

**FORM AND CONTENT OF AFRICAN MUSIC:
A CASE STUDY OF BUKUSU CIRCUMCISION MUSIC**

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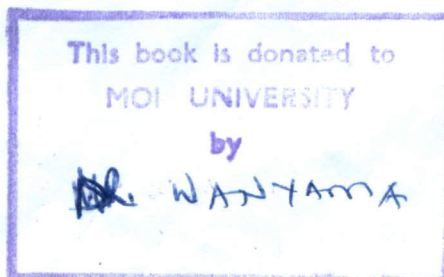
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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to investigate form and content of African music as exemplified by Bukusu circumcision music. Technological products, growth of urban centres, emergence of industries and the widespread of deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS have led to remarkable adjustments in the social behaviour and other ways of life in African communities. These adjustments have strained the socio-cultural patterns of African traditional ceremonies leading to a shift in the form, content, significance and performance of music in such ceremonies.

The dilemma and problem in the Bukusu community is centred on how to strike a balance between the traditional and modern perspectives in the form, content, organization and performance of Bukusu circumcision music. This dilemma has given rise to three protagonists: the traditionalists, semi-traditionalists and modernists. While traditionalists advocate for the traditional organization and performance of Bukusu circumcision music, the semi-traditionalists mix the modern and traditional aspects. On the other hand, the modernists have altogether done away with the traditional music.

This study identifies, investigates and explains the various structures, forms, meanings and functions of traditional Bukusu circumcision music against the backdrop of modernity. Here, by modernity we mean capitalistic and monetary oriented economies together with religious ideologies foreign to the African belief systems. Such ideologies are, for example, embodied in Christianity and Islam. It is recommended that important virtues embodied in the Bukusu circumcision ritual be incorporated and perpetuated within the modern social trends. This would sustain the social controls that such virtues effect and, by extension, stand for in most African communities.

Primary and secondary sources of data were consulted. Collection of primary data involved carrying out both participant and non-participant observations in Bungoma District in Western Province of Kenya, where most Bukususes reside. Interviews and focus group discussions were also employed in primary data collection. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to identify respondents who included circumcisers, initiates, song leaders, singers and instrumentalists among others. Secondary sources included information from written materials like books, journals, reports, articles, seminar papers and periodicals.

Findings of this research are a record of Bukusu circumcision music, which is ever evolving to conform to the changing socio-cultural and economic situation of the society. They are an invaluable assessment tool in the evaluation of the past, present and future perspectives of the music. Above all, the findings are a repository for reference by future generations in scholarship and ethnomusicological research.

Key Words: Form, Content, Bukusu, Luyia, Lubukusu, Chinyimba, Creativity, Circumcision music, Circumcision ceremony, Soloist, Response, Solo-response form.