusu music. The mode of presentation entails how the music is staged, for whatever reason, who performs it, and how levels of effectiveness and excellence are achieved. It is also noteworthy that such philosophies are culturally-based and determined, where they in many ways represent the Bukusu people's *modus operandi*, their knowledge and belief systems, and founded on certain historical facts that typify the locus of the Bukusu community. A change in performance context, therefore, entails a systematic paradigm shift that carries with it a considerable part of the social-cultural fabric of Babukusu, which potentially influences the artistic and aesthetic relevance of their musical performance.

With regard to performance, it is affirmed that the change of contexts comes with choosing and discarding of some features that combine to form a new aesthetic experience. Consequently, whereas the composite nature of performance as an aesthetic is re-affirmed in the relocated contexts, remarkable changes are noted as a result of exclusion of the social and IKS features. With reference to Figure 16, the aesthetic experience of Bukusu music in new contexts exhibits the composite nature, but lacking two important features (social and indigenous knowledge systems). The sound and performative aspects in such situations are altered in various ways as illustrated in Figure 16 as follows;
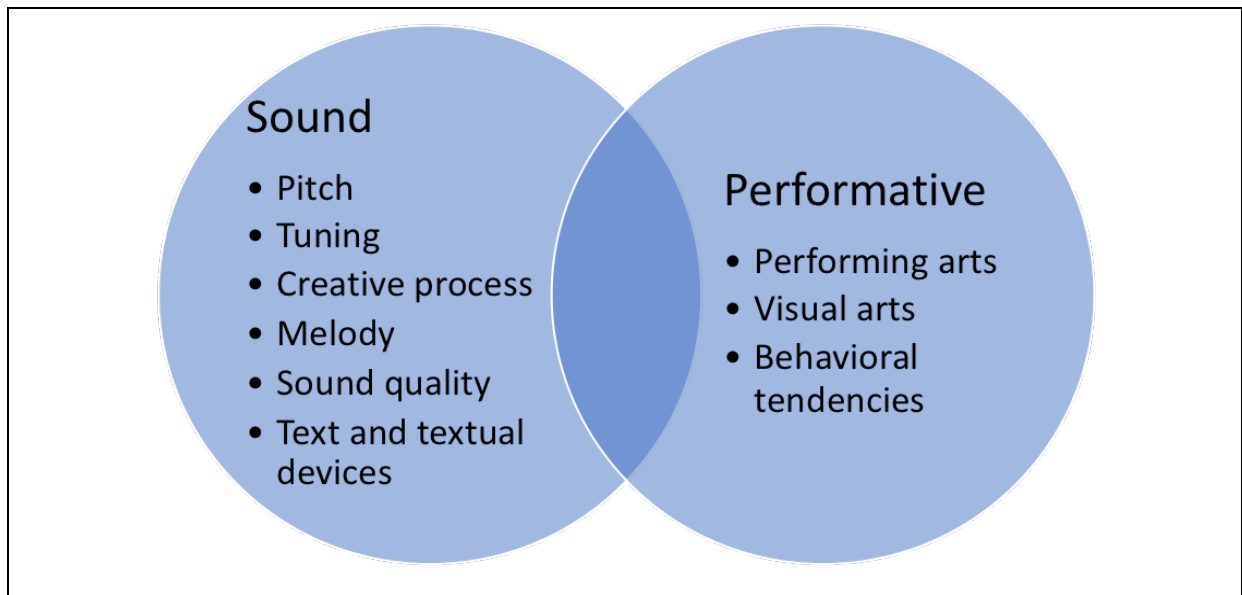
Figure 15: Relocated aesthetic experience[133]

Figure 16 above shows a shift in the nucleus of the aesthetic experience where a thinner set of facets form the composite in relocated contexts. The slimmer objects to work with leads to newer approaches to be sought for the sake of achieving relevance, hence re/mis-interpretation or generation of totally new aesthetic dimensions. New aesthetics are, therefore, based on how the sonic and performative aspects achieved uniformity, precision, cohesion, systematisation, patterning, synchrony, congruence, form and structure as basis for artistry. To achieve the above attributes, the relocated contexts employ talented participants who learn, extensively rehearse and work towards absolute perfection of skills and reproduction of learnt and internalized concepts without addition or editing during performance. The process of prior learning, internalization and reproduction of the above features leads to what is regarded as performance with a fixed creative process as a move away from the traditional dynamic creative process.

Towards object-oriented aesthetics

Interrogation of the aesthetic manifestation of Bukusu music revealed that the relocation of music from its initial traditional, social and ritual-based contexts, indicated a systematic shift from music as intangible cultural heritage to object-oriented artistry. Pinto (2018: 49) defines ICH as;

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[133] Source: Developed by researcher based on the study findings.

"Both living practice and at the same time tradition, a form of knowledge which is made real and brought to life by creative actions that spring from human, spiritual and intellectual actions – speech, performance, handwork, theatre, dance, ritual, marriage customs, festivals and so on."

Pinto (2018:50) further lists the ICH categories as per the 2003 UNESCO convention as;

"1. Oral traditions, 2. Performing arts, 3. Customs and usages of human society, (including rituals, festivals etc.) 4. Knowledge and practice focusing on the universe and 5. Special knowledge in the field of traditional handwork techniques."

Music in traditional contexts of Babukusu resonates with the above definition, and fits in the intangible cultural heritage. This is true in the way it is organized as a social event, part of the daily activities and life of the people, passed on orally and aurally, is spiritual and manifested in their intellectual actions. Moreover, music is an oral tradition, a performing art, employed in and part of rituals, is practiced and makes use of indigenous knowledge systems.

Moving music from these initial contexts indicated a shift from this regard (as ICH) in a number of ways. Notably, the music is no longer part of the daily lives of the people, but secured for special occasions like music festivals, cultural nights and revivals and entrepreneurial ventures. Within these occasions, the music is mostly offered as a commodity for people to buy (enterprise), for exhibition or a tool for competition. Whereas it is supposed to be part of the people, in the alternative contexts the music is accessed to remind them of their culture, as was realized in the cultural exhibitions. In traditional contexts, music is used and part of rituals, whereas in relocated ones, the rituals are excluded as the sonic and performative features are presented.

This position is further demonstrated in Figure 18 above, where the composite was thinned down to sonic and performative facets only. The importance of IKS and contexts has been removed from the musical practice. In terms of perception, such a composite would entail sight and auditory senses only. Other aspects of perception that typify music as ICH, demonstrated in Figures 15 and 16 lack a place in this scenario. It is also apparent that in the new contexts, (for example KMF) music is notated to the effect that its presentation is restricted to the performance directions within the music scores.

In this sense, the music has been objectified as opposed to it being a living heritage embodied in their social environments, manifested and passed on orally. By putting it on paper, the music is made tangible, that also belongs to one person (the composer or arranger). This

further reduces the music from being a societal ingredient and component, which inasmuch as it is conceived by one person as the composer or arranger, it is practiced by the rest who also contribute to composition to make it communal.

Other performers present such compositions contextually as they add in their own genius to make it more society oriented. Notating and appending a name to the music makes it a personal object, a further qualification of the deduction that music in relocated contexts are systematically moving towards being object-oriented.

Towards a theory

Relocation of music from context to another affects respective intrinsic and extrinsic features that characterize what leads to its artistic effectiveness. In reference to Bukusu music performance, the intrinsic features entail sound materials, style, form and song texts. The extrinsic ones involve social aspects that inform and dictate how the music is performed coupled with indigenous knowledge systems. It follows that change of context typically affects social aspects of performance.

In most cases, social qualities entail conformity to procedures which lead to acceptability, relevance, goodness and equilibrium. Whereas the social qualities would be largely affected, the multi-factorial nature of Bukusu music allows for the other components of the composite to survive selected aesthetic relevance.

By and large, when social aspects of a performance are compromised, the ears, soul and spirit of the people who know and/or assume ownership of the music are diverted from its intrinsic components. This renders the music to substantially lack in terms of aesthetic significance as well as its resultant meaning. To the outsider, however, social factors may not make sense; neither are they a consideration. That is why the intrinsic components would still be substantially meaningful irrespective of the context in which they are presented. Contextual irrelevance in this sense is the lack of sensibilities, where, whereas music may be worthy, when performed out of context the goodness is shifted.

While music makes sense and is aesthetically relevant based on where it is performed, by who, when and informed by certain ideologies, a relocation of such contextual features does not completely render it aesthetically and/or meaningfully deficient. Breaking contextual barriers gives opportunity for respective music to be subjected to renewal of meaning and so would be the resultant aesthetic appeal and relevance. The ability of art to adaptively lend

itself to new situations facilitates editing, addition, mis/re-interpretation or creation of new aesthetic principles as well as the resultant meaning.

Additionally, the transformational character of art which enables it to continually create new meaning despite changing social circumstances leads to renewed beauty within varied contexts. In essence, when an artistic facet is presented in a context beyond its original purpose, its aesthetic significance and resultant meaning is not completely lost. It lends itself with adaptation to the new circumstances of the relocated environment to be manifested with validation, mis/re-interpretation or otherwise creation of a new aesthetic dimension for the sake of relevance in the relocated context.

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APPENDIX I: BUNGOMA COUNTY ON THE MAP OF KENYA

Source: http://www.ambulancegateway.org/tgt_kenya.shtml

APPENDIX II: RESEARCH ASSISTANTS' BIO DATA

The field research that led to this publication was a success partly due to the support I received from my research assistants, Mariano Gonzalez, Esther Kiromo, Anderson Merkleine, Fred Kituyi, Enock Wasilwa, Bryan Menya and Joakim Omwega Oketch. I can never thank you enough for having coordinated my field study in different areas that I would not have been able to access. I am grateful for having helped me to take photographs, make recordings, illustrations and provided necessary material that I needed for my fieldwork. I hereby, provide a brief bio data of these people as an appreciation for their work.

Mariano Gonzalez

Born in San Paolo, Brazil, Mariano is a musicologist currently undertaking his Doctoral studies at the Utrecht University, Netherlands. During my fieldwork, he was studying M.A. at the University of Music Franz Liszt Weimar. Besides his musicological knowledge, Mariano is a talented photographer who played a major role in taking photos and recording videos during my fieldwork.

Anderson Merklein is an M.A. graduate of the University of Music Franz Liszt Weimar. Besides his vast knowledge in musicology and a trumpet player, Anderson is talented in field techniques, especially dealing with recording machines. He was fundamental in making audio, video and photo recording during my fieldwork.

Esther Gakenia

Having trained in business management, she specializes in travel industry and is a fan of choral music. Her vast knowledge of the travel industry has taken her to many important places, especially tourist attraction sites. She played an important role in identifying festival venues, as well as enterprising development and cultural centres that were essential for data collection with regard to relocated contexts.

Fred Kituyi is a seasoned music teacher, currently the deputy head teacher at Wacholi primary school, in Bungoma South Sub-county. Besides school, he is a trainer of Catholic Church choirs, currently based at St. Leo Kimwanga Parish, the Catholic Diocese of Bungoma. Having taught many, he has the knowledge of where many of his former pupils were playing their music. He helped me to identify possible respondents from the *Litungu* bands as well as church musicians. His musical knowledge was similarly handy in explaining many concepts that the musicians shared with me.

Enock Wasilwa

A former employee of Mumias sugar company, is currently a farmer at Naitiri location. His successful farming techniques attracts many people from this region to visit his farm for learning purposes. His home was a monument of hope in accessing possible informants. Courtesy of his good rapport with the people, he was also able to lead me to many other homes where I met possible informants.

Joakim Omwega Oketch

One of my students at the Technical University of Kenya, Joakim is an all rounded artist/e. He is a tenor singer, accomplished dancer and actor and can draw with utmost ease and precision. For the artefacts that I did not find in the field, I described them to him and was able to make illustrations as pictorial representations.

Bryan Menya

I call him "*mfaransa*"! He is a talented dramatist and bass singer, attributes that I knew him for, for a long time. It was a surprise to me when one day I realized that he is a trained French language teacher and to my dismay I always doubt this by calling him "*mfaransa*", a Kiswahili term for a French person. Besides his profession, he performs with Kayamba fiesta band. Besides his band, he helped me to access such bands Nairobi county as well many of the relocated contexts that I accessed.

APPENDIX III: GLOSSARY OF BUKUSU TERMINOLOGIES

Bukusu words	English translation
Babana	Children
Babaakanila	'the receivers of a song' (choral response)
Bakhwana	Twins
Bakolongolo	The first of the eight age sets of the Bukusu
Bibiayo	Animals
Bichenje	Jingles/metallic ankle rattle
Bitenga	*Kamabeka* dance emphasized from the head
Bukhana	Instruments
Bukhino	Dance
Bukhwana	A dance performed to cleanse twins
Bulosi	Witchcraft
Busie	Flour
Buulo	Millet
Buyuni	Curled hair
Chieyi	Oxen
Chikhafu	Cattle
Chikhendu	Raffia reeds
Chimbi	Clapping
Chimbusi	Goats
Chindekwe	Metallic bangles worn on the ankles
Chindulienge	Reeds played by young boys
Chinduyu	Rabbits
Ching'oma	Drums
Chingacho	Comic language
Chingo	Homesteads
Chingokho	Chicken
Chinyenyi	Vegetables
Chinyimba	Ankle bells played by initiates
Chinyimbo/kimienya	Songs
Chinyinja	Dress made of strips of skin
Chisasi	Shakers made from gourds
Chisia	Strings
Chisimbi	Beads
Chisimo	Proverbs
Chiswa	White Termites
Ebukhocha	Maternal uncle's place
Ebula	Opening created as a result of removal of two lower front teeth
Efumbo	Goblet shaped drum with one end open
Ekholo	Clan

Ekhombi	Short horn made from Animal horns
Ekofio	Cap
Ekutusi	Flowing royal animal skin clothing
Eluchi	At the river
Embanya	Natural opening in the upper front teeth
Embechelo	Carving tool
Emotia	Big baskets for carrying food
Endoli	Small hand drum
Endwitwi	Friction drum
Eng'ilisi	Big animal skin dress worn by the rich people
Eng'oma	Drum
Engubo emboela	Dress made from animal skin and tied from the waist
Esungura/Embako	Mouldboard plough
Kamabeka	Shoulders… a dance where shoulders are shaken
Kamachanjasi	Hoarse voice
Kamachweno	Metallic sheets used to make skirt dress for girls
Kamaemba	Sorghum
Kamafundikho	Tuning knobs
Kamaindi/Nasimia	Maize
Kamakhese	Sheep
Kamapwoni	Sweet potatoes
Kamasika	Funeral
Kamausi	Doves
Khanyelele	Thin voice
Khubiita	Giving a way forward
Khubona	To see
Khuchangalala	Boring
Khuchelela	A clear captivating voice
Khuchukhila	Ceremony done three days to circumcision
Khuchuuba	Challenging and encouraging
Khukalakasia	To ululate
Khukambila	Advising
Khukhalaka kumwenya	To end the song
Khukhalanya	Forceful voice
Khukhwakanila	'To receive a song' (song response)
Khukhwimba	Singing
Khukobia chilomo	Stylistic
Khukubukha	Dancing with vigour
Khulanga (calling)	During circumcision means inviting relatives
Khuminya	Singing during circumcision
Khuolelesia	Soothing
Khuramo kumwenya	To start a song

Khuremaka	Uprooting sweet potato plantation
Khuroma	Creatively gathering words for a song
Khusia	Grinding
Khusinyila	Stamping feet
Khusomia	Educating
Khusuna singorio	Stylized leaps
Khuswala kumuse	Stepping on the arena
Khutondobana	Losing track
Khucha	Going
Khukhweulila	To feel
Khuulila	To hear
Kimilimo	Work
Kiminayi	Riddles
Kimioko	Cassava
Kimikabo	Talents
Kimisilo	Taboos
Kumuchenje	A musical style marked with swing effect
Kumufunje	Bridge made from sisal ropes
Kumukongo	Back… *Kamabeka* dance emphasized from the back
Kumulele	Flute from the Bukusu Community
Kumumilo	Pitch, sound
Kumunulu	Sweet song
Kumusa	Tool used to harvest potatoes
Kumuse	Arena
Kumutoba	Ochre
Kumwanjo	Wooden rattle played for termite harvesting
Kumwolo	Machete
Lichabe	Royal ivory bangle
Likutu	Dress made from animal skin
Lilomaloma (talk)	It talks (in this case referring to the *Litungu*)
Litungu lie bakhasi	Lyre for women
Litungu	Seven-string lyre of the Bukusu community
Lubeko lutama	Knife blade used for shaving
Luengele	Rattle struck by two sticks
Lufufu	Species of a tree used to wake the dead
Lukalakala	Ululation
Lukano	Folk tale
Lukoba	Stockade covering many homesteads
Lukulu	Mountain
Lulwika	Long horn made from Animal horns
Lulwoki	Sharp, in this case a sharp voice
Lususi	Grinding stone

Luswa	Gross misdemeanour
Maayi muro	Step-mother
Maayi	Mum
Mubukhino	Dance hall
Mulembe	Peace
Mumbo	West
Nabwebwe/Nalulingo/Omuyoti	Researcher
Obilo	Elderly and reputable age
Omuchelesi	Lead singer in marriage ceremony
Omukasa	Administrative leader
Omukhupetungu	*Litungu* player
Omukhupi	Player of an instrument
Omulai	Lead singer in social gatherings
Omusena/oswala muse	Reconciler
Omuyinda	Rich person
Omwami	Royal leader
Omwimbi	Lead singer, soloist or singer
Owang'i	The crane (a bird)
Owe sioyo	Lead singer in circumcision ceremony
Owimelela kimienya	Person who leads a song (soloist)
Sifwototo	Round and hollowed blown instrument
Siilili	Two-string fiddle of the Bukusu community
Sikanda	A stack
Sikhebo	Circumcision ceremony
Sinanda sikhwesa	Accordion
Sioyayo	Designate song, sang when initiates escorted home for circumcision procedure
Siselelo	Courtship
Sisiaki	Granary
Sisialukho	Graduating from seclusion, after circumcision
Sisingilo	Circumcision age set
Situkhu	Quiver
Siyula	Fibre dress
Tindikiti	Expression of inner joy
Walubende	Earth bow, made from a tin
Wele	God