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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTECEDENTS OF KALAMBYA BOYS AND SISTERS KAMBA POPULAR BAND

By

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores creation of popular music in Kalambya band as symbolic resource to reveal attributes related to the making of identity. Popular music in Ukambani society is a useful unit of analysis that can explain how people respond to cultural change and can tell us much about cultural values. The origin of identity studied is both historical and social by nature. The main focus of this paper is to explore the socio-cultural functions of the Kalambya songs are used to expand our understanding of both cultural and social realities of the Kamba society in which identity takes place. As such, this advances the argument that popular music as identity is not static and is always in flux. The assumption in this paper is that only through a historical, social, cultural, political and economic context is identity making fully realized. The functions of popular music are expressive behaviors which shape and are shaped by social, cultural, historical and economic experiences. Performance theory was used in examining the cultural antecedents of the songs, Performance theory has been developed as a way of explaining dimensions and significance of performance acts as an integral part of social experience of life. It was established that Kalambya songs that were composed in the late 1970's and the 1980's reflect on what was happening in Ukambani during this period. Kalambya music is seen as a medium through which the Kamba people expressed the contradictions in the society that time.

Key words: *Social, Cultural, Antecedents, Popular music, Identity.*

Introduction

The Akamba Music develops out of everyday social experiences that overtime develop patterns that sustain and are also sustained by specific cultural practices. Out of this is music. Therefore in interpreting musical texts, it becomes necessary to take into account the interplay between the social, cultural and artistic factors involved. Music, an essential aspect of human life has been with us for a very long time. People have drawn inspirational, educational and emotional messages from it. The notion of

music as a reflector of society and a player of varied roles within society has been acknowledged by many musicians, media personnel, and society members themselves. Far from being confined to pure entertainment, the roles that popular music can play in society are powerful, extensive, and varied. Confined neither to entertainer nor commentator, popular music is rather an active, dynamic and complex contributor to the shaping and reshaping of societal culture, and is conversely shaped by that culture (Kavyu 1973).

Barber argues that popular arts in Africa would remain stranded without the aesthetic and maternal visibility conferred on the spheres of “traditional” and the “elite” cultures. She observes that popular forms of expression serve to help people organize and understand the way in which their survival is circumscribed socially, politically and poor government (Barber (1987, 5-7) musical idioms, she writes “can be the locus where an emerging class consciousness a forged “ (1987- 58-59) Barber’s point is not that African popular cultures are socially fluid or positioned outside history but that class unconsciousness is caught up in narratives and art forms, social and political inflection and that the content and genres of popular art forms demonstrates a level of experimentation, playfulness and generic freedom unconstrained by the power relations put in place by “official” sites of bodies.

Popular Culture, so called because of its intimacy with ordinary people, reflects and reflects on everyday life. It does not only mirror popular attitudes and opinions but contributes to shaping these as well. Okome & Haynes (1998; 107) refer to Karin Barber’s piece “Popular Arts in Africa,” in which she summarizes her definition of ‘popular art’ as follows: Popular art can be taken to mean the large class of new unofficial art forms which

are syncretic, concerned with social change and associated with the masses. The centers of activity in this field are the cities, in their pivotal position between the rural hinterland on the one hand and the metropolitan countries on the other (ibid).

Material And methods

The primary data for this study was from the songs (texts), oral testimony of the key informants and Recorded CD’s. We use this data to identify and describe certain social patterns that could be read to inform the music.

Results and Discussions

Social - cultural dynamics

The paper seeks to present the arguments that the Akamba popular music is developed from specific socio-cultural dynamics which must be considered in the interpretation of the music.

Dicky Mulwa, the major informant is one of the most popular Akamba musicians. His music has been influenced not only by the socio-historical forces in his background, but also as a result of family and community expectations. His music can therefore be said to be a response to the social and historical circumstances that the musician finds himself in at any given time. In the African

performance context, *“every musical culture played in community life has a tradition behind it, a tradition which governs its mode of performance, its repertoire... as well as the tradition that governs the context in which it should be played”* (Nketia cited in Asante 2000: 48).. The music can thus be said to be a social commentary on the society and other factors that impact on the musician as a person. Mulwa notes:

“yes, many songs are from life experiences and the sweetest of all songs are from own experience, because they are all real”.

Songs are normally of three categories:

Category one: own experiences of the artists. When someone starts singing, normally he draws from his own experience of the surrounding and of the people. For example my first song to record with boys band was about myself and the environment I came from... *“aai umaskini mbaya ukasyaiwa thinani ukeania thinani, nokesa kukwa uithina”* (trans. *Poverty is so bad, to be born poor, to grow in poverty and die a poor man.*) is a sad melody from my own experience. My father had big piece of land which was sub divided into three portions because he had three wives. My father then neglected the older wives for the young one. I saw the poverty in my home as my mother

was the eldest, and therefore i composed a song from my own experience of the reality i faced when my father sold everything for the young wife.

Category two: Observation – Music is also drawn from observing how a person behaves. Looking at person’s actions and then an artist composes the song. Not necessarily saying it’s the person but addressing the individual actions for purposes of maintaining social harmony. For example, I composed a song about some elderly men in our place called *Katenthoni* who they used to stay in the market till night when it was all dark they torched to see who was alighting late at the bus stop. I didn’t say who they were for purpose of social harmony because they were my elders, but I ridiculed their shameless behavior.

Category three: *“From others narrating their experiences – from someone who shares his own experiences, then the artist composes a song. There are artists who say they dream of a song at night while sleeping but I don’t know because I have never had such an experience.”* In reading Mulwa therefore, we are tangentially looking at his society.

The history of Mulwa is the history of his society. The biggest influence is the concept of absence. It is the absence that drives his

actions and his music. The absence of his father means that he lacks a father figure he could look up to. Lack of basic requirements and love drives him to look for ways of satisfying them, which drives him into musical composition. The composition of the music served two purposes, namely, to express his frustrations at the absence and to satisfy his material needs through making money. His level of education at the same time points to a lack which motivates him to overcome and the only avenue was in musical composition. In an interview with him, the desire to bridge the absence is observed when he says:

(Trans) Myself...I was born in 1957, joined Ngoleni School in 1971. I had tried joining school in 1968 but failed due to lack of money to pay fees. That time school fees were Ksh: 20 per year and because I could not afford, I failed to join in 1968, 1969 and 1970. I was the oldest in the class and I was thus treated as a grown up in class one. In 1978 I passed well and was called to Machakos Boys secondary school but did not join due to lack of school fees since my father passed on in 1974 while I was in primary school. In 1978 I gave up on education because we were seven in the family and had no financial support and could not take me to school for they had other commitments.

Considering that Akamba society is patriarchal in nature, the absence of his father was traumatizing on him (Freud...). When the child suffers the loss of the parents as love-objects, the child internalizes and identifies with one of them (Kavyu 1973). As Freud sees it, the boy commonly internalizes his father and reinforces his identification with him. Freud says the explanation for this pattern of internalization, in which boys identify with their fathers and girls with their mothers, is the 'disposition' naturally within the child: It would appear, therefore, that in both sexes the relative strength of the masculine and feminine sexual dispositions is what determines whether the outcome of the Oedipus situation shall be an identification with the father or with the mother. This is one of the ways in which bisexuality takes a hand in the subsequent vicissitudes of the Oedipus complex.

According to Freud, then, each child has both a masculine and a feminine disposition, and the relative strength of these two dispositions determines the parent with which the child chooses to identify. It is at this point when the child makes this choice that the child "consolidates" his or her gender identity. When the child identifies with the father, Freud says, it consolidates the

masculinity in the child's character. Likewise, when a child identifies with the mother, it consolidates the femininity in the child's character. This is how Freud believes gender identity is formed.) The only parent who was present for Mulwa was the mother who was a woman. It is possible that the need to cover up for the absentee father drives him to listen to his mother singing. Music in Africa as Karin Barber has said serves a function.

Kilumi/ Mbeni music is sung by Akamba women and the music speaks to the world from the women's perspective. It may include the women's view on the social conditions that contribute to the absenteeism of the men. Mulwa says that he grew up listening to his mother and it can thus be argued that the absence of the father and his mother's lamentations could have led him to perceive music as an avenue of expressing his feelings hence his desire to form his first band. (Interview) Mulwa notes:

My father was in the army (kear) and fought in World War II in Burma before I was born.

My mother participated in several Akamba music songs notably: Mbeni songs and Kilumi and Mbalya which were being sung to uplift each member in the group. They were sung to motivate each other and themselves. The groups helped each other in turns as they

did the work of digging and construction of houses, they did that while singing. As a boy we used to sit aside and enjoy the group singing while working. My mother died in 2014 and she used to be a leader of mbeni group and sung songs to political leaders like Raila, Mzee Moi and other prominent people in the country. My mother was a very good soloist though uneducated. She also led many school children in dancing and singing in many government meetings.

Based on the life, this argument can be observed in the life of Mulwa where the Kamba *Kilumi* and *mbeni* music was performed during helping groups and community ceremonies which influenced his attraction to music. As a child, Dicky would always watch the mother and the other women perform the music. His Father then was away working in the army (Kaer). As such, there are some set expectations as to how the music should be performed; namely, what Nketia has identified as an "interpretative experience" by audiences. Nketia explains this idea in detail:

By interpretative we do not just mean the artistry evident in the performance of a given piece, but simply the concrete realization of a tradition in a way and manner acceptable to a traditional audience, and which may show the

extent of the performer's correctness of memory and fidelity to tradition as well as the creative imagination he brings into it. (Nketia cited in Welsh-Asante 2000: 94).

Nketia's ideas here suggest that it is important to reflect on what the performance of popular musicians and to the musical community in general. According to Mulwa, Wathi (song) which included the *Kilumi and mbeni songs* was the most significant social occasion among the Kamba.. People gathered, sang and danced in the *kituto or kinyaka*, (a specially cleared piece of land between two or three villages). They mingled at the *Wathi*; and the youth met their future spouses. Wathi was organized by *nthele* (*young energetic men/a medium elder* who was selected by older men and women. Wathi happened during the dry season and was forbidden during planting, weeding and harvesting times because people were busy and idleness which music was associated with was frowned upon during this period. During the performance of Wathi, people gathered, sang and danced in the *kituto or kinyaka*, a specially cleared piece of land between two or three villages. People mingled at the *Wathi*; and many youth met their partners.

Blacking (1973) contends that music is a form of communication and in a common cultural context, specific music can evoke feelings that are fearful, apprehensive, passionate, patriotic and religious, just but to mention a few. Seemingly, "music is deeply concerned with human feelings and experiences in society" (Blacking 1973:10). In most cases, the indigenous Akamba religious rituals are accompanied by music, singing and dancing. For the Akamba, singing is part and parcel of dancing because their traditional expression for singing is *kwina wathi*, which literary means "to sing and dance". At the Wathi, both individuals and groups sang with or without musical instruments, the most common usually being drums. Many types of drums were used for different dances. Different villages sometimes held dance competitions. It was believed that Charms and magic could be used to win the competitions, supposedly by lessening the opponents' vigor in dancing by successfully deflecting an opponent. Mulwa's spirit of competition can be thus seen as sprouting from the communal spirit of competition from the Wathi. Mulwa notes:

I was doing the one man guitar and during the performance I met many *Ndenzi sya ngita* (Guitar dancers). I could then imitate how they sung as they also borrowed my styles

during the *imandiko* occasions)..... In Kalambya Boys, I was the manager. In a band we have band leader, band master, and band manager. I used to manage on how to sing and where they go for performance. I and Onesmus Musyoki we used to compose, and then a producer chooses the best because the songs were many. After composing a song, we used to call other members of the band, teach them the song then we go for recording. In 1981, I composed my first song which I sang about a person who used to steal. In 1982, I left Kalambya boys for Ngoleni brothers because I saw that the boys had no focus. I was searching for the best in music.

The Wathi was seasonal Between January and March, where, *Wathi wa muvingusyo* (song of knocking) occurred. This kind of Wathi happened at night. It started at the homesteads with youths singing loudly while gathering their friends and moving from village to village. Being free to wander at night, young men serenaded outside girls' huts. A girl's father would tell the group: "Stop clamoring, leave the compound." This signaled that he would allow his daughter to go with them. If he said nothing, the youths would wait patiently, later leaving without her, but reluctantly. After many youths joined the procession, they went to the kituto or any

open space nearby where the Wathi continued till dawn. After the harvest and circumcisions, Wathi was at its peak. Dancing was specifically for the young. A man could dance until his children were adolescents; afterwards he could only watch. Married women, especially those who had borne more than two children, were usually spectators, not dancers. Once married; a girl became a *kiveti* who was the mother and caretaker of her family. While she participated in the dances a *kiveti* no longer attended them. She could only participate in the *kilumi* dance but with permission from her husband. As the Akamba stressed, a good wife was clean, generous, industrious, sociable, hospitable and not a witch. At old age, a married woman could be selected to become *kiveti kya ithembo* (female shrine elder)

Butler argues that gender is not natural, nor is it inscribed (written) onto a biological body or blank slate. Rather, gender is discursively constructed and maintained. Gender is performed by individuals on a daily basis, and it is this performance that consolidates gender at a social and cultural level. In turn, social and cultural understandings of gender direct the gendered performances of individuals.

The aspect of the patriarchal nature of the society is captured here. Each participant at the Wathi had a Wathi - name given by his peers (significance of this when you given new identity, are there expectations that go with it). After marriage, women's Wathi-names were dropped, though men kept theirs. The dropping of the woman's name after marriage and men kept theirs is an assertion of the patriarchal power among the Kamba community. It was the responsibility of the father to teach his sons the male duties while the mother taught her daughters the female duties. Some of this teaching was done orally through songs, proverbs, riddles and stories. As Githige (1986) concluded, in the past, society's laws, customs, education and religion were orally imprinted in the minds of each African. Yieke (2002) observes that power as used to characterize social relations is best exemplified in terms of its 'mediatory

and regulatory' role in the interaction between individuals or social groups. She adds that power is not just a relation between individuals, but is sustained by socially structured and culturally patterned behavior of groups, and the practices of institutions which may indeed be manifested by individual actions (2002: 31).

Mbiti (1986) argued that all African people have a basic belief in a Supreme Being. Basing his argument on an Ashanti proverb in Ghana which says 'No one shows a child the supreme being', Mbiti asserts that: Knowledge about God's reality is so fundamental that it is acquired at a very early stage of growing. Furthermore, religious beliefs are corporately held - they are the property of the community, the individual automatically accepts them, assents to them, by virtue of being a member of the wide community (Mbiti 1986: 101). In another work, Lindblom (1934) views the Akamba as a singing people and song occupies a prominent part in their lives. Generally, missionaries in Ukambani were faced in the early stages with the difficulties of a strange land, people, language, culture, customs and music. Most of them did not have the time or even patience to go into these matters sufficiently. Although Lindblom spent some time in Ukambani Kikamba language, he

laments that: Collecting Kamba songs is of considerable difficulty that it is only through songs that the natives could revisit (Lindblom 1934:41). Kavyu says that the Akamba have had traditions that have been repeated over and over again. Also, some of the kilumi songs of our old, and have been handed from one son to another.

Boas (1972) speaking of the function of dance in human society stressed that dance fulfils a vital role in the lives of people. Dance could be a therapy for the mentally and emotionally ill. It is not only expressive but also creative. It has powers to cure and vitalize, to appease and aggravate, to satisfy and discover. Dance may promote dissociation which is believed to be therapeutically effective. For example, dance may be viewed as a way of letting off steam in which behavior not tolerated in everyday life may be permitted. Therefore, dance becomes a relief of anxiety which may be definitely therapeutic. As Eliade (1987) explained, the power of dance in religious practice lies in its capacity to communicate. The efficacy of dance depends upon the beliefs of the participants particularly their faith in their ability to affect the world around them. Like the other people, the Akamba dance to effect change in an individual

Mother influence and Kilumi , Mbeni and Mbalya music.

Mulwa's journey to the popular music started early as he watched his mother perform the Kilumi songs which is a form of a religious or sacred dance comprising of many rituals. Kilumi is performed during times of sorrow such as lack of rains, drought and famine; during social occasions or times of joy such as harvesting, planting and initiation of medicine people; and as a means of protection, especially after the death of a person or after the birth of an illegitimate child. Nadel (1970) states that a ritual is any non instinctive predictable action or a series of actions that cannot be justified by a 'rational' means-to-ends type of explanation. Kilumi songs are concerned with religious ritual which is the prescribed form of uttered words, or actions which constitute an act of worship; and is extended to the supernatural world. That is, in religious rituals, people struggle to comprehend their relationship with the cosmic reality. Therefore, kilumi rituals are perceived as ways of communicating something of religious significance through words, symbols and actions.

Kilumi music and dances were traditionally performed by women and comprised of two Kilumi drums accompanying the ululations

and singing of a lead singer backed by two other women vocalists. The symbolism of the two drums highlights the duality of order and rhythm. The notion can be recanted to reflect the desire of Mulwa to have a family that was complete and balanced; made up of a mother and a father to make it complete. In his opinion, his family was incomplete owing to the absence of his father. Mulwa notes:

My father was in the army (kear) and fought in World War II in Burma before I was born. My mother participated in several Kamba music songs notably: mbeni songs and Kilumi and Mbalya which were being sung to uplift each member in the group. They were sung to motivate each other and themselves. The groups helped each other in turns as in mbeni group members as they did the work of digging and construction of houses, they did that while singing.

As a boy we used to sit aside and enjoy the group singing while working. My mother died in 2014 and she used to be a leader of mbeni group and sung songs to political leaders like Raila, Mzee Moi and other prominent people in the country. My mother was a very good soloist though uneducated.

Kilumi also signifies some tensions in the society. The possessed becomes a symbol of these hidden tensions. The rituals and dances

reveal them and restore the status quo. Therefore, they become devices for individuals to transact social relationships more favorably.

Mostly, songs and dances form an integral part of the human society for they fulfill socio-political and religious functions. The traditional African setting, songs prove to be an authentic expression of the outlook of the people, as observed by Mbiti (1975). For example, when sung as the drummers beat the drums (kilumi drums) rhythmically, the songs literally express the Akamba hopes, fears, thoughts and beliefs. In Kilumi, the role of traditional songs and dances is very significant. Concurrently, Tracey (1962) states that dance action is an abiding passion with most Africans for it is a sincere act of devotion to the deity and it is an outward sign of worship. Therefore, dance becomes a medium of religious expression.

Usually, the drummers compose and sing. Kilumi was performed by old women although it is now danced to even by men. Kilumi is one of the few songs and dances that are still performed in UKambani although for totally different reasons unlike in the past. One session of a Kilumi dance could last about half an hour, and the entire performance for something like eight hours.

Depending on the severity of the drought and the desperation of the people, Kilumi dance was also type of fertility dance and it was the reason that it was performed by women and it was a taboo for a man to want to see what the women were doing.

Among the Akamba people, lack of rain is considered an event requiring ritual intervention. As a result they performed the ritual rain making dance. It is a healing rite designed to restore environmental balance through spiritual blessings, movement, offering, and pray. As the Kamba community comes from a dry part of the country, the people learnt to do rituals to precipitate for rains and Dicky learnt to compose his songs from own experience and environment. Mbunga (1973), asserts that in African art and music, there are beautiful songs with profound wisdom hidden therein, such as those of the rain-making ceremonies, harvesting dances, circumcision celebrations, marriage rites and dances for success in battle .Mulwa notes:

“yes, many songs are from life experiences and the sweetest of all songs are from own experience, because they are all real. Songs are normally of three categories”: From own experiences of the artists. When someone starts singing, normally he draws from his own experience of the surrounding and of the

people. *For example: “aii umaskini mbaya ukasyaiwa thinani nokesa kukwa uithina” Is a sad melody from my own experience. They had big piece of land which was sub divided into three portions because dad had three wives. My father then neglected the older wives for the young one. I saw the poverty in my home and therefore composed a song from my own experience of the reality I faces as my father sold everything for the young wife.*

According to Akamba, Kilumi has been present since the very beginning of Akamba existence. This ritual emphasizes symbolic dance movements as a key force in achieving the goal of the worship ceremony. In the kilumi dances, numerous spirits are believed to possess the participants. Each spirit has its own special song or music which depicts its character and which alone can summon its presence. In the dances, the possessed is expected to mime the character of the possessing spirit. During the dances, some of the possessed people dance in a strange fashion, while others become wild and uncontrollable. It is through the mouth of the possessed that the spirits reveal their names in order for the songster to sing their songs. Some make utterances which are received by the people as messages from the spiritual realm. However, it should be noted that in the

kilumi dances, not all the participants are subject to possession. In most of the kilumi songs, the soloist sings, through the song and the dancers repeat the chorus. Mulwa's mother was a soloist.

As Finnegan(1970:70) observed: Songs in Africa are frequently in antiphonal form. There is a response of some kind between the soloist and chorus and the song depends on the alteration between the two parts. The role of the soloist is crucial. The chorus is more or less fixed. The soloist has complete scope to improvise his part of the verse. Mulwa's songs are seen to have the repetitive pattern. In the kilumi dances, the songs follow no programmes they are sung as the spirits request for them. Sometimes, they express dissatisfaction when particular songs are sung. The singing and dancing continues throughout the night. All the songs express ideas of religious significance through symbols. Geertz (1966:5) asserted that: Sacred symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos - the tone character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood – and their world-view - the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order. Mulwa religious and respect of the supreme power is constantly depicted in his lyrics.

Dundas (1913) erroneously asserted that the Akamba used three words, namely, Muungu, Ngai, and Mulungu to denote God. He further explained that Muunguu was a borrowed Kiswahili word, n Ngai was a Maasai word, while Mulungu might have been a corruption of the first word. To him; it is clear that the Mkamba had no word for God; neither do they know of such being but the various terms used are merely collective words meant to denote the plurality of the spiritual world (Dundas 1913:535).

From the oral interview conducted with Mulwa, during the research, it is evident that the Akamba knew of a supreme being. For example, Mbiti (1970:219) summarizes that: To assert, however, that they (Africans) have "no faith" in God, would be absolute nonsense and there are no atheists in traditional African societies. An Ashanti proverb seems to summarize the situation well; it says, 'No one shows a child the Supreme being', because even the child knows of God almost automatically by instinct. The Akamba worshipped the great God called Mulungu, who is Ngai Mumbi (the creator), as well as the sustainer and the end of life. Mulungu is a benevolent God who bestows good things upon the Akamba. However, if somebody commits any wrong act against this benevolent being, in spite of

the kindness bestowed, he/she has to show penitence. Mulungu was worshipped either at individuals or community's breaking points namely, powerlessness, scarcity and deprivation was approached at times of catastrophes such as drought, famine, epidemics and other psychological, social needs. Mulungu was also approached in gratitude for good or abundant harvests. To the Mukamba, offering a sacrifice (be it animals without blemish or grains from the fields) occasionally insured a continuous contact with Mulungu, hence a peaceful existence.

Mulwa's life in music can be seen as a journey...journey on which he as a musician he takes different paths in search for his own identity and in search of solutions to his own problems and the problems of others in the bands and by extension that of the Kamba society.

From the Mother, Mulwa seems to have developed a spirit of collective and identity based on the social system. He starts by identifying with a group of boys which let them to form the earliest Ngoleni Supersonic Band which he started with one of his boy neighbor as part of entertainment in the evenings when they retired from work. By naming the group as Ngoleni (their

geographical area) Mulwa seems to be identifying with his local cultures. The formation of the group which composed of only men is an indication of the boy's creation of their own space and distancing themselves from the *others*. He further goes in search of other bands so as to form a collective organization.

Mulwa draws the meaning of music as being rooted in the role music plays in the life of those who make it. Mulwa attributes the meaning and value of his songs to its relationship with the activities of the society.

No, I was playing the common guitar because when I was in school I heard of other musicians like Kitanga, Kakai Kilonzo, Muema brothers. By that time, I was being called to perform especially during maiyo occasions (when a woman was being bestowed).

Kalambya started when I was still in school and in class 4 and 5 I was really performing the guitar very well. I used to mainly perform the community composed songs. I was doing the one man guitar and during the performance I met many Ndenzi sya guitar (Guitar dancers). I could then imitate how they sung as they

also borrowed my styles during the imandiko occasions

Sitting position while playing the Kilumi drums. The drummers usually include the main soloist and sometimes the chief medicine person. The soloist will sing in a free kind of a rhythm and after a few exchanges with the chorus she starts drumming then the first person to open the arena is usually the chief medicine person after which the spirit possessed person is called by the ngui to dance. After dancing for sometime she/he might stop dancing abruptly and this also calls for a sudden stop in the singing and drumming. The dancer may demand things like water, food, beer, cigarettes and other food items to be consumed right on the dance arena. When orders are not easily understood then the medicine person has to take the possessed into a secluded area for a divine intervention and to find out exactly what the spirits require. The dance will only continue after the demands are met. A person dances to a specific song, in a specified dance style and in a specific dress code as required by a spirit.

Music is therefore very crucial in this equation in fact the main pillar of a traditional healing. For healing to be

achieved the medicine person and the soloist have to invoke the ancestors (spirits) in the spiritual realm through Kilumi dance. The Healing process through Kilumi music Kigunda (ibid) notes that music is necessary in the whole life history of a mundu mue or the ngui since it fashions them through an initiatory dance, refreshes the connection between them their spirits sustaining a strong link between the two. Music also calls a spirit to address a problem presented when it (music) facilitates spirit invocation where a mundu mue sings asking the spirits that they are needed, visited, greeted and so on; in which case the spirits would descend into her to meet the 'visitors' and in the process recognize any health problems and heal the sick.

Dickys admiration of the mother as a hero led him to perform his music.

Mbeni Music

The Mbeni music is seen as a social force affecting the musician. The musician is subconsciously interested by the performance of the mother as a performer. The absence of the father who left when the musician was very young to work in the (kaer) army left Dicky under the care of the mother. Her Mother's Kilumi and Mbeni performances influence Dicky. He creates his music from

the Kamba culture. His musical identity begins at the earliest stages of life through interaction with Mother.

Identity is an interactive process involving both public and private spheres and the degree to which it can develop depends largely on its cultivation. Dicky creates his music from what he has learned from his mother from what he has heard from his community. Even when Musicians create something entirely new, it is still based on what existed in previous experience. Music adds to the culture and is an important form and avenue for personal and group expression in it. It is also very much a product of that culture and of all the influences, historical, political, economic as well as aesthetic which have played upon it.

Mulwa seems to have desired the music performance of his mother and the Kamba community. Desire is also particularly important in psychoanalytic contexts, where desire is understood to be produced in a gap that fundamentally structures the subject. The absence of the father in his earlier days of his childhood is seen as creating a vacuum in his heart. In Freudian terms, this gap is the realization that the primary love object (the mother) cannot be loved due to the incest prohibition. Therefore the child is forever

seeking the lost love object (especially apparent in unresolved oedipal complexes).

For Lacan, the fundamental gap structuring the subject is the entry into the symbolic where the child recognizes him/herself as distinct from the world around him/her. The child can never return to this presymbolic unity. Therefore there is an endless circling of desire around an unattainable demand.

Foucault claims that discourses are cultural products circulated by powerful institutions (such as the legal, political, educational and social institutions), as well as at the level of the individual. Thus discourses are important for maintaining systems of power and powerlessness. Discourses do not simply elucidate an underlying truth or knowledge, but are actively involved in producing this knowledge. Discourses, for example, do not simply talk about sexuality, but actually produce the way it is understood as an inner part of the self, as natural or as perverse. Historical specificity - that discourses are produced at particular times and locations.

Butler argues that gender is not natural, nor is it inscribed (written) onto a biological body or blank slate. Gender is discursively constructed and maintained. Gender is performed by individuals on a daily basis, and it is this performance that consolidates

gender at a social and cultural level. In turn, social and cultural understandings of gender direct the gendered performances of individuals. We can understand that music must grow out of its own cultural context which Mulwa highlights when he says:

*My father was in the army (kear) and fought in World War II in Burma before I was born. Both of my parents participated in several Kamba music songs notably: **mbeni songs** and **Kilumi** and **Mbalya** which were being sung to uplift each member in the group. They were sung to motivate each other and themselves. The groups helped each other in turns as in mbeni **mwethya** group members as they did the work of digging and construction of houses, they did that while singing.*

As a boy we used to sit aside and enjoy the group singing while working. My mother died in 2014 and she used to be a leader of mbeni group and sung songs to political leaders like Raila, Mzee Moi and other prominent people in the country. My mother was a very good soloist though uneducated.

The Kilumi, mbeni and mbalya musicians engaged primarily not in communal or public works but rather in shared work on private land or in small group enterprises (Rocheleau 1992).

Boyhood and Music

In his transitory journey, the Musician says earlier at his home, in 1974, he had formed a group of *boys* which they named Ngoleni Supersonic band which performed with a boy Kakuyuni who used to work in a matatu as a tout for a man called Mwikya wa Muli. In their journey to self identity as boys, they met every evening after work in the heart of their market and together with other boys they performed. Dicky is seen as using the music context to identify with the other boys and also using that context as an avenue of an exclusive social category class-performing the social category class. Performing the boy identity in their music to lock out “others”

The Kamba music of the 1980’s gave the performers a chance to perform their identities. it was a contest performance. Men like women, have been imprisoned by cultural stereotypes not only in the way they reenact social gender codes but also in the subcultures, lyrics, images, and semiotics they choose to represent themselves as popular music artists. Definitions of manhood have shifted over the decades as our culture has moved from one of production, utility, and industry to one of consumption, ornament, and service. This society of industry recognized the essence of

masculinity to be stoicism, a backbreaking work ethic, a willingness to shoulder others' burdens, reliability, and unflinching resolve. Our current culture of consumption recognizes manhood, according to Susan Faludi, as "defined by appearance, by youth and attractiveness, by money and aggression, by posture and swagger and 'props,' by the curled lip and petulant sulk and flexed biceps."

Expressions of masculinity in popular music must work within these incredibly limited, culturally constructed scenarios as well. Power is seen as a relation, rather than an entity. It's clearly seen in the band that power is not something that can be possessed, but only executed:

In Kalambya Boys, I was the manager. In a band we have band leader, band master, and band

manager. I used to manage on how to sing and where they go for performance. I and Onesmus Musyoki we used to compose, and then a producer chooses the best because the songs were many. After composing a song, we used to call other members of the band, teach them the song then we go for recording. In 1981, I composed my first song which I sang about a person who used to steal. In 1982, I left Kalambya boys for

Ngoleni brothers because I saw that the so boys had no focus....there is a time that you will no longer be a boy but brothers will be brothers will be brothers even at old age so where there are brothers there is love

The archetypal pop song creates an 'imaginary identification' between consumer and performer, where the perceived use value of the song – its emotional 'conversation' – becomes its exchange value and the key to success. Personal experiences, real and imaginary, imbued with emotion, are embodied in narrative form, creating an 'ideology of authenticity' (Bloomfield 1993).

Popular musicians have been reported to join bands in early stages of learning an instrument (Bennett, 1980; Finnegan, 1989; Green, 2001). Band-playing thus seems significant for acquiring knowledge. For some students, learning the basic structure of a pop song and the basic skills of playing keyboard or electric guitar at school is the beginning of a band-playing "career."

When I joined class 1, I had made a tin guitar and I had so much interest in it and used it in performance. I used to teach teachers especially the head teacher and other children in school and during important and special occasions in school and in the

community when we had functions especially when I was in class four

The cultural position of the boy is something that contributes to the construction of the cultural position of men and of adult masculinity, and is as defused, pluralized, and subalternized as is “the feminine” in hegemonic constructions of masculinity. In a popular music context, one important connotation of the boy is that of the boy band, which, as a spectacle, enacts and problematizes a number of important facets of not-yet-stabilized masculinity. Mulwa later decides to call his band a brother’s band and not the boy’s band. His sole reason is that the *brother* denotes a concept of longevity and closeness. Whereas the boyhood denotes a limited time which comes to an end at a particular period. The Boy’s concept as narrated by the Dicky is seen as a transitory journey as he says you cannot be a boy forever as he moves on to Kalambya boys. Thus music is seen as a social media to grow up. From boys band to brothers band as he journeys from the local geography in Ukambani to perform in Nairobi.

The Ngoleni typical boy’s band was made up of two young men-boys on the brink of adulthood - each with distinct physical qualities and personalities, brought together

into archetypes, which together make up something approximating a whole. What the boy band phenomenon illustrates effectively is the extent to which the boy as a cultural icon has to negotiate carefully the potential threat of masculinity. Later on they were joined by other Ngoleni boys and they formed a larger group. The figure of the boy-specifically the adolescent boy-operates as a site of slippage, as he sits on the border between childhood and adulthood. His juvenility performs an important role in his sexualization, since he is man enough to be desired and desiring, and yet boy enough to be unthreatening. At the same time, the androgyny that underpins the boy’s body the hairlessness, his “pretty” face also positions him at a point on the borderline between the sexes, and this borderline position is a dangerous one for the culture in which the boy operates.

Folk Music to Club Music.

Dicky: *In 1978, I carried my guitar to Nairobi where I was employed in a kiosk to sell food as I needed to survive. Then latter, I was employed in a club. I worked in the club and started performing at night for those who came to drink at night and I attracted so many customers. I again left the club to do*

construction in Dandora where I really noticed my talent in music.

The world of the folktale performers is largely defined by their culture and the social, economic, geographical and historical conditions of existence, and if they draw on the world they know, for plot, characterization and setting.

The power of context seems to support the significance of cultural patterns and circumstances created by cultural behaviours. Our relationship with our culture and our music choices are so interwoven with our identity, it is difficult to determine how much of our identity formation is impacted by outside forces and how much of our identity is internally created and expressed through our music choices.

The fact that oral literature is the image of the producing society validates interest in understanding the society whose oral literature is under study. Na' allah (1997:125) reminds us that an understanding of oral works depends upon an appreciation of the totality of their historical essence. It is with this in mind that the following overview of the gender aspects of the social, historical and cultural context of the Kamba people Folktale texts is given in a bid to establish

gender relations, roles and statuses in this society.

Kamba Music has been affected by foreign trends that stormed the whole area and changed many aspects of what they considered their treasure, their traditional music. This has resulted from musicians copying from western trends in music. Urbanization has somehow affected the Kamba popular song performance and dances.

Due to socio-economic pressures, some of the Akamba move to urban centres where other cultural (Western) musical patterns are accessible through the media. This rural-urban movement weakens traditional hold on the people. The young are no longer taught orally, for example, through traditional songs, proverbs and stories. Instead, through the media (for example, radios and televisions), they learn all types of music. Through such influences, kilumi which used to be a very sacred dance tends to lose its meaning.

Conclusion

Kalambya songs which are composed in the late 1970's and the 1980's reflect on what was happening in Ukambani during this

period. Kalambya music is seen as a medium through which the Kamba people express the contradictions in the society at the time. The society is seen as experiencing a lot of changes due to colonialism, capitalism, urbanization and globalization. The social dynamics cause a lot of contradictions in the relationships of men and women in the society. The social changes are seen as

creating new possibilities where people perform identity. The songs are metaphorically used.

The patterns of cultural values found in Kalambya popular music reveal that there is a unique interconnectedness between musical expression and its functions within a society. It is a symbolic expression of a group's values and desires. It also functions as a way to deal with and respond to their changing realities.

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