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THE TRANSFORMATION OF SWAHILI *UNYAGO* AND FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION INTO AN ALTERNATIVE RITE OF PASSAGE: A POSTSTRUCTURALIST APPROACH

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APPROVAL

The undersigned hereby certify that he/she has read the dissertation entitled "The Transformation of Swahili *Unyago* and Female Genital Mutilation into an Alternative Rite of Passage: A Poststructuralist Approach" by John Kirimi M'Raiji. This dissertation has been examined and approved as meeting the requirements of a fulfillment for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy in African Languages and Literature.

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DECLARATION

The author at the University of Botswana between August 2010 and February 2015 completed the work contained in this dissertation. It is original work except where due reference is made and neither has been nor will be submitted for any award of any other university unless otherwise stated.

John Kirimi M'Raiji

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August 2015

University of Botswana 2015

DEDICATION

To the loving women in my life: my mum Peris Tirindi, my dear wife Susan Wambui, and my daughter Morin Kinya. This work demonstrates that ‘to educate a woman is to educate a generation’.

Abstract

The Transformation of Swahili *Unyago* and Female Genital Mutilation into an Alternative Rite of Passage: A Poststructuralist Approach

By

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Since the colonial period, there have been attempts to eradicate female genital mutilation not only in Kenya but also in other parts of Africa where it is practiced. The efforts have not been fully successful due to the entrenchment of the practice among the communities that value it. This is despite the fact that previous studies have cited social, religious, economic and political factors as the main reasons why it is difficult to eradicate female genital mutilation. Scholars have also not taken the trouble to investigate how female circumcision became so well established as to render it difficult to stop. In addition, neither have the preceding studies investigated the philosophical perspectives that may have led to the establishment and entrenchment of the ritual. This study fills that gap by investigating *unyago* and female genital mutilation with the aim of understanding the dynamics that were used to perpetuate them, as well as how the Swahili *unyago* as practiced by the Swahili of Mumias, was adapted in the form of an alternative rite of passage by other communities. The field research involved identifying, sampling, recording and interviewing the stakeholders who included community members involved in *unyago* and female circumcision. These included the novices, the circumcisers, community and religious leaders, performers as well as alternative rite of passage animators and participants. Some information was also collected from the internet and the media. The analysis used poststructuralist approaches, including deconstruction á lá Derrida, as well as existential philosophy based on Heidegger's Dasein (being there). Theories of feminist poststructuralism and gender were also employed to elicit the male/female dichotomy and unity in the community's perceptions. The research determined that there is an underlying philosophical frame enshrined in beliefs, superstitions, taboos and identity formation. It further established that punishment, such as through intimidation, excommunication, ridicule, and a compliance and reward

system were employed to entrench and enforce the practices. The findings indicate that female circumcision was, and is still, entrenched through cultural reproduction mechanisms during seasonally repeated folklore performance to ensure that it is passed on from one generation to another. The study also reports that the *unyago* practiced by the Swahili of Mumias, which has no circumcision component, has been adapted and adopted by the government and other organisations in an effort to eradicate female circumcision in Kenya. The research identifies the major impediment to eradicating female circumcision as being cultural reproduction through ritualization. For that reason, the thesis proposes that in order to successfully eradicate female circumcision, a philosophical approach positing an alternative but popularly acceptable ritual similar to the Swahili *unyago wa mfereji* is needed.

ABBREVIATIONS

ARP: Alternative Rites of Passage

CBO: Community Based Organization

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

FGM: Female Genital Mutilation, also referred to as, female genital cutting or female circumcision.

FPAK: Family Planning Association of Kenya

GOK: Government of Kenya

GTZ: German Technical Cooperation Agency (Deutsche Gessellschaft fúr Technische Zusammenarbeit)

IOM: International Organization for Migration

KDHS: Kenya Demographic and Health Survey

KNBS: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

KNCHR: Kenya National Commission on Human Rights

KTN: Kenya Television Network

MDG: Millennium Development Goals

MYWO: Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

NTV: Nation Television

PATH: Program for Appropriate Technology in Health

TNI: Tasaru Ntomonok Initiative

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFPA: United Nations Fund for Population Fund

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

WHO: World Health Organization

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This introductory chapter provides background information to the *unyago* rite of passage among the Swahili. It also deals with the statement of the problem and the methods used to collect and analyse data.

1.2. Study Background

Initiation rites for both boys and girls have continued to play an important role in the formation of gender identity among the Swahili and other African communities that practice them. This is due to the notion that "both boys and girls have to be transformed into men and women, rather than simply becoming adults as a result of physical growth" (Suad & Najmadadi 2003: 206). It is in the light of this that the *unyago* rite of passage for both boys and girls has remained relevant and vibrant among the Swahili of East Africa.

The *Unyago* is a culturally-entrenched set of rituals and ceremonies for initiating girls into womanhood. It is a rite of passage often used to indicate a girl's transition into womanhood/ adulthood (Caplan, 1970; Topan, 1975; Strobel, 1979; Larsen, 1990; 2000; Suad & Najmadadi, 2003). *Unyago* also refers to the music and dance performances associated with the ceremony and other related rituals; such as wedding songs (Mwai, 2000).

The *unyago, tohara* or *jando* includes training and an operation, or circumcision, for boys. It may also involve the cutting of the clitoris or female circumcision. The ritual is performed when girls attain puberty because it is believed that it leads to womanhood and adulthood. It is therefore a ritual that is aimed at preparing girls for marriage. Female circumcision is also commonly referred to as female genital mutilation (FGM). It is a surgery that entails the removal of the female genitalia.

According to Chege, Askew & Liku (2001:1), FGM has been rated internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It is considered an extreme form of discrimination against women and, when carried out on minors, it is a violation of children's rights. For that reason, several efforts have been made to eradicate FGM wherever it is practiced. In addition, the UNHCR defined Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as comprising of 'all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs, carried out for traditional, cultural or religious reasons'. In other words, the procedure is for non-medical

reasons. All forms of FGM are considered harmful although the consequences tend to be more severe the more extensive the procedure. Other factors, such as age and social situation, may also have an impact on the gravity of the consequences.

FGM is mostly carried out on girls under the age of 15 years, although it is occasionally also performed on adult and married women. The procedure is often performed with rudimentary tools and without anaesthesia while the girl or woman is held down. Almost all those who are subjected to FGM experience extreme pain and bleeding. Other health complications include shock, psychological trauma, infections, and urine retention, damage to the urethra and anus, and even death. The 'medicalization' of FGM, whereby the procedure is performed by trained health professionals rather than traditional practitioners, does not necessarily make it less severe". www.refworld.org/docid/4a0c28492.html.

The World Health Organization (2008-www.who.int/reproductivehealth/ publications/fgm/9789241596442/en/.) explained the controversial terminology regarding the procedure as being "generally referred to as 'female circumcision' [but] the expression 'female genital mutilation' (FGM) gained support from the late 1970s in order to establish a clear distinction from male circumcision and to emphasize the gravity and harm of the procedure. From the late 1990s, the terms 'female genital cutting' (FGC) and 'female genital mutilation/cutting' (FGM/C) have also been used, partly due to dissatisfaction with the negative connotations of 'mutilation' for survivors and partly because there is some evidence that the use of the term 'mutilation' may alienate communities that practice FGM and hinder the process of social change."

The abbreviation FGM has been used since the 1970s to distinguish female circumcision from male circumcision (WHO, 1996). Further to this, and with the support of the UNICEF and UNDP, the WHO is of the view that the word 'mutilation', rather than the more culturally polite 'circumcision', lends credence to the notion that FGM is a violation of women's and girls' (human) rights. As a consequence of this, "FGM" is the most widely used term for female circumcision. Previous studies have shown that FGM is a deeply entrenched cultural practice that has proven difficult to eradicate (MYWO, 1991; WHO; UNICEF& UNFPA, 1997: 88; GTZ, 2005; Chege, 2000; Cheserem, 2011; Kanake, 2012).

It has further been claimed that as a human rights issue, FGM violates international conventions; such as the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, because it does not conform to the right to equality and non- discrimination on the basis of sex. Further, it is argued that the operation violates the right to life, the right to freedom from torture, the right to good health and children's rights to protection. FGM is also considered a barrier to the achievement of the MDGs for Africa (http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/).

According to (http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=7329), the MDGs were set out by the United Nations in 2000 with the aim of eradicating poverty and hunger, to achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and to ensure environmental sustainability by the year 2015. The continued practice of FGM in Kenya and other parts of Africa is enough evidence that the goals relating to children's rights have not been achieved.

The practice of FGM, however, seems to stand in the way of achieving the above goals; hence the concerted attempts to stop it. Research further indicates that FGM leads to the increase of school drop-outs among girls because they often get married after the operation, denying them the right to education as enshrined in the constitution of Kenya (KNCHR, 2005).

Despite the sustained efforts to eradicate FGM, most communities have declined to abandon it. Interestingly, the *unyago wa mfereji* (Mwai & Runo, 2013: 13) practised by the Swahili of Mumias do not have the circumcision component. The *unyago wa mfereji* is a rite of passage that involves teachings, demonstrations and training on adulthood without the cutting of genitals.

The term is literally translated as "the tunnel *unyago* ritual" because it is a process that girls go through (like through a tunnel) but without circumcision. The conceptualization of *unyago* without circumcision is an interesting cultural transformation worthy of scholarly attention. Moreover, the fundamental component of training through performances of song and dance has been adapted as an alternative rite of passage (ARP) model that is being used among other communities where FGM is practiced.

The ARP ceremony is geared towards communicating pro-ARP or anti-FGM messages. Performances during the ARP ceremonies can be viewed as cultural change agents that are artistically created so as to aesthetically appeal to audiences in order to change attitudes and

influence behaviour. Some of the issues that are addressed in this research include those that deal with the attitudes, beliefs, acculturation and cultural reproduction of *unyago* among the Swahili of Mumias.

The indigenous Swahili are a minority of less than 1% of Kenya's population of 40 million people (KNBS, 2010); yet their language and culture have had a big influence among other communities in Kenya and East Africa. For instance, the Kiswahili language has transcended ethnic frontiers to become one of the most widely used languages in Africa (Ntarangwi 2003; Mazrui 2007). This has to some extent led to the adaptation of some of the Swahili peoples' cultural practices, such as *unyago wa mfereji*, by non-Swahili communities.

The main focus of the study is an investigation of the changes in the Swahili *unyago* in Mumias. Notably, the study traces actions of Swahili women which led to a paradigm shift in the practice of FGM in the community. The dissertation provides ample information on how the *unyago wa mfereji*, which has replaced the traditional *unyago*, is being introduced in some non-Swahili communities in Kenya.

The study is a marked departure from previous studies on *unyago* in that it investigates the practice, performance, teaching and training aspects, which, due to the secretive nature of the ritual; had escaped the attention of previous researchers. This previous omission in research, in terms of interrogating the nature of cultural changes in the *unyago*, has hitherto created gaps in knowledge and consequently slowed down efforts to eradicate FGM in Kenya. The research was motivated by a desire to unravel the fundamental philosophical elements of *unyago* practice that had been ignored by previous studies and to highlight the useful components of the rite that have been retained as a cultural heritage of the Swahili and which have been adapted as a national heritage practiced by diverse Kenyan communities.

The study investigates the cultural changes in the *unyago* rite of passage among Swahili women in Mumias with the view of demonstrating how stakeholders in the anti-FGM campaign have replicated the contemporary *unyago* in communities that still practice FGM. This dissertation highlights transformations in the *unyago* practice that can be attributed to cultural change factors such as acculturation, education, religion, intermarriages, migration, globalization, cultural engineering and mobility of culture.

Notwithstanding the fact that not all Swahili women became members of the *unyago* group (Suad & Najmadadi, 2003: 205); this study observes that the Swahili immigrants to Mumias practiced *unyago* that had the FGM component until 1982, when it was abandoned in favour of a ritual which emphasized performance (of music and dance) and training, without FGM. Unlike their coastal counterparts, the Swahili who migrated to Mumias openly practiced female circumcision but later abandoned it. The changes of practising FGM and later stopping it are unique in that, to the best of our knowledge, there is no other community which practiced FGM in Kenya that has completely abandoned it.

This study was inspired by the realization that the Swahili, who migrated from their coastal habitat, such as those in Mumias, have completely abandoned female circumcision in their *unyago* rites of passage without any external interference. Moreover, this study attests to the fact that the Mumias example has been used as a guideline in formulating programs to tackle FGM practice among other Kenyan communities. Consequently, the thesis notes that despite the *unyago* and FGM being deeply rooted in the philosophy, psychology and cultures of the communities that practice them, the Swahili in Mumias were able to subvert the status quo, a dispensation under which they were denied their sense of Being (á la Heidegger, 1953).

Mumias is the adopted name for a place originally known as Lureko or the Nabongo's (King's) palace. Mumias is the Anglicization of 'the place of Mumia" or Mumia's place. The settlement was named after the then reigning king during the encroachment of the Arab, Swahili, Indian and British peoples into western Kenya (Ochieng', 2002). Mumias is the place where Arab and Swahili merchants paid homage to the King before proceeding to Buganda kingdom in present day Uganda. Mumias is home to the Wanga sub-tribe of the larger Luhya people of western Kenya.

The Wanga Kingdom has a long chronological profile of organized administrative and civil governance dating back to the 11th century. The capital of the Wanga Kingdom is Mumias. It remains a major trading centre in Kakamega County (See Map 1 & 2 in Appendix). King Mumia was the last sovereign King of Wanga and was succeeded by his son Peter Shitawa Mumia II, who is still serving as a king but without any administrative power.

Another community that has closely interacted with the Swahili in Mumias are the Nubian people. According to the Nubian Rights Forum, the Nubians are one of the oldest communities in the country having entered Kenya as early as 1884. They were brought by the British from the Sudan to secure the British imperial colonial rule in Kenya from being taken away by the Germans. They

settled into El-dama Ravine, Kibra, Machakos, Kibigori, Mombasa, Kibos, Isiolo, Mumias, Bungoma, Meru and Oyugis after service as soldiers to the British colonial government (http://susterra.com/nrf/?page_id=39).

There is also a possibility that the Nubians, Arabs and Somalis, who practiced female circumcision and are sometimes cited as the possible originators of the ritual (Guindi, 2006), may have introduced female circumcision to the Swahili community in Mumias. According to informants in Mumias, the Nubian, Arab and Somali communities which predominantly share the Islamic faith with the Swahili have had a major cultural impact on the Swahili through intermarriages. However, this theoretical perspective requires further research. The contentious issues regarding the origin of female circumcision among the Swahili of Mumias can only be exhaustively understood through a thorough and independent research which is beyond the scope of this study.

On the other hand, *unyago* is the most prevalent rite of passage for girls among the Swahili. However, researching it has been problematic because some of its components, such as those regarding FGM, were "highly secretive" (Fair 1996: 152) and therefore inaccessible for research. According to Hansen (1971; 1973), Modawi (1973), Huelsman (1976) and Hosken (1976); FGM is a fairly well-kept secret which is practiced intimately associated with tribal customs, superstition and wrong concepts of religion and is closely guarded from foreign curiosity.

Kaplan et al. (2013:3) referred FGM as "secret world of women". As a result of this secrecy, all previous studies on Swahili *unyago* have predominantly focused on its more obvious aspects, such as, weddings. Such a focus has created the perception that the Swahili *unyago* only comprised wedding songs and dances. Suffice to note that most of the studies have been conducted among the Swahili residing in their ancestral coastal and island habitat, but not among those who migrated into the interior. This bias in research may have crystallized the notion that there was no FGM practiced among the Swahili (Suad, J & Najmadadi 2003: 205). This may be the reason why Mwai (1997; 2000) erroneously classifies all Swahili wedding songs as *unyago* songs. To her credit, however, Mwai's research was carried out among the Swahili and Nubians living in Kisumu in Nyanza County.

This dissertation isolates FGM as one of the "secretive" components that had been left out of all previous studies of the *unyago* but which have evolved to inform current strategies to eradicate FGM. This study reports that, the *unyago wa mfereji* which is devoid of FGM informs the ARP training.

It is the contention of this dissertation that the modified *unyago* practice, which is often called the *unyago wa mfereji*, was thereafter adapted and modified for use among other communities to eradicate FGM in Kenya. The research study further maintains that the reason for the adaptation of the Swahili *unyago* by other communities lies in the fact that the *unyago* has an unresearched philosophical structure that is at the core of defining womanhood among communities that practice FGM. This research uses a poststructuralist feminist analysis of the performances to reveal a well-established and complex cultural construction that defines a Swahili woman in Mumias.

This research demonstrates that the sustained resistance to eradicate FGM in Kenya can be best explained from philosophical and feminist poststructuralist perspectives. The study problematizes *unyago*, FGM, *unyago wa mfereji* and ARP with the aid of the philosophical works of poststructuralist thinkers. This perspective is different from previous approaches which focused on socio-economic, religious and cultural factors that may have caused resistance to stopping FGM.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Previous studies have stated that FGM is difficult to eradicate due to religious, social, cultural, economic and political reasons (MYWO, 1991; FPAK, 1991, 1994; WHO/UNICEF/UFPA, 1997). However, the studies ignored basic philosophical principles that may have created and entrenched institutions on which the FGM practice is based. This study, therefore, is a marked departure from those previous studies on *unyago* and FGM in that it investigates the practice, performance, teaching, and training aspects, which due to the secretive nature of ritual, had escaped the attention of previous researchers.

The study investigates the three variables of *unyago*, FGM and ARP in an attempt to answer the following philosophical questions:

(i) How does FGM determine being a woman within the communities that practice it in Kenya?

(ii) Do *unyago*, FGM and ARP engender (give rise to) womanhood among the communities that practice them?

(iii) In the light of FGM, what does it mean to be a newly engendered subject?

(iv) Can (i), (ii), and (iii) above account for the reluctance by some communities to abandon FGM or to embrace ARP?

1.4. Justification and Significance of the Study

This study is significant and socially relevant because it provides insights into the beneficial aspects of Swahili *unyago* practice that bear resemblance to those adapted in ARP to aid the fight against FGM in Kenya. Previous omissions in research, in terms of interrogating the nature of cultural changes in the *unyago* and FGM, have created gaps in knowledge and consequently slowed down efforts to eradicate or prevent FGM in communities that still practice it in Kenya.

This dissertation adds to the existing body of knowledge on *unyago* and cultural mobility as a method of realigning some elements of indigenous knowledge to modernity. The study is also a contribution to the existing literature on socio-cultural aspects of Swahili folklore because it examines certain crucial information that has informed cultural change in Kenya. It is driven by an understanding that folklore is one of the surest ways to the understanding of a people's collective behaviour.

Furthermore, the study is of primary importance as it provides ample information on an evolving intangible cultural heritage. Cultural changes have now made it possible to access *unyago* information that was hitherto kept secret. The study investigates the contemporary Swahili *unyago* rite of passage among Swahili women resident in Mumias in western Kenya. It traces the changes that have taken place in regard to *unyago* practice. Notably, these changes are the reason why *unyago* is now accessible for scholarly analysis.

The research identifies Swahili *unyago* as a cultural variable and isolates it to investigate gender and cultural development issues in Kenya to further compliment earlier researches carried out on Swahili women. It investigates *unyago*, a woman's socialization institution, from philosophical and feminist points of view. The research findings are expected to instigate debate and further inquiry into the dynamic nature of Swahili and other African rites of passage.

This study hopes to motivate other scholars to investigate *unyago* within its broad cultural context and, hence, shift Swahili folklore studies from the past to the present; and from the coastal Swahili to inland Swahili as well. This latter group of inland Swahili has not been given enough scholarly attention. This research further demonstrates and highlights new gender constructions based on gender parity and empowerment for women in Kenya based on the practice of contemporary *unyago* devoid of FGM.

The findings of this study have the potential to provide scientific guidelines on possibilities of adapting and/or replicating such a model to combat FGM among communities that practice it in other parts of the world. In this way, the study bridges the gap between action researches that have been done before, and academic-based research.

1.5. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

(i) To investigate current attitudes of the Mumias community towards traditional *unyago* and FGM.

(ii) To explore the philosophical underpinnings of the Swahili *unyago*, especially those regarding FGM practice.

(iii) To identify the performance and aesthetic features of Swahili *unyago* and ARP.

(iv) To assess the implication of the Swahili *unyago* in efforts to eradicate FGM through the use of ARP in Kenya.

1.6. Research Questions

The research questions that guided the study were:

(i) What are the attitudes of Swahili women in Mumias towards past and present *unyago* practice?

(ii) What philosophical presuppositions, as reflected in performances, explain the existence of *unyago* and FGM practices?

(iii) What are the performative and aesthetic features of the *unyago* and ARP?

(iv) What is the implication of ARP for other communities in Kenya?

1.7. Hypotheses /Assumptions

(i) The *unyago* practice reveals changing attitudes of Swahili women towards a traditional rite of passage.

(ii) The *unyago* exposes philosophical information that is at the core of resistance to eradicate FGM.

(iii) The *unyago* performances exhibit more elaborate aesthetic qualities than the ARP ceremonies.

(iv) The *unyago wa mfereji* has been adapted as a tool in the eradication of FGM.

1.8. Scope and Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations were in regard to accessing information that some community members consider sensitive or privileged**.** My status as a male researcher was an impediment to gaining firsthand information on some aspects of the traditional *unyago*. This necessitated the application of various approaches to get information from female respondents, such as, using trained female research assistants who were members of the Swahili community, sourcing information through social media and creating rapport with *makungwi*.

To be more objective, some of the research interviews focused on the *makungwi* who had already expressed willingness to participate in the research. The respondents thereafter were selected through snowball sampling. Initial field surveys had indicated that some of the *makungwi* have evolved into professional sexologists offering professional consultancy services. This cultural development proved invaluable to this study because the contemporary *makungwi* were not embarrassed to volunteer as much information as was required.

The modern *makungwi* are educated and exposed to various cultures, therefore, they were more willing to divulge most of the information which was not previously availed to males and uninitiated members of the public. The inclusion of social workers and religious leaders (*imams*) in the research process not only elicited qualitative data but also minimized any biases that may have arisen from the initiates' responses.

Apart from the social workers and *makungwi*, all the other women respondents, including initiates, were drawn from the Swahili community in Mumias. The study specifically targeted Swahili women resident in Mumias. Owing to research constraints of finances, time and the fact that the Swahili do no not generally practice female circumcision, *unyago* activities among other migrant Swahili women residing in other areas such as El-dama Ravine, Kibra, Machakos, Kibigori, Mombasa, Kibos, Isiolo, Bungoma, Meru and Oyugis were not part of this research activity. To overcome this impediment, however, views on ARP performed among other Kenyan communities were sought from NGOs, social workers, initiates, *makungwi* and bloggers through social media. The information on ARP projects was directly sourced from the NGOs that have been involved in a nationwide anti-FGM campaign.

1.9. Research Procedure and Techniques

The research was conducted mainly among the Swahili of Mumias in Kakamega County in Kenya. The findings were later compared with the situation obtaining in other parts of Kenya where ARP

has been introduced. The following research techniques were used in order to obtain answers to the stated research questions and to verify tentative hypotheses.

- Personal narratives (oral) accounts *unyago, unyago wa mfereji*, FGM and ARP.
- Questionnaires with specific questions to key respondents (completed by research assistants).
- Recording of *unyago* and ARP performances for transcription, translation, and critical analysis of texts.
- Observation schedule of ARP graduation ceremonies.
- Social media (Facebook and Twitter) responses from respondents.

1.10. Presentation of the Study

The study set out to investigate previous and current attitudes, transformations, and the implications of Swahili *unyago* for FGM and ARP practices in Kenya. It further analyzed data from the field through the lens of a poststructuralist theoretical framework with the aim of explaining the fundamental philosophy that has made it difficult to eradicate FGM despite efforts such as the ARP.

The first chapter provides a background to the research problem; statement of the research problem, significance of the study, objectives, research questions, hypotheses and assumptions, scope and limitations.

The second chapter focuses on research methods and procedures used to collect the required information for the study. The chapter provides insight into the research design of the study, target population, sampling techniques, and research instruments and data collection procedures.

The third chapter discusses theoretical issues relating to poststructuralism, gender and culture. The chapter probes the theoretical principles of poststructuralism, cultural transformation and the convention theory of FGM. It situates and appraises the tenets within the context of *unyago*, FGM and ARP practices.

The fourth chapter provides literature on the fundamental components of the research, background information on the Swahili people, their language and culture. It also reviews the contested terrain of Swahili identity.

Chapter five is an ethnographical analysis of data from the field. The chapter focuses on the traditional *unyago*, its practice and the FGM component.

Chapter six is a critical analysis of *unyago* songs from Mumias. The chapter examines the transcribed and translated songs through poststructuralist perspectives to draw conclusions on their surface and hidden meanings.

Crucially, chapter seven highlights how the *unyago wa mfereji* concept has been adapted and transmitted through multi-lingual, multi-media and multi-cultural methods to champion the fight against FGM. In this chapter, the manifestation of the *unyago wa mfereji* in the form of the ARP is analysed. A case study of the ARP model is also provided.

Finally, the last chapter provides final conclusions, policy implications and recommendations for further research. This last chapter is then followed by the bibliography, and various appendices.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Introduction

The research methodology included structured interviews and observations of ARP ceremonies. The background to the study and detailed literature review were facilitated through library research and internet search tools such as Google Scholar and library spot.com. The field research entailed observations of ARP ceremonies such as crowd sourcing, parades and the passing out ceremony. These were further augmented by probing participants about their experiences in regard to FGM and ARP. The analysis of data was guided by a critical literary theory anchored on poststructuralist feminism.

The study adopts an exploratory, qualitative approach using a descriptive survey design to investigate the transformation of Swahili *unyago* in Mumias and the ARP practice and its implications on eradicating FGM among various communities in Kenya. Descriptive survey designs are used in preliminary and exploratory studies (Peter, 1981) to allow researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret data for the purpose of clarification (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003:7).

Qualitative research values data as being intrinsically meaningful and organized around theory. In qualitative research, researchers are more concerned with generating new concepts than with testing existing ones. Hence, grounded theory is used as a specific inductive technique, which means that theory may be built from data during the collection process (Neuman 1997:328; 334). People and events in concrete social settings are described (Neuman 1997:328), as in the case of our respondents in Mumias.

Qualitative data are concerned with accounts of actors' social worlds: where specific behaviour such as beliefs, attitudes, songs, dress and observations that are gathered by means of unstructured questionnaires are analyzed. Qualitative research examines the subjective experiences of people in their daily lives as members of a defined social group (Denzin, 1991).

To achieve its objectives, the study identified the qualitative research paradigm as the most suitable method of eliciting information about individual and group experiences of the Swahili community in Mumias. The qualitative approach enabled the interpretation of information related to *unyago* and FGM practices as well as the meanings participants ascribe to them. This data was compared with information obtained in the ARP performances in other parts of Kenya.

An observation schedule was prepared as an essential tool for assessing the aesthetic value of the performances. Such data was further explained and interpreted based on discussions with the respondents.

2.2. Study Design

The study applied a qualitative approach to explore attitudes and social practices in order to understand the factors that may have caused changes in Swahili *unyago* practice in Mumias. It also used standard open-ended interview questions to elicit data on *unyago*, FGM and ARP practices from the target population. Interviews using semi-structured questions were conducted with selected respondents in Mumias. These respondents are key stakeholder groups and individuals involved in traditional and *unyago wa mfereji* practice in Mumias.

The interview schedule comprised questions on the past and current status of the *unyago*, FGM and ARP among Swahili women in Mumias. Attitudes towards *unyago* held by respondents in Mumias, video clips, as well as descriptive studies that document the Kenyan government and civil societies' activities in eradicating FGM were also reviewed.

This broad approach was preferred for this study as it entails an inductive description, comparison and analysis of group and individual situations, personal narratives, experiences and meanings in relation to the area of study. This is because the analysis of human interaction is central to folklorist and gender researches. The individuals whose lives, experiences and behaviour were interpreted were those who possess cultural knowledge about the Swahili community residing in Mumias in western Kenya.

2.3. Study Loci

Mumias town is located in South Wanga Location in Kakamega County in the western part of Kenya (see map 1 &2 in the appendix 5). According to the 2009 population census, Mumias has an urban population of 45,485 (KNBS, 2010) with an estimated Swahili component of less than 1%.

The first phase of this study was carried out in six (6) Swahili urban villages in Mumias in 2011. Makunda, Mumias (town), Jinja, Eluche, Elureko and Matungu settlements were targeted in the first phase of this research. These villages comprise 100% of the Swahili settlements in Mumias. Four schools, two mosques and two churches were included in the study. The Mumias Muslim Community Program office, the Mumias Sugar Company and the *Nabongo* Culture Centre were

visited to identify and interview community leaders. Social workers and other stakeholders in the community were also included in the study.

The second and comparative phase of the study targeted the ARP practice and social set-up by observing seven 'graduation' ceremonies performed by girls who had undergone ARP training in between 2011 and December 2014 among the Meru, Maasai and Pokot communities in Kenya. The performances were compared with primary and secondary data from social workers, NGOs and media houses that organize and sponsor the ARP. The ARP ceremonies are usually organized by various NGOs with stakeholders such as religious bodies, community based organizations (CBO), parents and the government during the December holidays.

Video clips from sponsors and television stations such as Kenya Television Network (KTN), Nation Media (NTV), K24 and Citizen TV that usually give coverage to the events were surveyed. Such clips, which were easily available on the internet, were incorporated in the analysis of ARP data.

2.4. Population and Sample Size

Women	68
Men	43
Girls (12 years and above)	79
Teachers	8
Makungwi	8
Social workers	4
Imams (Muslim clergy)	2
Nabongo Council of Elders	8
Pastors (Christian clergy)	6
Social network of friends	26
Total	252 respondents

2.5. Sampling Techniques

The study employs the snowball sampling technique. A major informant was purposively selected from each category of respondents. This person later assisted the researcher and his assistants in identifying other informants. In addition, the respondents were given a chance to nominate other participants who were eligible for this study.

Whilst Miller (1991:38) notes that a minimum of 10% of the target population is adequate for descriptive surveys, this study targeted double, 20% of the population, in each category. All the respondents selected for this study share basic characteristics concerning the topic of the study.

The women, men and girls are members of the Mumias Swahili community. In some instances, the girls were the initiates during the graduation ceremony performed after the ARP. Some of the older women went through traditional *unyago* initiation, which included FGM. The *makungwi* and social workers are the instructors and custodians of *unyago* and ARP practices, while the i*mams* and pastors are the religious and opinion leaders within the community.

The teachers possess information about their students. 56% of the female teachers revealed that they had undergone FGM during their youth and that they were supportive of efforts to eradicate it, while 100% of the male respondents had all undergone male circumcision but they all supported the *unyago wa mfereji*, and any other efforts to eradicate FGM.

100% of the *makungwi* constituted a significant population of this study because they possess knowledge on both traditional and contemporary *unyago*. Data from the *makungwi* as well as that from social workers involved in *unyago wa mfereji* and ARP programmes in Kenya was elicited through interviews.

Men were also targeted for this study, alongside religious leaders such as pastors and *imams* who are in charge of the places of worship in the area of study because they are opinion shapers within the Mumias community and hence formed an important population of study.

The *Nabongo*Council of elders, together with the Nubian Council of Elders in Mumias, were also consulted during this research especially in regard to socio-cultural changes in Mumias. The elders are the custodians of the community's customs and history.

2.6. Data Gathering Techniques

The research employed a combination of methods to collect data as follows:

(a) Documentary study of *unyago*, FGM and ARP background. These include recorded information obtained from existing literature, secondary data obtained from publications and official documents from various relevant sources such as NGOs and CBOs involved in the practice.

(b) Primary data sourced through questionnaires with predetermined topics and questions. This qualitative technique was used on selected individuals for important information. This group included the primary school girls, their teachers, the *makungwi*, the Chief, and both Muslim and Christian clergy. The technique is ideal for this group of respondents since it provides exhaustive and appropriate information about their own viewpoints. Due to logistical constraints, secondary school girls were not part of the subjects for this research. However, some girls who are not in school were included. Further information was sought through personal and email correspondence from the TNI and rescue centre founder, a sexologist and the Nabongo Council of elders.

(c) Tape recording of live ARP graduation ceremony was considered ideal because it provided exhaustive and relevant information for analysis of performance aspects of the ARP such as songs, poems, films and drama. The method is also non-intrusive as opposed to video recording hence created a more relaxed atmosphere between the researcher and respondents. It proved ideal because some of the Swahili women did not want their pictures taken owing to cultural and religious code of conduct for married women. The impediment of not recording the visual aspects of the subjects was overcome through the acquisition and reviewing of videos that were recorded by the sponsors and media house.

Qualitative research data gathering techniques were used in the research. Data was collected from respondents by two experienced research assistants at venues accessible to the participants such as schools, offices and mosques through interview schedules to elicit information on various aspects of *unyago* practice and to solicit the respondents' knowledge and attitudes on *unyago* practice. Probing was used to seek clarification in the field and during transcription of recorded data. The research also applied participant observation techniques to observe live ARP performances at the 'graduation' phase of contemporary *unyago*. The observations were objectified through an observation list of the ARP graduation ceremonies.

Finally, the internet through social media offered immediate access to a wider community of respondents. Young women groups' views on both *unyago* and ARP (such as "Super-mamas" on Facebook) were sought and analyzed. Moreover, internet tracking of hits or responses based on open-ended questions posted on Facebook and blogs were used to complement personal interviews carried out in the field.

2.7. Instruments for Data Collection

The research employed different triangulation techniques to collect data from sampled respondents. These included a standard interview schedule and an observation list of the contemporary *unyago* ceremonies. Tape recording of the graduation performances was envisaged to save time as compared to writing.

Due to the nature of their contract, however, the ARP ceremony sponsors declined my personal video-recording of the performances. However, I relied on the video clips that were recorded by various media houses and sponsors. During the collection of data it was observed that private Kenyan television stations such as NTV, KTN, Citizen TV, K24 and the sponsoring NGOs, had professional personnel recording the ceremonies. These clips were acquired and their content reviewed. Nevertheless, the sponsors allowed the researcher only limited use of a still camera to take some pictures. Consequently, the research largely relied on the recorded video coverage by the stakeholders. This data constituted the transcribed and recorded texts contained in this study.

The observation method was favoured because the performances constitute a contemporary world-view; the "lived experience and reality for the participants" (Berger and Luckmann 1967:20). Moreover, the performances represent current units of analysis "as articulated, formulated, and presented/represented by the people themselves" (Ntarangwi 2003: 37). All the above methods were used to complement the field notes made during interviews and observation periods.

2.8. Pilot Study

Piloting involved trying out in the field once the questionnaire was constructed in order to ascertain the questionnaire's reliability as a data collection instrument. The questions were pretested to a selected sample group in Mumias before finalizing them. This was done four months prior to the actual period of data collection using the same procedures used during the actual data collection as recommended by Borg (1977:33) and Brause (2002:25). The research assistants were later trained and briefed on how to create rapport with, and to collect data from respondents.

The preliminary study successfully determined that:

(i) The Swahili in Mumias had intermarried with fellow migrant communities, such as the Nubians, Arabs and Somali. They had also intermarried with the local Wanga inhabitants. The outcome of the interactions was the adoption of multicultural practices which included the adoption of Islamic faith, similar marriage practices and most importantly, the circumcision of both boys and girls.

(ii) The practice of female circumcision had ceased but in its place was a ritual known as *unyago wa mfereji* which is devoid of female circumcision. Having determined that there was no more FGM practice among the Swahili of Mumias, the researcher was able to evaluate and predict an appropriate sample size. This led to the identification of major informants who were later used to identify other subjects.

2.9. Methods of Data Analysis

The content, meaning and implications of the Swahili *unyago* ritual were qualitatively deduced from the views of the respondents, the initiates, the *makungwi*, the social workers and the *imams* and other stakeholders. As a quality control measure and for comparative purposes, questionnaires were administered to primary school pupils, primary school teachers, chiefs and social workers from both Mumias and three other areas, namely Meru, Pokot and Kajiado, where ARP ceremonies were being held.

In the questionnaires administered in Mumias, the research indicated that traditional *unyago* had already given way to *unyago wa mfereji*. Discussions with the Nabongo, his council of elders who include the Wanga, the Swahili and the Nubians, and the social workers validated this view with the argument that the ARP practice was founded on the principles of *unyago wa mfereji*. With these results, validation was sought by replicating the same questionnaires in areas where ARP ceremonies had been introduced.

Songs performed during the ARP graduation ceremony were later reviewed for transcription, translation and analysis. The literary interpretation of the performance texts was based on surface reading. Surface reading is "a mode of interpretation that assumes that a text's meaning lies in what it does not say" (Best & Marcus, 2009).

The songs, dances, poems and films related to *unyago* and ARP ceremonies were scrutinized for veiled, latent and allusive undertones with the aim of seeking the hidden meanings. The reason for this kind of interpretation was because some aspects of *unyago* are secretive, taboo and esoteric. The critical analysis and interpretation was philosophically guided by Jacques Derrida's deconstruction and Martin Heidegger's sense of Being cast within a feminist poststructuralist

theoretical perspective. This approach enabled the formulation of the thesis that forms the basic argument in this study.

The contents of the traditional *unyago* ceremony were subjected to comparative analysis with those sung during ARP ceremonies. It was observed that the themes and style were diametrically opposed in that for instance, the *unyago* songs are vulgar. They are also rendered in the vernacular while the ARP performances are multi-generic and multi-lingual. This conclusion was further complemented by secondary data sought from non-governmental agencies that deal with attempts to stop FGM.

Although conclusions on Swahili *unyago* were drawn from specific field data and remain specific to the Swahili community in Mumias, generalizations were based on information gathered from previous case studies by NGOs involved in combating FGM in other parts of Kenya; hence parallels were drawn between the *unyago wa mfereji* and ARP training.

2.10. Transcription and Translation of Data

Some of the field data was transcribed and translated from Kiswahili to English. Fortunately, the researcher has studied both Kiswahili and English to graduate level, so transcription of data was not a major problem. However, the translation of Kiswahili poems into English is problematic because of the prosodic nature of Swahili poetry. For instance, one line in a Kiswahili poem may have been rendered in more than one sentence in the English version for clarity. Due to the use of deep metaphors in Kiswahili songs and poetry, further information about the significance and meaning of complex cultural symbols, images and allusions discernible only by the initiated community members were sought from the *makungwi*, initiates, *imams*, the *Nabongo* and other respondents through probing.

2.11. Ethical Considerations

This research deals with a topic that is very contentious, sensitive and secretive to the community. Therefore, the researcher had anticipated that some respondents might wish to keep their identities secret. Appropriate field ethics such as explaining the reasons for the research, guarantee of confidentiality and privacy of participants were assured through a consent form prior to commencement of research. For that reason, only a list of the people who accepted that their names should appear in the dissertation is included in this dissertation.

In addition, confidentiality on sensitive issues was assured to all the respondents involved in the study. It was resolved that the identity of respondents, especially women and girls, was to be protected. For instance, it was imperative to protect the identities of children and women whose

Islamic faith forbids from exposing themselves or taking pictures for public viewing. However, pictures regarding to the Wanga male circumcision and ARP were allowed because they are non-secretive public ceremonies. The research was carried out in such a way that the culture, customs and beliefs of the respondents were accorded due respect. Utmost objectivity was also observed in collecting, analyzing and disseminating all material pertaining to this research.

The consent of all the respondents who participated in this study was sought prior to taking pictures to ensure there was informed consent. Further, permission was sought in all areas of study from the relevant government authorities in Kenya. Respondents were approached through government and community structures such as the District Commissioner (D. C), Division Officer (D. O), the reigning *Nabongo*, Ward Chief, Elders, the *Imam*, the Head Teachers and the class teachers and any other community leaders identified in the field. Fortunately, there was no research permit required to undertake such an academic research study in Kenya.

2.12. Conclusion

The chapter has described how the data appropriate to the study was collected from the field. Data collection was done by the researcher with the help of two research assistants on diverse dates spread out between December 2010 and December 2013. In order to achieve its objectives the researcher employed the stated research methodology to address the research questions. The next chapter is the theoretical framework that guided this study.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

The research deals with women-specific cultural institutions: the *unyago*, FGM and ARP. It is guided by poststructuralist theory (Weedon, 1987) which is contextualized within an African feminist perspective (Kolawole, 2002; Kisiang'ani, 2004). The researcher chose this theoretical approach due to the fact that both poststructuralism and contemporary feminism are movements that share a certain critical relationship to established philosophical traditions.

3.2. Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism refers to literary criticism that began in France in the late 1960s to propagate ideas whose main theme was the rejection of the self-sufficiency of structuralism and the interrogation of the binary oppositions that make up structuralism. According to poststructuralism, a text can have varied interpretations in that the author's intended meaning is considered secondary to the meaning that the critic perceives.

Poststructuralism tends to emphasize the incoherence, tensions and ambiguities inherent in a text or discourse. It rejects the notion of a text having a single purpose or meaning and advocates that there can be multiple texts in a single text. Consequently, poststructuralism employs a variety of perspectives to form a multifaceted interpretation of a text to focus on the plurality of meaning.

Poststructuralism reviews underlying structures that make up knowledge and cultures and offers a way of studying how knowledge is produced. The knowledge that is produced in a community is normally passed on to younger generations through various methods of cultural reproduction, often resulting in transferring aspects of society such as class and gender roles to upcoming generations. This transmission can be done through both informal and formal methods, such as *unyago* training, demonstrations and formal education. Poststructuralism argues that because history and culture condition and determine underlying structures in a community, they are susceptible to bias and misinterpretations.

To understand an object or text, therefore, it is necessary to study the object itself, the subject(s), and the systems of knowledge that produced both the object and the subject. In this study, I have analyzed the attitudes of women (subject) towards *unyago*, FGM and ARP (cultural institutions), and the performances that produce and support the institutions (object). Therefore, the three variables are considered agents of cultural production and are used to explain why FGM is so established as to render it difficult to eradicate.

Poststructuralists argue that meaning has a performative and practical dimension to the extent that meaning is renewed or transformed through such performances. Meaning is not fixed through any objective or theoretical process; neither is it a representation of an objective world. Rather, meaning is the disclosure of a world of meaning within which we make sense of life; hence, linguistic meanings are never complete but always exhibit ambiguity and contradiction. Poststructuralism takes some elements from reader response, deconstruction and structuralism. According to poststructuralism, a reader's response creates meaning; hence, a text's meaning is never stable but is always changing and shifting.

Poststructuralism insists that a text conceals conflicts within it due to different authorial voices. These varied voices within a text are sometimes termed sub-texts. Every text, therefore, is a contested terrain in the sense that what it appears to say on the surface cannot be understood without reference to the concealments and contextualization of meaning going on simultaneously to mark the text's significance, such as in the use of specialized jargon and euphemisms.

Unyago performances, for instance, are restricted to the women's domain and within a secretive codification of meaning. The performances are therefore analyzed in this study with the aim of attempting to unravel the concealed meanings that help us to understand the deep philosophical reasoning that communities use to justify and promote FGM. Such an approach demands the use of deconstruction as one of the key tenets of poststructuralism.

3.2.1. Deconstruction

Derrida (1976; 1978) suggests that every text has ambiguities and developed deconstruction as a technique for uncovering the ambivalences that often lead to multiple interpretations of texts. To Derrida, it is impossible to arrive at a final and complete interpretation of a text. For this reason, he concluded that meaning is indeterminate.

Derrida (ibid) promotes deconstruction as a method of inserting additional or different meanings to a text. Agger (1991: 113) argues that "…deconstructive reading prises open unavoidable gaps of meanings that readers fill with their own interpolative sense." Seen this way, reading becomes a vibrant activity rather than remaining merely a passive reflection on an objective text with a singular meaning. Agger (ibid) further states that readers contribute to giving sense and meaning to a text by "filling in the gaps and conflicts of meaning, even becoming writers, and hence challenging the hierarchy of writing over reading, cultural production over cultural reception", a standpoint that mirrors Roland Barthes'(1967) essay, *The Death of the Author*.

Some of the *unyago* performances in this dissertation had to be interpreted, out of necessity, with the objective of understanding the value of language and symbolic usages through assuming that the *unyago* performances are composed, preserved, transmitted and owned communally. Consequently, the texts, especially the songs, were interpreted as having been authored by the community. They are socially and historically constituted texts whose meanings are open to different interpretations. However, the poems, songs and ARP performances whose authors are known are acknowledged. The multiple sources of the texts do not impose any interpretation limits to the texts. The analysis was aimed at arriving at multiple conclusions regarding cultural reproduction through performance.

Poststructuralism and deconstruction reveal how language helps constitute reality. For instance, Foucault (1972) argues that systems of knowledge are never pure or devoid of stake but are always formed by power interpretations rather than by objectivity. To poststructuralists, the traditional model of objectivity, which claims to represent or describe social reality, is challenged. The theory upholds the view that language does not connect with a "truth" or "reality" outside of it, but that it is a structure or code, which derives meaning from a connection with an outside world. In other words, if there is a reality, it may not have any bearing on our sense of "truth" at all (Foucault, 1972).

This study takes cognizance of such contradictions, gaps in meaning, and takes note of what is left unsaid as far as *unyago* and FGM are concerned to define relationships within the population of study.

3.2.2. Being

Despite the fact that Heidegger (1953) is silent on issues of sexual difference, his philosophical works have, in the last two decades, been viewed from a feminist perspective. In his work *Being and Time* (1953), Heidegger argues that philosophy had discussed all beings found in the world but had neglected to question what Being itself is. *Being* is best understood through the application of existentialist philosophy. Existentialism places emphasis on individual human existence through personal choices and freedoms. However, despite the individual being in charge of his own life, the very reason for existence is negated through death. Consequently, a human being has to find meaning in life by creating a purpose for its existence. Heidegger's (ibid) "question of Being" places emphasis on *Dasein* (being there, presence or existence). *Dasein* is thrown into the world only to find an already existing world in which there are other beings. For survival, *Dasein* has to struggle with all possibilities and be responsible for its own existence.

Because *Dasein* is indoctrinated into a tradition that already exists through language and meaning, it is through socialization that *Dasein* finds an identity, but has to grapple with individual survival, mortality and historicity. Being is what determines beings as beings. If we understand being, we can clarify and understand the meaning of Being, or the sense of Being (*Sinn des Seins*).

In Heideggerian terms, the understanding of Being is only possible by referring to particular beings. In other words, our access to Being is through other beings. It is in the light of this that *unyago* and FGM are interpreted as ascribing an identity to participants. It is also demonstrated that this ascribed identity can sometimes be withdrawn in case of perceived deviancy to the group. It is further demonstrated that the ARP should be developed as to ascribe tangible benefits for participants to gain acceptance by a majority of community members.

Derrida observes that Heidegger's silence on the subject of sexuality or human body in *Dasein* is "easily remarked…which means that the remark is somewhat facile" (Derrida 2001: 54). Derrida observes that it is pointless to criticize Heidegger for being silent on sexuality. On the other hand, Huntington (2001) interprets Derrida's assertion to be an endorsement of *Dasein* as being gender-neutral. Huntington's insistence on the neutral gender of *Dasein* signals that his philosophy is geared toward a concern for human existence as a whole, regardless of whether the subject is female or male. It is at this point of gender-neutrality that Heidegger's Being is brought to bear on poststructuralist feminist theory.

Poststructuralism supports the view that a discussion of gendered bodies need not have any other purpose besides having the discussion. This is borne out by the realization that modern feminism does not intend to replace one type of subordination with another; but rather to put forth a philosophy for humans, for *Dasein* (which is only a being).

Poststructuralism aims at reaching a point at which there is no privileging of one gender over another. Such a view privileges ontological (the nature of being) over sexual difference to the extent that we may all consider ourselves human, or a gender-neutral set of *Dasein* that are engaged with being with one another. In this view, the privileging of one race, one class, or one gender cannot eliminate repression.

In this study, the concept of Being is investigated with the aim of understanding the logic behind the support accorded to female circumcision, which to some people is considered a painful, harmful, useless and barbaric practice. Regarding this, (KDHS, 2006:1) states that despite FGM

being horrific to some people; it is "exalted and sanctified through the very language used". It is for this reason that despite the controversy surrounding it; female circumcision is often referred to in terms that indicate its importance to a group.

Ultimately, this study examines the centrality of *unyago* and FGM in defining, giving identity to, providing consciousness, reality and presence to a member of a community that practices it. It shows how some communities have resisted change despite the practices facing threats from various internal and external forces. The research concludes that there is a strong philosophical justification for the practice of FGM and that the ritual plays a big role in the existence of community members as it defines their sense of Being. Finally, the research interrogates whether ARP has acquired similar efficacy.

3.2.3. Language

Language is an important element of a feminist poststructural analysis because it is the mechanism through which the constructs of femininity and masculinity are defined, characterized and internalized in socially specific ways (Scott, 1994). It is through language that an individual makes sense and meaning of the world (Doering, 1992). It is also through language that socially specific meanings are constituted within language, not by those who utter the words (Weedon, 1987); but rather it is contextualized through social positioning. In other words, language is not mere words but rather a meaning-constituting system. In this study, the debates surrounding female circumcision are considered in an objective manner.

An analysis of language, discourse or text, provides a starting point for understanding how social relations are conceived, how institutions are organized and how collective identity is established. The aim of poststructuralist feminism is to analyse specific texts such as utterances and cultural practices in terms of specific historical contexts (Weedon, 1987). Further informed by Palmer's (1990:3) assertion that "language is the stage on which consciousness makes historical entrance and politics is scripted", this study maintains that language is a vital element in understanding the philosophical and ideological standpoints regarding *unyago*, female circumcision and ARP.

In the context of this study, and as guided by Scott (1994), utterances regarding the *unyago*, female circumcision, and ARP institutions and their performances do not have fixed meanings. Rather, they possess highly connotative historical and contextual meanings. This study takes cognizance of women's discourses as valid sources of knowledge and operates from the paradigm that words can be a medium through which we can gain insights into the life-world of women.

In the analysis, this research asks several questions regarding text. How and in what specific contexts, in which specific communities, and by what textual and social processes has meaning been acquired? How do meanings change? How have some meanings emerged as normative, expressing value judgment, while others have disappeared or become obsolete? Moreover, how do these processes reveal how power is constituted and how it operates?

3.2.4. Power

Another important principle of the poststructuralist theoretical perspective that we use in this study is power. In poststructuralist theory, power and knowledge are not identical but are mutually dependent upon one another: with power generating knowledge and knowledge initiating power. Some poststructuralists such as Weedon (2007) and Dickson (1990) are agreed that knowledge and power are used to conceptualize the relationship between "language, social institutions, and individual consciousness" and are always exercised in relation to a resistance.

Poststructuralists state that because knowledge is socially constructed, inherently transient and closely associated with power, then individuals with power control what constitutes a meaningful event. Further, those with power determine the era and our subsequent understanding of the event. Moreover, and as suggested by Gavey (1997), the recognition of different meanings of an event, utterance or performance serves to disrupt and displace oppressive knowledge and meanings, embracing the plurality of meaning that the poststructuralist theory upholds.

Since knowledge is made by society and depends on context, it is changeable by those who wield power. Like knowledge, power is made by society using politics, history and the circumstances surrounding events; hence all social relationships are power relationships. For poststructuralists, power and knowledge go together. In the analysis of *unyago*, FGM and ARP performances, this study underscores the power relations between women and men, women and women, initiated girls and non-initiated ones, and girls and boys. The power relations are investigated from the prism of *unyago*, FGM and ARP within a complex socially defined matrix in which power relations keep shifting based on ascribed attributes that arise from the rites of passage for both men and women.

3.2.5. Subjectivity

Another tenet of a poststructuralist theoretical perspective that underscores this study is subjectivity. Subjectivity is defined as conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions that allow an individual to make sense of self and to understand one's relation to the world (Weedon, 1987). In addition, Alcoff (1995) considers subjectivity in individuals as being mediated by social discourse

and cultural practices rather than by individual motivations, intentions or preferences. For this reason, therefore, a woman would undergo the painful operation so as to conform to socially sanctioned expectations because social forces shape a person's perception of self and also shape the acquisition of gendered subjectivity by assuming current meanings and values for behaviour. A woman or man who has not undergone certain rites of passage may, in some contexts, be viewed as a child; or at best, an incomplete Being.

Poststructural feminism is mainly a tool for literary analysis but, as we have shown above, overarches both psychoanalysis and social-cultural criticism. Following the ideas of Lacan, Weedon (1977) argues that poststructuralism seeks to explore relationships that may exist between language, society, subjectivity and power relations as they impact upon gender in particular.

3.3. Feminist Poststructuralism

Poststructural feminism seeks to explore relationships between language, society, subjectivity and power relations and how they impact upon gender in particular (Randal, 2010: 116). Poststructural feminism is largely a tool for literary analysis that applies socio-cultural criticism combined with philosophy. In the late twentieth century, feminists adapted the poststructuralist philosophy of Foucault (1972, 1977, and 1978) to analyse and challenge constructs of meaning and power relations in modern society. Poststructural feminism arose as a branch of feminism that engages with insights from poststructuralist thought.

Feminist thought embraced Foucault's ideas because they challenged the notion of a fixed meaning, a unified meaning and central theories of power (Weedon, 1987). The principles provided the much-needed theoretical foundation for feminists to push goals that are political in nature. Scott (1994) argues that Foucault's thinking provides a creative and different way of thinking about the politics of contextualized social meaning.

According to Weedon (1987: 40-41), poststructuralism offers a useful conceptual framework for feminist practice. She goes on to describe feminist poststructuralism as "a mode of knowledge production which uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and identify areas and strategies for change" (ibid). Poststructuralist feminism is applied in this dissertation to interrogate, challenge, examine and deconstruct patriarchal discourse, social institutions and power relationships that empower, disempower and oppress women. It is in the light of the foregoing that *unyago* and ARP performances are analyzed.

It is severally demonstrated in this dissertation that some *unyago* songs are a window through which we can view the underlying tensions within which *unyago* and FGM exist. The findings in this study vindicate Rabinow's (1996) view that Foucault (1972) sought to identify, investigate, and expose any contemporary cultural practices and rituals that threatened the theoretical equality of people envisaged by the law, or by some political philosophers. That is because the study indicates that *unyago* and FGM were contentious and contested even within traditional domains with both supporters and opposers in equal measure.

A poststructuralist feminist perspective scrutinizes the set of rules on which discourse is situated. The value of its analysis results when gender issues are incorporated into a poststructural framework. A poststructural feminist analysis is a methodological paradigm of understanding, exposing, challenging and changing hierarchical social institutions that use power to silence and marginalize discursive discourse related to gender (Weedon, 1977), and to expose biases within socially, politically, and culturally established institutions that result in the oppression of women (Gavey, 1997). In this study, the *unyago* and FGM are discussed as institutions constituted in repressive ways and whose main challengers, though subtle, emanated from among the women themselves. In contemporary times, the ARP openly supports the perceived benefits of *unyago* but subverts the basic principles of FGM.

As noted earlier, poststructuralist feminism is informed by Foucault's (1972: 49) view of discourse as "practices that systematically form the object of which they speak". Feminist poststructuralism considers all spoken interactions, performances, and indeed any formal or informal utterances as being interwoven within a web of social and institutional discourses. It is for this reason that supporters of FGM "espouse a wide range of ideas about why female circumcision constitutes an important part of their cosmology and worldview" (Abusharaf, 2006: 1). The analysis of *unyago* songs in this dissertation exposes a systematic method of indoctrination or cultural reproduction that ensured the perpetuation of the rite.

It is from the above perspective that this research activity treats women's socialization institutions of the *unyago* and the ARP, together with the accompanying performances and operations such as FGM, as discourses whose analysis provides great insights into the philosophical undercurrents of FGM practice in Kenya. This study uses a poststructural feminist analysis through which different gender discourses work intertextually to position women as "variously powerful and powerless, often shifting from one position to another", in different performance contexts (Baxter, 2003: 2).

Furthermore, the interpretation of meaning in various performances within a given discursive context is left open to further interpretation because the theoretical approach used advocates for multiple-authored accounts of respondents. This study adheres to the fundamental principles of the poststructuralist theoretical perspective through the investigation of the key tenets of language, power and subjectivity in the analysis of all the performances.

3.3.1. Gender

In general terms, gender signifies differences in biological makeup of human beings in terms of the sex of the species as male, female or neuter. In recent times, gender also includes the wider application of the term to include 'transsexual' or 'transvestite' people. On the other hand, culture is rooted in the community and within people; hence feminist approaches often examine representations and patterns of behaviour towards persons of the 'other' gender within communities. Beliefs, attitudes and values that might be linked to the gender concerns in a community are explored.

Cultural studies regard gender as something that is performed or practiced within a community. Its investigation always seeks to prioritize campaigns for reforms on issues such as reproductive rights, domestic and sexual violence, among other social maladies. Feminist thought attempts to deconstruct societies in an attempt to combat social and cultural inequalities; hence some scholars define gender in terms of relations of power between the sexes. For instance, Ostergaard (1992: 6) promotes the view that "gender relations are constructed in terms of the relations of power and dominance that structure the life chances of women and men".

Ostergaard (ibid) further observes that gender divisions are not fixed by biology, but constitute aspects of wider social divisions of labour, which are rooted in the conditions of production and reproduction and reinforced by cultural, religious and ideological systems prevailing in a society. The campaign against FGM falls squarely within such a paradigm.

The social construction of gender sublimes the biological construct in the sense that the production and consumption of culture seems to be dependent upon the effective control of one social class over another, or one sex over another, to the extent that in terms of power relations, the male controls and dominates the female. The interpretation of the gender classification in terms of 'masculinity' and 'femininity', therefore, seems to have more to do with the socialization process of the individual rather than with the biological endowment of nature. The three variables of *unyago*, FGM and ARP are socialization agents whose aim is to impart certain culturally sanctioned ethos.

Mikkola (2012:1) classifies 'sex' as reference to biological features of a human being depending on "chromosomes, sex organs, hormones and other physical features". On the other hand, 'gender' is categorized depending on *social* factors such as "social role, position, behaviour or identity". Beauvoir (1989) supports this view by observing that one is not born, but rather 'becomes a woman' because every society has its own socialization institutions that transfer gender ideology. One such effective institution is the male and female rites of passage involving circumcision as a socialization process to attaining adulthood. In this study, both the males and females acquired manhood and womanhood through genital cutting and various forms of training and indoctrination.

This investigation thus begins from the hypothesis that *unyago* and the accompanying FGM ritual are socializing agents for women that serve the interests of both women and men. However, some may argue that FGM benefits men more than FGM benefits women. Arising from this premise, therefore, ARP is considered more gender sensitive and modern in that it benefits all parties concerned and eliminates certain social-economic challenges. This, however, does not mean that ARP is uncontested or unchallenged.

Many scholars agree that gender is one of the most important components of social identity and social classification across human cultures. Researchers have attempted to define the concept of gender using a number of different perspectives but most, if not all, would agree with Appadurai (1991: 8) that as a theoretical concept, "gender involves relations of duality and difference…a 'metaphor' useful for ordering other aspects of social cultural life in making all kinds of cultural meaning".

People therefore define themselves or are defined as different from each other based on gender as enshrined in symbolic representations. Such a view of gender is especially pertinent about Swahili women who, as earlier indicated, originate from a multi-cultural background. For instance, *unyago*, which is replete with symbolic cultural overtones, may illuminate diversities and binary oppositions through which meaning is negotiated between freeborn/slave, rich/poor, male/female, young/old, single/married, and so on.

The tenets of gender semiotics are used in this study to interrogate perceived differences that *unyago* introduces into the Swahili community of Mumias. How do the girls/women perceive themselves after u*nyago* vis-a-vis the other members of the community? What is the philosophical, ideological and material underpinning of being u*nyago*, non-*unyago* or *unyago wa mfereji* woman?

How do *unyago*, FGM and ARP underscore this conceptualization of womanhood? What symbols are used to entrench such perceptions?

Hirdman (1988) identifies two basic premises of all gender systems, namely difference and hierarchy. The binary oppositions inherent in gender give women, or promise some women a certain power, status and influence, which is the reason why women participate in it. The participation of women in a ritual that ascribes power to the participants can be best understood through the concept of 'gender contract'. The term "gender contract" was coined by Nordic researchers (Astrom and Hirdman, 1992) to describe the sex-segregated division of labour (paid and unpaid).

The concept was further developed to refer to those unspoken rules, reciprocal obligations and rights that determine relations between men and women, women and other women, older and younger generations, together with matters of production and reproduction (Berge & Ve H, 2000). In this study, gender contract is an unwritten intra-gender agreement that confers certain privileges to women and denies them to those who do not conform to certain expectations. This theory was confirmed through this research. Some scholars seek to develop rigorous models of the concept of gender as a system of meaning and representation forged in social interaction.

In traditional Swahili society in Mumias, women who underwent *unyago* got more respect than those who did not. They were allowed to marry and have children. The rite of passage therefore gave them a higher status in society. Those who did not subscribe to the ritual were despised and derided through derogatory language, insults and proverbs such as '*mwacha mila ni mtumwa*' (One who abandons his or her customs/traditions is a slave). This study also sought to discover the attitudes of Swahili women towards *unyago* and the value they place on it concerning gaining higher status as married women, maintaining the marriage institution and child bearing, among other reasons.

Rosaldo (1980: 393) explains that gender seems to be "the product of social relationships in concrete and changeable societies". Consequently, gender is neither biologically based differences nor a fixed bipartite division of the sexes but an outcome of social interaction. It means that in gender, there are categorizations of people, artifacts, sequences and events even within people of the same gender (Arola, 1998).

The analysis of gender relations is also a key element of gender theory. The theory explains the different ways in which communities assign and ascribe roles based on "the large body of knowledge that each culture uses to explain the world, structure social interaction, establish beliefs and attitudes…" (Nhlekisana 2010: 36). The theory further posits that gender is a social construct that varies across cultures, historical periods and even between members of the same sex.

Gender entails exploring ways in which social relations in specific contexts are constructed and maintained. It also includes an investigation of the intentions behind gender-specific cultural practices to determine whose interest they serve (whether those of men or women or whether there is gender parity), and whether those interests are uncontested (Encloe 1989: 59). This study probes the veracity of this argument about the *unyago* ritual, which is a woman-specific cultural practice among the Swahili in order to determine women's social identity as adult marriageable women.

According to the general theory of socialization espoused by Van Gennep (1977:21), rites of passage are rituals that mark the transitional phase between childhood and full inclusion into a tribe or social group. Rites of passage are indicators of important milestones, values and beliefs in specific cultures. Such a perspective would suggest that *unyago* creates feelings of 'oneness' within the group of initiates and 'otherness' within the uninitiated girls.

An objective examination of gender, therefore, must take into consideration the socio-cultural contexts and the values that govern the sexes and groups of the same sex. Gullestand (1993) argues that the assumption that women everywhere are subordinated to men is not a useful guideline in investigations of gender. She maintains that the axiom of global subordination assumes what should be examined across all cultures. This, she observes, "reduces the ability of the analyst to uncover subtleties, complexities, contradictions and ambiguities of gender relations in different contexts" (Gullestand, 1993: 128). Thus, the current study's quest to understand contemporary Swahili *unyago*, which is a gender constructed institution, cannot ignore the caution given by Spivak (1987) and Locket (1990) to western scholars, that they should avoid impositions of western ideological thought into the arena of the Third World women's experience.

Both Steady (1987) and Badejo (1999) advance a type of African feminist ideology founded on the principles of traditional African values that view gender as complimentary, parallel, asymmetrical and autonomously linked in the continuity of human life. Badejo (1993: 93) states that African feminism recognizes the inherent multiple roles of women and men in production, reproduction and the distribution of wealth, power and responsibility for sustaining human life. He further observes

that “this feminist perspective is underscored by traditional mythical beliefs and religious practices found in African oral literary traditions and festivals that place women at the centre of the social order as custodians of the earth, fire and water and uphold men as the guardians of women’s custodial rights” (ibid).

Badejo’ s position is that African feminism embraces femininity, beauty, power, serenity, inner harmony and a complex matrix of power centered on womanness; thus demonstrating that power and femininity are intertwined rather than antithetical. Within this perspective, African femininity could be seen as complementary to African masculinity. Kabaji (2005) agrees with this observation by arguing that African femininity is active and essential to the social, political, economic, cultural and evolutionary aspects of human order. This research study adduced evidence from the field to validate this complementary theoretical perspective.

Consequently, the gender roles ascribed to members of the communities differ from one context to another. As a result, the social diversities informing the African situation demand a theoretical approach that best explains the socio-cultural factors that determine the constructions of gender in any particular community. A gender based folklorist study in Africa should therefore, include situating the research within its specific cultural context (Nhlekisana. 2010: 37). From the foregoing, it is clear that the socio-cultural context of the Swahili is relevant in understanding the Swahili in Mumias. Consequently, the signs, symbols and visual imagery embedded in the *unyago* and the ARP practices were analyzed with an aim of understanding the semiotics of gender inherent in both the traditional and the contemporary *unyago wa mfereji* and ARP.

The desire to break from the western gender ideology is further underscored by Kisiang’ani (2004), who writes about the need to decolonize gender studies in Africa. Kisiang’ani argues that gender studies in Africa have been a platform from which the West has used its immense economic resources to pit the African man against the African woman. Kisiang’ani further observes that the reason for western engagement in gender sensitization is to divert attention from the real issues, such as that colonial imperialism marginalized both African men and women.

Kisiang’ani further argues that both the western man and woman are not true friends of the African woman, who is continuously suffering from the brutality of the African man. While it is useful to consider and interrogate the involvement of many international donors in attempting to eradicate FGM, this study considers the fact that FGM is not a voluntary or lifestyle choice. FGM is a custom in which the consent of the girls is not sought. The present study also probed the extent of

masculine involvement in the practice of *unyago*, FGM and ARP, and in how both men and women in the Mumias community perceive and define themselves as human beings.

Previous studies have indicated that one of the reasons for the practice of FGM was sexual control. In most of the communities where FGM is practiced, studies have shown that the circumcision of women was believed to prevent immorality by limiting women's sexual desires so that they remained faithful to their husbands. Other reasons used to buttress FGM include beautification of the genitalia, cleanliness, and marriageability, alongside other cultural and religious reasons (Njue & Askew 2004). In most societies, men make decisions on when a girl is to undergo FGM. Such arguments have emphasized that FGM is deeply rooted in people's culture, whose custodians are the elders in the community.

Opposition to FGM has been part of the fight for gender equality and human rights, including, the right to sexual and reproductive health. There are dissenting voices who argue that the fight against FGM is based on Western ideologies and that Africans should be left to choose their own cultural aesthetic and practice (Robertson 1996; Shweder 2000). This debate is beyond the focus of this study. However, whenever necessary in our analysis of field data, such dissenting views regarding FGM and Islam were put into perspective.

3.3.2. Islamic Feminism

The concept of gender is a fundamental tool in analyzing culture within the limitations of a multicultural African world. There are more than forty ethnic communities with their own cultural beliefs and practices in Kenya. The only unifying element among them is either Christianity or Islam. A Swahili is an African, and, in most cases, a Muslim by faith (Ntarangwi, 2003: 43-76). This research, therefore, acknowledges the role Islam plays in the lives of Swahili women in Mumias by considering theoretical perspectives of "Islamic feminism".

Although Islamic intellectual encounters with gender date back to the early 20th century, the concept of Islamic feminism only emerged in the 1990s. The emergence of Islamic feminism was met with outright opposition and suspicion among Muslim nations (Badran and Cooke, 1990).Other stakeholders feel that the seclusion of girls after the *Sunna* circumcision, segregation and veiling imposed on Muslim women were not sanctioned by Islam but by Islamic society's male dominated cultures (Badran and Cooke, 1990: xxiv). Preliminary pilot studies for this research were cognizant of the fact that various Muslim scholars banned FGM practice in Kenya and Egypt in 2006 because it is a cultural tradition, which is not supported by Islam and that FGM, existed before the introduction of Islam or Christianity (Slack, 1988; Wakabi, 2007).

Islamic feminism is a brand of feminism, which is concerned with the role of women in Islam. It aims to achieve the full equality and recognition of all Muslims, regardless of gender. Islamic feminism argues that patriarchal oppression is against the principles of Islam and that it is a cultural construct not supported by religious doctrine. According to Islamic feminism, the discrimination of women amounts to violation of human rights (Badran and Cooke, 1990: 275). That is why Islamic feminism seeks to highlight the deeply rooted teachings of equality in the religion and questions the patriarchal interpretation of Islamic teachings contained in the *Koran*, (holy book), *hadith* (sayings of Prophet Muhammad) and *sharia* (Islamic law).

Islamic feminism advocates women's rights, gender equality and social justice grounded in an Islamic framework. However, it embraces and acknowledges the role of non-Islamic feminist discourse by promoting an integrated global feminist perspective. For instance, Nawal El Sadaawi championed the fight for the rights of women and girls in Egypt for many decades. Although Sadaawi (1977) contextualizes the plight of the girl-child in Egypt by exposing the indignity of FGM, she is keen to point out that FGM is a widespread practice all over the world. She further observes that *Sunna* circumcision is not a religious requirement but a cultural practice imposed on women by a predominantly patriarchal mentality.

Although all major religions have been accused of discriminating against women in one way or the other, Islam appears to withstand the worst of the allegations (Sadaawi, 1977). It has also been observed that western concepts of feminism and gender are sometimes resisted as foreign and subversive of Islam. However, most Islamic feminists concur that an approach that argues for the equality of women "from within Islam" would be more effective than one that is considered foreign (Afshar, 1997). Such a postmodern feminist perspective underscores the importance of a specific community's history and culture, a principle that resonates with African gender theorists who advocate a 'glocal' (a localized) application of feminist principles (Sadaawi, 1977: 3).

The contextualization of gender issues is pertinent to this research because, according to available data, *Sunna* circumcision is still practiced among some practioners of Islam as part of the *unyago* ritual (KDHS, 2003; Cheserem 2011). On the other hand, Swahili identity and culture are contentious, contended and controversial (Ntarangwi, 2003; Mazrui, 1995; 2007; Mazrui & Sharif, 1994). It therefore follows that some traditions, such as the existence of FGM among them, are

equally contested and shrouded in secrecy; hence the general assumption that the Swahili do not practice any form of female circumcision.

The indigenous Swahili population is also small to the extent that data regarding FGM among them is usually lumped together with that of the Mijikenda (nine tribes) who are closely related to the Swahili. It is for such reasons that subaltern cultures are left out of major studies. This study recognises the role that minorities such as the Swahili living in Mumias play towards uplifting Kenya's national culture. FGM is supported by ideological and socio-cultural factors, hence its abandonment among Swahili women in Mumias, needed to be thoroughly investigated for its oddity.

3.4. Culture and Culture Change

This section is intended to examine the various definitions of culture and to succinctly situate the concept of cultural change within the context of the research. Secondly, it discusses the different forms of resistance to cultural change, and, thirdly, it investigates the concept of directed or planned cultural change which ARP claims to promote.

The section thus provides an operational definition of culture that can be used for characterizing, describing, and comparing cultures in different scenarios to enable us better understand the 'internal dynamism' of Swahili culture and the 'internal pluralism' of voices, positions and opinions about the *unyago* practice.

Culture as a modern concept is based on a term first used in classical antiquity. In recent times, however, sociologists and other scholars influenced by Marxism have developed the Cultural Studies discipline. These studies have further identified culture with consumption of goods and leisure activities such as music, film, food, and clothing. Nevertheless, cultural studies focus largely on the study of popular culture, that is, the social meaning of mass-produced consumer and leisure goods. However, this study is about culture as it is predominantly understood in the field of social sciences and humanities, namely as denoting the folk-spirit, having a unique identity, and the full expression of the unique authentic self.

Hall (1976: 16) asserts that culture is not genetically inherited, and neither can it exist on its own. Rather, members of a society always share it. Hofstede (1980, 21-23) supports the view that culture is "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another" and is passed from generation to generation. Hofstede conceptualizes cross-cultural communication in terms of cultural constant cultural changes. Culture is changing all the time

because each generation adds something of its own before passing it on to the next generation. It is usual that one's culture is taken for granted and assumed to be correct because it is the first-and sometimes the only one- to be learned (Hofstede, ibid).

According to Hall & Jefferson (1976: 10-11) culture is also considered the "peculiar and distinctive 'way of life' of a group or class, the meanings, values and ideas embodied in institutions, in social relations, in systems of beliefs, in mores and customs, in uses of objects and material life". A group, such as the youth, constitutes a cultural category. The most common definition of culture considers it a way of life followed by a community or society, or the mode of life in respective social groups (Tanase, 1959: 18-19). It also includes a community's practices like the arts and methods of communication and representation that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political domains (Said, 1994).

Culture also includes a community's intangible heritage. Intangible cultural heritage is the living traditions and expressions such as oral traditions, rituals, and indigenous knowledge and craft skills of a community that are inherited from past generations. Intangible cultural heritage represents the best traditional, contemporary and living knowledge and worldview held by a cultural community.

The term "culture" has been recently used to describe the knowledge and behaviour of groups, such as in the concept of "corporate culture", "organizational culture" "culture of masculinity" and "culture of motherhood and the family", (Du Gay 1997; Woodward 1997), and the "culture of deregulation" (Miller 1997). In this sense, culture vaguely denotes some characteristics or ways of behaviour of a category of people or organization. All the above suggest that every social activity, group, or institution generates and requires its own distinctive 'world' of meaning and practices, its own culture, or a sub-culture (Kuper, 1999).

From the foregoing, culture is a complex concept, and no single definition of it has achieved consensus in the literature. It is impossible to understand a culture without taking into account its language(s) because language plays an important role in creating the context of negotiation and in allowing negotiators to prepare for cross-cultural interactions. Nonverbal communication, such as movements, emotions, attitudes and feelings shown in different gestures and motions may be conveyed unintentionally by facial expressions, gestures, and body language for dramatic effect and histrionics (Okpewho, 1992: 46). An understanding of non-verbal communication is therefore considered one of the most important parts of communication (Mulholland 1991).

Some experts consider culture as the communication of information, ideas, beliefs, concepts, symbols, and technical knowledge across the human population. The use of the word 'communication' in defining culture suggests that culture is meant to be distributed either from one individual to another, from one family to another or from one generation to another. Ferraro (1990:45) opines that communication can be divided into three categories: verbal, the use of words with specific meaning, paraverbal, tone of the voice; and non-verbal communication. The language used in verbal communication by any group is not a universal means, but is, according to Hargie and Dickson (2004), deeply rooted in a particular culture.

On the other hand, Linton (1936:14) suggests that the culture of any society consists of the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behaviour which the members of that society have acquired through instruction or imitation; and which they share to a greater or lesser degree. This definition suggests that culture conveys elements of what people think, how people feel, and how people behave. It is further suggestive of the fact that culture is acquired and shared through communication and imitation. It is for this reason that culture can be acquired through diverse methods of indoctrination and reproduction.

Culture is here understood as the totality of what groups of people think, how they behave, and what they produce. These human features are passed on to future generations. They bind humans together and, at the same time, separate them into different communities. From this, one is able to select relevant aspects when building his or her own definition, though of course, there are constraints. In sum, the concept of culture is indispensable to our conceptualization of gender.

3. 4.1. Directed/Planned Culture Change

Can culture be directed? Is planned cultural change possible? Bate (1994:137) answers these questions in the affirmative. In fact, culture is being continually and deliberately changed all the time at a first order level and periodically at a second order level. Bate argues that cultures are not physical entities, but rather, complex social phenomena produced interactively rather than biologically. Consequently, people create, sustain and change traditions.

Bate (1994:13) asserts that there is absolutely nothing about culture that cannot be changed by human intervention. Indeed, there is nothing more to cultures than human intervention. This is the reason why this study argues that it is possible to transform culture through an understanding of the psychological methods used in establishing, disseminating, preserving and indoctrinating community members.

Bate (1994) stated it is possible for a people to change their culture by intelligent will by intervening deliberately, and purposefully in the cultural cycle; and changing its path of development and the nature and duration of its various phases. Bate further opines that cultural change is a by-product of human interaction and does not need to be planned for it to occur. However, he maintains that it is possible for cultural change to be managed.

Referring to the case of organizations where cultures are frequently changing, Bate (1994: 138) attributes the managing and directing of culture to two factors: an understanding of the cultural process that is to be managed, and a model for intervening in that process. Furthermore, Wilkins and Dyer (1988) quoted in Bate (1994: 138) observe that the flaw in cultural change programmes is that they fail to take into account the nature of the culture to be changed. These writers point out that the issue is treated as if the process of cultural change is independent of the kind of culture that is changing. Bate (1994) suggests that the simple rule for avoiding this flaw is to first get to know one's culture and then deciding on the specific components to be modified. A proper cultural diagnosis is desirable before proceeding with the intervention. The process of deliberately transforming cultures has been termed cultural engineering (Sherman & Willard, 1983; Knott et al., 2008).

3.4.2. Cultural Engineering

Cultural engineering is a conceptual approach to cultural development planning that aims to design practical strategies for dealing with contentious cultural problems arising from social dynamics. Interventions in culture are usually geared at formulating creative solutions to challenges arising from the continued practice of some cultural institution. The new cultural values are informed by advances in human thought and knowledge and cross-fertilization of cultures in what has come to be known as cultural engineering.

Cultural changes come because of many factors leading to modifications of a society through innovation, invention, discovery or contact with other communities. Today, cultural studies have identified factors such as education, religion, urbanization and globalization as being responsible for either gradual or rapid changes that impact on a community's way of life and worldview. However, there are some aspects of cultural practice, such as FGM, that are resistant to such agents of change. Consequently, it is becoming increasingly common for culture development experts to instigate cultural change through deliberate interventions in communities where some practices have proved to be immune to the known agents of cultural change.

Cultural engineering involves taking and analyzing the structure and functions of a cultural item with a view to replacing the perceived repugnant elements inherent in it (Mazrui, 1972). Cultural engineering has great potential to bring about changes in cultural practices, such as FGM, that are considered retrogressive and harmful. FGM has been proved to have negative health implications on women. For instance, some problems associated with FGM include hemorrhage, shock, pain, and infection, difficulties during childbirth and psychological and sexual problems that can damage a girl's lifetime health (WHO, 2000; Njue and Askew, 2004).

Cultural engineering is based on the premise that cultural factors such as language, practices, performances and customs can be manipulated to develop social policies that can contribute to social reform and nation building (Mazrui, 2003; 2007). In this regard, the place of the Swahili in East Africa is distinctive in that their language is the lingua franca of the masses. Because culture is embedded in language, the Swahili cultural practice such as the *unyago* ritual that is devoid of FGM has been adapted for use among other communities that practice it. This has enabled the promotion of this shared language with the ultimate ambition of cultural homogenization as part of national integration. Based on the premise that culture is dynamic, the *unyago wa mfereji* perfectly fits this role as it has been adapted to mitigate the prevalence of FGM in Kenya.

3.5. Convention Theory of FGM

The convention theory of FGM refers to the abandonment of FGM through a general agreement, consensus or convention. The theory attempts to provide reasons that account for the possible origins and abandonment of FGM. By drawing parallels between foot-binding in China and FGM (which he refers to as FGC), Mackie (1996) proposed that the formation of a certain kind of 'pledge association' would bring FGM to an end. Mackie suggested that FGM was bound to stop the same way as foot-binding, which had persisted in China for many years. According to the convention theory, people can only abandon a cultural practice once several families abandon it. The theory is an example of deliberate channels through which efforts towards the 'social engineering' of FGM can be made.

Mackie (2000:254) develops the hypothesis that critical masses of individuals within a group are capable of effecting change. He further states that if people "whose children marry one another, who have come to the point that they would like to abandon FGC, a public pledge among such individuals would forever end FGC for them and also quickly motivate the remainder of the

intermarrying population to join in the pledge and abandon FGC as well" (ibid). This is why the aforementioned 'pledge association' is important in eradicating FGM.

Mackie further observed that the "successful abandonment might inspire neighboring groups to undertake their own pledges, so the process would be contagious within some larger collection of overlapping group" (Mackie 2000:255). In 1998, Mackie's theory was vindicated when some villages in Senegal, which were unaware of Mackie's theory, made such pledges to abandon FGM and the pledges spread to other villages. Unknown to many, the Swahili immigrant community in Mumias had already accomplished a similar feat in 1982 (ten years before Mackie's Senegalese 'discovery').

Mackie's convention theory is based on the fact that within cultures, families choose what other families choose. In Mackie's view, FGM is a 'convention' which can be abandoned once families make a pledge and stick to it, because, eventually their daughters will get married by those who also subscribe to the same convention. Most of the interventions undertaken to eradicate FGM have not been successful despite economic development or cultural globalization/internationalization. However, the convention theory argues that FGM ends quickly and almost universally "within an intermarrying group" (Mackie, 2000:254).

The convention theory therefore posits that FGM must either persist or end rapidly. Consequently, attempts to eradicate FGM through methods such as medicalization, prohibition, criminalization, among other interventions, have not been as successful as in communities where "relatively sudden convention shift" in attitude among community members has been observed (Mackie, 2000).

Although modernization theories generally suggest that increased urbanization, education, mass communication, and economic development lead to the eventual abandonment of traditional practices such as FGM, "states of cessation are rare and often dubious [with] evidence that FGM has been on the increase in the modern era" (Mackie, 2000: 270). With reference to the Rendille community in Kenya, Shell-Duncan et al. (2000) demonstrates that development does not in and of itself reduce the demand for FGM. Mackie found out that exposing women to new influences, bargaining power and independence does not necessarily compel them to abandon FGM. Research does not show a relationship between economic independence and attitude towards FGM.

3.6. Conclusion

While drawing from the positions discussed above, this study attempts to investigate the Swahili *unyago* by taking into consideration Swahili and Africa's specificity even while using western

paradigms. The broad theoretical perspectives promoted by poststructuralism have been suggested as the best-placed approach to investigate cultural transformations in *unyago*. Gender and allied concepts have also been examined from African cultural experiences and epistemologies in order to underscore the importance of socio-cultural history in understanding gender dynamics in Africa.

CHAPTER 4
LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to evaluate previous studies on women's performances, *unyago*, the Swahili people in Mumias, and FGM. It describes and summarizes selected works that are relevant to this study. The chapter explores the literature regarding the general and specific area of this research in order to identify the knowledge gaps left by previous studies.

4.2. Literature Review on Kiswahili

Discussions on the origin of Kiswahili (the language of the Swahili people) have never reached a conclusive point. In summary, two theories have been expressed. One is that Kiswahili was one of the Bantu languages of the East African coast (Nurse, 1985). The other is that Kiswahili is a mixture of Arabic and one or several Bantu languages (Johnson and Bloomfield). For the purpose of this research study this diversity in Kiswahili language is an indication of the ever dynamic nature of Swahili culture.

Later linguistic analyses have linked Kiswahili, to *Kingozi*: an ancient proto-Bantu dialect that was spoken along the East African coastline (Guthrie, 1970; Nurse, 1975; Nurse and Spear, 1985). Further research has proved that Kiswahili has borrowed vocabularies from several foreign languages but that its syntactic structure is Bantu (Abdulaziz, 1979; Mbaabu, 1987; 1991; Bakari, 1985; Mazrui and Sharif, 1994). Spear (1984: 292) argues that the Swahili language "is a Bantu language in both its grammatical structure and the majority of its vocabulary [is] closely related to the Mijikenda and Pokomo languages spoken along the Kenyan coast". Spear (ibid) observes that Kiswahili literature also reflects the African oral tradition of composition and performance.

According to Hollingsworth (1961: 38), many socio-cultural changes occurred in the east coast of Africa during the so-called "period of the *Zenj* Empire", estimated to have been between A. D. 975 and 1497 when the region was controlled by the black (*Zenj*) people. Swahili is the product of a unipolar process consisting of a combination of Arabic/Islamic and African cultures with a language spoken by both people of mixed descent and descendants of the *Wangozi*. The Swahili culture, therefore, exhibits many traces of cultural similarities with Arabic, Indian and African cultures. Although the Swahili could, therefore, be said to be a hybrid culture, its foundation is Swahili culture (Nurse & Spear 1985; Mazrui and Sharif, 1994). The term *Swahili* is itself a more recent derivation from the Arabic word *sawahil*, which means "the coast and its islands" (Ntarangwi 2003: 50).

The advent of the Arabs and their religion, Islam, further impacted on the culture of the *Wangozi*. To begin with, their identity changed from *Wangozi* (literally; 'people of wearing skins') to Waswahili (literally: 'the people who belong to this island'). The initial spread of Kiswahili from the coastal region to the hinterland of Kenya and Tanzania is attributed to Swahili and Arab traders.

The traders settled in some strategic towns such as Tabora, Mwanza, Ujiji, Usambara and Lake Nyasa in Tanzania; and Voi, Sultan Hamud and Mumias in Kenya (Whitely, 1956; Kabiri, 1995). Both Christian missionaries and Muslim preachers used Kiswahili to spread their religious beliefs in eastern Africa. This led to the further spread of Kiswahili inland. The Christian missionaries translated hymns and short Bible verses into Kiswahili. Later, Arthur C. Madan, a missionary, compiled the first Standard English-Swahili dictionary in 1903. It was later revised by Fredrick Johnson and formed the basis of standard Kiswahili in later years.

During the colonial period, the colonial administrators in Kenya and Tanganyika (now Tanzania) used Kiswahili as a lingua franca. The colonial government recognized the potential of Kiswahili in controlling their subjects in Kenya and Tanzania and, therefore, pioneered efforts of standardizing it. The dialect of Zanzibar (*Kiunguja*) was selected as the basis for standard Kiswahili and was thereafter used in all settings of formal communication (Mbaabu 1991; 1997). Currently, Kiswahili is spoken in many countries of eastern Africa. According to the University of Virginia's Swahili website, Eastern Africa is the cradle of Swahili but, from the rate at which it is spreading, it may be recognized as one of the leading languages in the world.

In Tanzania, where Kiswahili is the official and national language, for instance, deliberate efforts were made to promote the language. Tanzania's special relations with southern African countries further accelerated the spread of Kiswahili to Zambia, Malawi, and some parts of the Republic of South Africa. In Kenya Kiswahili has remained the national language, with English as the official language. However, a recent change in Kenya's constitution has elevated Kiswahili to the status of both national and official language. The majority of speakers of Kiswahili in Kenya today are not native Swahili but people who have learnt the standard Kiswahili in school.

4.3. The Swahili in Mumias

The Swahili residing in Mumias are a unique community in that it is among the few mainland Swahili settlements in Kenya with a "noticeable Muslim community…derived from trade links between Wanga state and coastal Kenya" (Sperling, 1985). One of the distinguishing cultural markers of Swahili identity to date is the practicing of Islam as a religion and as a way of life

(Ntarangwi 2003: 61). Mumias is therefore a microcosm of African (Luhya, Nubian, Somali, Asian and Swahili) cultures and religions.

Previous research based on the oral histories of the communities living in Western Kenya reported that the Luo, Luhya and Kisii migrated to western Kenya from the Sudan and Uganda between the 16th and 17th Centuries A. D. The minority Swahili settled in the region in the latter part of the 19th century (Ogot, 1973; Adhiambo, 1977; Ochieng, 1990; Nzibo, 1995).

Mwai (2000: 4) observes that the Swahili in western Kenya "consider themselves descendants of the original Swahili-the *Wangozi*" [and] "speak Kiswahili as their first language. However, there is no evidence of any Swahili who have been assimilated into any of the dominant communities in western Kenya". This character of the Swahili attests to the cultural tenacity of their culture in withstanding outside influences while, at the same time, influencing others (Kabiri, 1995; Nzibo, 1995).

According to Ochieng' (1990; 2002), Mumias is estimated to have gained prominence between the 1560s and 1600 during the reign of *Nabongo* Netia. However, it was during the reign of *Nabongo* Mumia that Mumias acquired multicultural dimensions due to interactions with foreigners. Historians have recorded that the Swahili had been visiting Mumias before 1882, when they brought merchandise for sale (Ochieng', ibid).

Ochieng' (ibid), further states that Arab and Swahili traders had been present in Mumias in the second half of the nineteenth century. They constructed houses in the town which the colonial administrators found intact in the early 1880s (Ochieng 1990: i). The Arabs and Swahili were friendly to *Nabongo* Mumia of the Wanga Kingdom, who provided them safe passage and a resting place en route to Uganda. Mumia expanded his Kingdom after he acquired guns from the Arabs which he used to wage war against neighbouring Luo between 1882 and 1890 (Ochieng', 1990; 2002).

The Arabs and Swahili were later joined by the Nubians (from Sudan) and the Somali (from Somalia) who were serving as the porters and soldiers for the colonial government and its officials. *Nabongo* Mumia later welcomed the British missionaries who named the town Mumias (the town of Mumia). The current King, Nabongo Peter Shitawa Mumia II, was installed as King of Wanga in 1974 following the death of his father Nabongo Shitawa. However, his coronation took place in April 2010 when he was crowned as the 14th Nabongo of the Wanga at the Nabongo Cultural Centre.

The assimilation of the Nubian and Somali settlers into Islam alongside some of the local inhabitants of Mumias, the Wanga, into Swahili culture can be attributed to the processes of Arabization, and *Swahilization*, whereby a person being admitted into the Swahili community has to be totally assimilated into the Swahili way of life through "a series of localized rituals, social categories, and informed audiences" (Appadurai, 1996: 185).

The Swahili aspired to the Arabization (*ustaarabu*) and/or *ungwana* (civilization/nobility) of the Arabs [Ntarangwi 2003: 80]. So the same way the Swahili admired Arabic culture and adopted it, so did the communities that interacted with them. The Nubians and Somalis who settled in western Kenya converted to Islam and aided in spreading Islam among the Wanga community in western Kenya. Ochieng' (1990) records that the local Wanga converted to Islam and adopted the Swahili/Arabic culture because they admired their way of life, such as exotic clothes and bicycles, which were rare at the time(Ochieng, ibid)'. There were intermarriages between the communities. This led to new cultures, such as the adoption of female circumcision among the Swahili of Mumias. However, as indicated earlier, this practice was later abandoned in favour of the *unyago wa mfereji*.

Swahilization also includes conversion into Islam, adoption of a Swahili name, circumcision, and 'rebirth' into a Swahili clan. Communities that embraced the Swahili way of life in Kenya also adopted other components of Swahili culture, such as naming, dressing, architecture, cuisine, dances and songs (Kabiri, 1995; Nzibo, 1995). Communities that were assimilated into the Swahili culture in Kenya also "inherited the dominant attributes of Swahili Islam *Sunna* and the *Shafii* School of law" (Sperling, 2001).

Despite being a minority in Mumias, the Swahili have neither abandoned their culture nor got culturally assimilated by the host communities wherever they reside in the hinterland (Mwai, 2000; Nzibo, 1995). To the contrary, the Swahili have influenced other cultures in that other communities embrace their language, customs, dress, cuisine and other elements of culture. Their society reflects the integration of Islamic cultural codes into indigenous Swahili urban culture, providing a synthesis that has been incorporated into a particular set of performances known as *unyago*.

4.4. Literature Review on Women's Folklore in Africa

The focus on women's folklore and rites of passage in Africa has mainly dealt with the analyses of the themes, functions and performance characteristics of songs. There are many studies focusing primarily on the gender issues projected in the women's songs. The studies are as varied as the

different communities found in Africa. Some of the cited studies draw attention to the ways that women's performances attempt to subvert traditional gender roles.

For a long time, studies in folklore focused on the analysis of the textual performances with little attempt to investigate the contribution of the individual performer/artist. In recent studies, however, scholarship dealing with women's oral compositions and performances has moved away from the generalized genre-oriented collections of the late 20thcentury to specific and specialized case studies solidly based on ethnographic fieldwork guided by current theoretical perspectives. For instance, Kabira Wanjiku's *The Oral Artist* (1984) draws particular attention to the unique role of the individual rather than the perceived collective creation of oral literature.

The focus on the individual oral artist celebrates the art and originality of individual composers and creative artists in the production, dissemination and preservation of performances. Such a shift in oral literature analysis has ultimately led to studying the contribution of women oral artists, composers, performers and storytellers. Scholars have also been investigating previously tabooed aspects of women's folklore, such as the use of obscenities, and references to sexuality. Consequently, the study of women's folklore has slowly grown into a vast, interdisciplinary field.

Agovi (1994) shows the gendered nature of the Ayabomo women in Ghana when she argues that their songs debate, analyse, and challenge the status quo and project the gender issues of self-hood and self-actualization. She concludes that women use the song genre as a vehicle of challenging stereotypes against women and traditional ideals of fidelity, subverting "fixed perceptions of women and their seeming marginality in the social process" (1994: 202). Our study borrows from Agovi's study to interrogate the hidden meanings inherent in traditional *unyago* songs among the Swahili women, with a view to determining the extent to which women may have challenged or subverted the well-established *unyago* principles.

Mugambi (1994) investigates emerging trends in negotiating the female space in Uganda, as she states that women have expanded their domain from domestic to the public arena of mass media and politics, creating a larger sphere of influence for themselves. Mugambi advances the view that women already controlled the story-telling and song genres in pre-literate Africa and therefore, their 'invasion' of the mass media was a further expansion of their space to one with a wider audience outreach, a perspective shared by Kabaji (2010). This study argues that such a phenomenon is observable within the Swahili *unyago* and has been adapted to push for women's empowerment through ARP among other communities in Kenya.

Ogede (1994) holds a similar stand as she observes that the songs composed and sung by the Igede women in Nigeria reflect their point of view and, therefore, offer an alternative opinion and perception to those of the men. The songs are usually based on the women's daily lives, so they address the many issues that are pertinent to their lives as women. Their perceptions may, therefore, be different from men's views because of the different gender roles ascribed by the Igede society. Such issues will provide this study with a framework to approach *unyago* songs performed during the 'graduation' of initiates among Swahili women in Mumias.

On the other hand, Ayodo (1994) focuses on the recreational songs of Luo women in Kenya and argues that women (re)construct songs to reflect on the positive changes they desire in order to re-define power relations within a patriarchal society. She concludes that singing provides the women with an avenue to express themselves with confidence and enables them to gain more knowledge and therefore assert and validate their newly negotiated spaces in that through the songs, the Luo "women find ways to raise their own voices and locate sources of their power" (Ayodo, 1994: 122).

Ayodo's study is relevant for this dissertation because the Luo people have hosted the Swahili in western Kenya and the two groups may have influenced one another, leading to hybridity. The hybridity theory suggests that dominant cultures do influence and alter less dominant cultures (Bauman, 1975), so that the new world cultures are, of necessity, altered by the dominant culture. The Swahili in Mumias are immigrants to western Kenya. This study therefore attempts to investigate the influence of the dominant Luhya culture in Mumias on the minority Swahili and, more specifically, on the *unyago*.

One of the most ambitious projects dealing with women in African literature is the Women Writing Africa project at the University of New York. Its publications are relevant for this study because they highlight the contributions of African women with a broad diversity of themes, genres, contexts and regions spanning from the eighteenth century to the twenty first century. For instance, Lihamba, A et al. (2007) celebrates the eighteenth century *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* and points out that it is significant in that it is one of the pioneering poetic compositions by an African woman. Apart from showing the valuable contribution of women to African social and economic development, however, the tomes do not shed much light on issues, such as *unyago* and FGM, which are germane to this study.

Songs are regarded as repositories of information about the culture of a community. Anthologies of Swahili women songs with diverse themes, therefore, provide a window through which we can gain insight into the issues affecting Swahili women, especially in illuminating their relationships with

men, on love, marriage, bringing up children, and on work. For instance Knappert, (1986; 1979) analyzes the songs of Swahili women and observes that, unlike men's songs, those composed by women are more thematically poignant because "women's lives are so much harder than men's lives in most African and Islamic societies" (Knappert, 1986: 125).

Such a scenario of dialogue across gender is not peculiar to the Swahili community. According to Nhlekisana (2005: 4), wedding songs in Botswana are performed by all people; men, women, boys and girls. The present study applies a similar holistic approach because songs "should be studied in relation to factors that have shaped the culture within which they are performed" (ibid).

Although Knappert's works are not guided by any explicit research theory, they generate scholarly curiosity as to the socio-cultural context of Swahili women songs. For instance, Knappert argues that girls compose many songs as a way of passing time because, "from puberty, most girls in Islamic societies are kept in isolation from any social contact with outsiders" (Knappert, 1986: 125). The seclusion period of the Swahili women is not peculiar to them as it is also practiced in other communities where female circumcision is done. This study goes further to interrogate this context within a contemporary Swahili community to verify if it is still being practiced.

Fair (1996) relies on previous researchers, such as Mirza and Strobel, to provide background information on *unyago* performance and supports the view that the *unyago* rite of passage became popular among the coastal Swahili in the 19th century. She attributes the origin of the *unyago* to the influence of women slaves from the "mainland ethnic communities with long traditions of performing such ceremonies" (Fair, 1996: 146).

According to Fair, the Swahili did not initially have the *unyago* rite of passage but adopted it from their slaves who they considered inferior in all other respects. It is an interesting argument whose veracity or otherwise would be of scholarly interest. Although it is not the intention of this research to investigate the origin of the Swahili *unyago*, the proposition gives this research further impetus in that, by investigating *unyago* among migrant Swahili women, we may be observing a cultural institution that has literally 'returned home' to its alleged cradle: the mainland.

Nevertheless, Fair's assessment is of particular interest for this study in that it underscores the significance of the *unyago* among the Swahili as a practice that bonds the female participants by creating "gender-based social networks whose strength women drew upon throughout their lives for

personal, economic, and political empowerment" (Fair, 1996: 152). However, Fair does not critically investigate nor demonstrate how the social networks among women emerged.

The existence of FGM among the Swahili was documented as early as the 1970s alongside other communities, such as, the Somali, Meru, Embu, Chuka, Kikuyu, Nandi, Maasai, Pokot, Elgeyo, Njemps, Dorobo, Sebei, Digo, Taita, Giriama, Kisii, Kamba, Kuria, Digo, Taita, Giriama, Samburu, Kamasia, Elgeyo, Terik, Marakwet, and Kamba (WIN, 1978: 140-141). Despite this, its practice among the Swahili has remained controversial and highly secretive. This study therefore filled the gap by investigating the purported bonding function of contemporary *unyago* and its implications for women in other communities that practice FGM in Kenya.

Whereas several studies have, for instance, argued that wedding songs are solely performed by women (Strobel, 1975; Sugarman, 1977; Mwai 1997; 2000), the wedding songs can be studied as a dialogue between two parties: male and female (Levington, 1993: 49). Although the current research does not use such a theoretical approach, which is based on Bakhtain's model of dialogism, it partly enriches it because some Swahili wedding songs may have been composed by men but are sung by women (Knappert: 1974; 1979; 1986). The reading of the wedding ritual as 'dialogue' is interesting and germane to this study, not only because it deals with the song genre, but also because the dialogic paradigm used can inform the analysis of wedding songs in Africa.

Gender related literary studies among the Swahili bear witness to the fact that most literary creations are authored by men, implying that the literary output of Swahili women has been scanty. However, nothing could be further from the truth, because in most pre-literate African societies, women controlled the oral genres of performed arts: singing, dancing and story-telling (Kabaji 2010). Although women controlled literary productions in pre-literate Africa, literacy appears to have relegated them to mere observers due to denial of learning opportunities. This study investigates if this view of women is still tenable, especially after the *unyago wa mfereji* phase which supports the empowerment of women through education.

Some scholars controversially argue that the lack of extensive writing by women compared to men in the Swahili community may be attributed to religious and other socio-cultural constraints. Such studies generally state that teachings of Islam and male hegemony relegated women to subordinate positions in comparison to men. It is further alleged that Islam teaches against the academic progress of women (Denise, 1979; Momanyi, 2007). The evidence from Mumias during the process

of this research demonstrates that there is equal schooling opportunity for both boys and girls, with schools and religious teachings availed to both sexes.

Strobel (1984: 98) states that the ideology of women's subordination among the Swahili has been transmitted in diverse ways, such as female puberty rites (the *unyago*) and traditional poetry. Strobel gives the example of *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* (The Epic of Mwanakupona); an ancient Swahili poem which she argues is often recited to girls to teach them to be submissive to their husbands.

In contrast, Biersteker (1991: 51) argues that *Utendi wa Mwanakupona is* the oldest "canonical Swahili text to [have been] authored by a woman, [and] which deals with the theme of wifely virtue as defined within contours of patriarchal Islamic ideology". On the other hand, Strobel (ibid) celebrates the fact that a Swahili woman had written a literary text at such an early period. Strobel's acknowledgement of a woman writer at such an early stage of Swahili writing culture is an endorsement of the historicity of the Swahili woman's empowerment struggle.

Both Strobel's and Biersteker' s thematic and contextual analyses underscore the importance of the virtues of womanhood espoused in *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* which the author (mother) intended to be upheld by her daughter. However, the epic has been variously cited as one of the Swahili written texts used to justify male hegemony among Swahili and Islamic women, joining the Koran and *hadith* as an instruction manual meant for the girls (Momanyi, 2007).

Endless debates have raged on whether it is actually Islam or the indigenous *Wangozi* culture that is responsible for the supposedly subordinate position of women among the Swahili. It has been noted that the *Wangozi* society was matriarchal and thus women were held in high esteem before patriarchy was introduced to the *Wangozi* through *Uswahili* (Mbaabu (1987: 7). Mirza and Strobel (1989: 10) uphold the view that the Swahili adopted a patriarchal system from their slaves. However, Biersteker (1991: 51) maintains that the Swahili were a matrilineal society who adopted the patriarchy system from the Arabs and Persians. The origin of patriarchy is beyond the ambit of this study. However, this study probes whether *unyago* and FGM exhibit patriarchal or matriarchal tendencies as observed by previous researchers.

Trimingham (1980: 5) further argues that the instructions given to a female Swahili child at adolescence to uphold wifely obedience and submissiveness were present in the culture practiced by the *Wangozi*. However, that study does not indicate whether the *unyago* was part of the instruction

or whether women challenged the contents of *Utendi wa Mwanakupona*, because it came to play a significant role in the instruction of young women on sexuality. All the above-mentioned scholars are silent on FGM among the Swahili. Considering the secrecy on the *unyago* ritual, this silence is not surprising.

Most of the scholars cited refer to women-specific rites of passage, while others refer to general female rites. However, Caplan (1976) provides deeper insights into the symbolism associated with the *unyago* ritual for both girls and boys of Mafia Island. Caplan observes that the rite was a long process that was "part of a series beginning when a girl first menstruates, and ending with her 'coming out' as a young married woman, an adult; several months after her marriage" (Caplan, 1976: 32).

Although Caplan (ibid) cites the circumcision of boys among the Swahili of Mafia Island, Caplan is silent on the practice of FGM during the *unyago* seclusion. One of the reasons for this silence on FGM could be what Moen (1977:1) calls "the consent by silence given to it by anthropologists, the clergy, the medical profession and international agencies such as the UN and WHO". However, this veil was lifted in the 1990s and efforts to confront the practice were increased.

From the foregoing, FGM was not prevalent among the Swahili residing at the coast and on the Islands. How then did the Swahili who migrated into the hinterland, such as those in Mumias, acquire this cultural practice? Could the reason for its abandonment in Mumias be as a result of its having been an alien cultural practice? These and other questions would be interesting research endeavours by other scholars because they are outside the scope of the current study.

4.5. Literature Review on FGM

It is difficult to pinpoint the genesis of FGM because its history is not well documented. However, theories and speculations abound as to its origins and rationale. Gerry Mackie (1996), a prominent theorist of FGM, advances the view that the earliest documented evidence of FGM occurred 2,200 years ago in the Nubian region of Sudan and parts of Egypt. This is a relevant observation because, as earlier indicated, the Swahili in Mumias interacted and intermarried with the Nubians, Arabs and Somali who practice various types of FGM. According to Mackie, this was probably linked to slavery and dating as far back as the second century. Mackie cites Greek geographer Agartharchides of Cnidus reporting on the tribes residing on the western coast of the Red Sea who practiced female circumcision. In the seventeen century, the practice is reported to have spread to Somalia.

While Mackie's account of the origin of FGM is widely held, other theorists have come up with different claims. Some argue that there's evidence from Egyptian mummies that female circumcision was routine more than 5000 years ago. There have been claims that FGM was practiced among slaves in ancient Rome, who had metal rings passed through the labia minora to prevent procreation. It may be possible that the practice spread from ancient Rome to Africa through the slave routes. It is also likely that FGM emanated from a slave custom which later on was accepted in society and became a condition for marriage and womanhood as it is in most communities today.

FGM practice has been cherished since time immemorial as a period of acquisition of knowledge; which is otherwise not accessible to those who have not been initiated (Mbiti, 1969; Kenyatta, 1938). A widely cited reason for female circumcision was said to be the hot climate of Egypt and Africa which allowed the labia and clitoris to grow longer thus making sexual intercourse difficult.

According to the above, cutting or removal of the labia and clitoris was done to allow for easier intercourse. Other explanations for the practice hinged on the need to prevent disease and the accumulations of secretions. Davenport (1966: 6) explains that "cleanliness has rendered it necessary". FGM is seen in other societies as a puberty rite, as it marks the passage from girlhood to womanhood. It was also believed that it purified the women and prepared them for marriage. In some African countries, infibulation, the sewing up of the vagina, is linked to gender roles and the girl's identity as a virgin.

The reasons why FGM is practiced differ widely in different communities. However, they hinge mainly on varied and complex belief systems and rituals that have to do with female fertility and the control of their sexuality (libido) in traditional male dominated societies. One of the main reasons for its practice is that it reduces or curbs the sexual desires of girls and women, and promotes virginity and chastity as well as serving to maintain hygiene. Some communities related to Islam practice it for religious purposes, although the Koran does not mention it.

According to Kibor (1998), the Marakwet people of Kenya believe that extramarital affairs are common among un-circumcised women. FGM is, therefore, an essential genital alteration to reduce female aggressiveness. However, in spite of FGM, promiscuity has risen greatly in the Marakwet society in recent years (Kibor, 1998). In support of this finding, a study in Nigeria found that FGM neither lowers sexual feelings nor reduces the level of promiscuity among women (Kyuli & Akoko, 2003).

4.6. FGM in Kenya

According to KDHS (1998) FGM is practiced in more than 50% of the districts in Kenya with an average prevalence rate of 38% for women aged 15 to 49. However, FGM is practiced among the Kisii (97%) and the Maasai (89%). It is also prevalent among the Kalenjin (62%), Taita Taveta (59%) and Meru / Embu (54%), the Kikuyu (43%), Kamba (33%) and Mijikenda/Swahili (12%). Among the Luo and Luhya communities, FGM is rarely practiced (less than 1%).

Research indicates that the FGM prevalence has been declining in recent years. For instance, in the 35 to 49 years and 15 to 24 years age groups FGM declined from 62% to 33% among the Kalenjin; 43% to 18% among the Kikuyu; 33% to 12% among the Kamba; 97% to 93% among the Kisii; and 89% to 77% among the Maasai communities. However, there is no data available on declines in FGM practices, if any, among the Mijikenda/Swahili communities.

The 2008 KDHS report shows that 24% of women who went through FGM in Kenya gave the reason of 'social acceptance' as the driving force. Most of the FGM procedures in Kenya were performed by traditional circumcisers without anaesthesia and under unhygienic conditions, such as blade-sharing. Research indicates such conditions may lead to infections such as HIV/AIDS.

There are some communities such as the Swahili in Mumias who have overhauled their practice without overt interventions from Government and non-State agencies. However, the other communities have required heavy outside interference and legislation. This study was partly motivated by the need to highlight this unique character of the Swahili in Mumias.

Recent studies have indicated changes in attitudes, beliefs and practice in some communities in Kenya. Medical doctors, nurses and midwives have also been performing some of the procedures among the Kisii, Kuria and Somali communities (Chege et al., 200; Njue, et al., 2004)). Most often, FGM is opposed because of its negative health consequences. Some stakeholders have therefore argued that having FGM performed by nurses and doctors would reduce the negative health consequences.

Traditional female circumcision was mostly performed in the initiates' or relatives' homes or in the bush. Nowadays, some cases of circumcision in health facilities have been reported. For instance, Shell-Duncan, et al. (2000) observe that modernization has not had much effect on FGM and argue that change in other values, such as reducing high fertility, has been genuine but slow. Thus, they

propose that medicalization be reconsidered as an intermediate solution to improve the health of affected women.

Overall, there was a decrease in circumcision specifically for women born in mid 1960s, soon after Kenya's independence (KDHS, 1998 and 2003). The convention theory pre-supposes that "female genital mutilation [is] a social practice defined by group norms as well as individual decision" and, as such, "will end when the group of parents ready to refuse to circumcise their daughters is large and visible" (Hayford 2008: 123). KDHS states (1998 and 2003) support this finding but ironically, the notion that FGM reduces a woman's libido, which is usually given as a reason for supporting the practice; was also given as a reason to stop the practice.

4.7. FGM and Human Rights

Since the mid-1990s, the discourse on FGM has aroused increasing interest and concern. Within human-rights organizations, NGOs, and international agencies, the practice has been classified as an abuse of human rights which violates the rights to non-discrimination, to integrity of the person and to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

United Nations member countries are obliged to promote international laws according to the United Nations Conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Convention on Civil and Political Rights (1966). Furthermore, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999) requires all African countries to protect children from harmful cultural practices.

In 2003, Article 5 of the protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa mandated all member countries to legislate against harmful socio-cultural practices and, more specifically, FGM. Furthermore, the years from 2010 to 2020 are the Decade for African Women. Member states therefore have a good opportunity to multiply their efforts in the advocacy against FGM.

The 6thof February is the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation. The day is used to create awareness about FGM. In December 2014, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution calling upon member States to develop, support and implement comprehensive and integrated strategies for the prevention of FGM. The interventions include the training of medical personnel, social workers, community and religious leaders to ensure they provide competent, supportive services and care to women and girls who are at risk of or who have undergone FGM"

(http://www.un.org/en/events/femalegenitalmutilationday/). This study, therefore, is a contribution to efforts to develop strategies to eradicate FGM.

4.8. Conclusion

The literature review has successfully examined areas related to the topic and it has identified flaws and gaps in the previous studies. The review also notes that previous studies have not applied modern theories, such as poststructuralist feminism in Swahili studies. Moreover, there is scanty research regarding migrant Swahili. This is the reason why the FGM component in *unyago* has been left out of previous studies. It was also observed that FGM is a global challenge that requires multiple approaches to eradicate because it is strongly embedded in culture. For that reason, this chapter has evaluated literature regarding women's performances: women's songs, the *unyago* and FGM in Kenya. The next chapter undertakes an ethnographic investigation of a cultural activity within a subaltern or minority community of the Swahili in Mumias.

CHAPTER 5

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF *UNYAGO* IN MUMIAS

5.1. Introduction

The discussion includes the views of the Mumias Swahili community based on field data collected through personal narratives, questionnaires, open-ended discussions and interviews that were aimed at eliciting ethnographic data. The respondents who came from both Wanga and Swahili communities provided background and comparative information on the nature of male and female circumcision of the Swahili in Mumias.

The data was collected from people who witnessed and/or went through traditional rites of passage. The section relies on the narratological method because it brings together the personal narratives of the respondents. Their stories, experiences and beliefs are all brought together to provide a descriptive overview of traditional methods of circumcision. The interviewees have been acknowledged in the bibliography.

The selection of a wide range of respondents, children, adults, men, women, community leaders, practioners such as *kungwi*, and social workers ensured that validity and reliability are achieved. The research used specific verification strategies that ensured thoroughness and rigor. The respondents compared traditional and contemporary practices in Mumias.

The respondents have the skill, wisdom and a deep understanding of their culture. These sources of information are considered to be valid. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), issues of validity in qualitative studies should not be linked to truth or value but rather to trustworthiness. The respondents used in this research are trustworthy and the data collected from them is used to arrive at the empirical findings that are presented in this section to explain the social life of the Swahili in Mumias.

5.2. Male Circumcision and FGM

It was noted that in all communities where male circumcision is practiced, there is FGM. Communities that do not practice male circumcision do not practice FGM. FGM therefore goes together with male circumcision. For instance, the Kikuyu, Kamba, Embu, Kisii, Kuria, Meru and Swahili (Bantu); the Somali (Cushites); and the Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana, Pokot and Somali (Nilotes) all practice male and female circumcision. The said communities all use the same terminology to describe an important milestone in the boys' and girls' lives. For instance, the word for circumcision for both boys and girls among the Swahili is *tohara* (cleansing). The Meru call it *itana* (leap), while the Kikuyu call it *irua* (transition).

However, there was an exception to this rule. The Luhya community and specifically the Wanga people among whom the Swahili have settled; practice male circumcision but they do not practice FGM at all (Shitawa, 2010). It is imperative, therefore, that a discussion of FGM in the context of the Swahili should entail an overview of male circumcision.

Most importantly it was noted that today, voluntary male circumcision (VMC) is more universally practiced among Kenyan communities: while FGM is discouraged and shunned by an exponentially increasing number of people. It was further observed that VMC is currently recommended among communities that did not practice male circumcision because of its perceived health benefits in the prevention of HIV/AIDS infection; whereas FGM is considered a valueless vice that needs to be eradicated. Such a situation definitely presents an interesting area for cultural inquiry.

Male circumcision is an old custom which marked the transition from boyhood to manhood. According to the general theory of socialization espoused by Van-Gennep (1977:21), rites of passage are rituals that mark the transitional phase between childhood and full inclusion into a tribe or social group. A ritual involves a series of actions performed according to a set order or a pattern that is done the same way without variation. A rite of passage is a religious or other solemn ceremony that marks an important transition stage in someone's life. Rites of passage are indicators of important milestones, values and beliefs in specific cultures.

One can argue that prior to the introduction of the term FGM, both female and male circumcision were considered similar and served the same purpose; hence the use of the same word to refer to the rite of passage. In the circumcision-practicing cultures in Kenya, therefore, male and female "circumcision" was not a binary opposition but a gender-neutral terminology: or the *Dasein* that Heidegger envisaged in his sense of Being. However, it transformed into a binary opposition and came to the fore with the demonization of the practice by Christian missionaries and the introduction of the term FGM.

Respondents in Mumias reported that the Wanga male circumcision is done in groups of four boys or more. The Wanga held their colourful circumcision ceremonies in August at intervals of three years.

Before the day of the operation, the Wanga boys spent several days dancing and singing from one relative's household to another. They received gifts in the form of chicken, livestock, foodstuffs and

money. During the entire initiation period, the boys painted their bodies with white chalk or ochre. A goat was slaughtered and a piece of its meat tied around the boy's neck (see Figure 2& 3 in Appendix 4). This piece of meat was not supposed to be removed until the boy was circumcised. The rotting piece of meat symbolized that the boy was unclean and was only removed after the circumcision to symbolize cleanliness.

The operation for Wanga boys was usually carried out in the open, in view of all members of the community (see figure 3, 4 and 5 in the appendix 4). The boy was expected to display courage during the entire ceremony. A piece of grass was placed on the boy's forehead with some mud. If an initiate moves his head during the operation and the tuft of grass falls, he is considered a coward and becomes the laughing stock of the community (Bakari Washiali, personal communication, December 28, 2011).

Wanga initiates had their recuperation in rough shelters inside their ancestral forest while the immigrant Swahili boys recuperated in their town homes (*miji*). The initiated Wanga boys (*bafulu*) often stay in large groups to undergo training. Nowadays, they often come out of hiding to participate in modern recreational activities, as demonstrated in Figure 5 in the appendix.

5.2.1. Economic and Religious Aspects of Male Circumcision

The circumcision of Wanga boys is reminiscent of Okpewho's (1992: 120) description of most African male initiation rites, in which "trembling or crying would earn an initiate considerable disgrace…" Male circumcision was aimed at creating courageous defenders of the community and it also promoted the men into ownership of property.

During recuperation, the Wanga boys are taught responsibilities befitting their new warrior status, such as defending the community from attacks, going to war, clearing land for cultivation, building houses, acquiring property and getting married. On the other hand, the Swahili boys are circumcised as infants. They attend the *madras* (Islamic religious teaching) classes at the mosque for religious training during adolescence. Whereas the Wanga boys underwent warfare training to defend their community from enemies, the Swahili boys were inducted into Islamic religious practice (Peter Shitawa, personal communication, July 20, 2012; Sakwa Okwara, personal communication, July 22, 2012).

Despite the promotion of war-like activities between the Wanga and Sabaot, both communities respected their Swahili neighbors. The Wanga admired the Swahili way of life (Ochieng, 1990). The Wanga and Sabaot often fought each other; but there was never any hostility between the

Wanga and the Swahili initiates (Ambani Kassim, personal communication, December 27, 2013). However, some respondents recalled sporadic skirmishes over grazing land between the Wanga and the neighboring Sabaot. The Wanga and Sabaot male initiates lived in the bush for the entire recuperation period; hence they often tested their military skills between themselves, which often ended in ugly incidents.

There are obvious indications that male circumcision among the Wanga and Sabaot resulted in aggressive behaviour among the men. A number of cultural trends were noted. The Swahili keep to their small groups. They do not keep livestock. Neither do they show interest in acquiring large farmlands in Mumias. The Wanga are small-scale sugarcane farmers. They deliver their produce to the nearby Mumias Sugar Factory, which was constructed in 1972. However, the Swahili are satisfied with their township residences (*miji*) from whence they carry out their businesses. The Swahili arrived and settled in Mumias as traders and they have predominantly remained traders.

Circumcision to the Swahili does not come with what may be termed the pride and arrogance of the Wanga and Sabaot warriors, whose ritual training is training in courage, aggression and forceful behaviour. The violent conduct is still noticeable, as reported in http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2014/08/11/minority_tribes_flee_forced_circumcisions_in_western_kenya.html.

The Wanga despised any of their own who is circumcised in hospital but tolerate the Swahili for doing the same. This makes them believe that the pain of circumcision is necessary for one to become a man. Wanga boys who are taken to the hospital are the laughing stock of their peers and are derisively referred to as ‘cowards who could not face the knife like a man’ (Bakari Washiali, personal communication, December 28, 2011).

According to data from the field, the Wanga who were circumcised in hospital or those who had displayed cowardice during circumcision were the first converts to Islam and sometimes married from the immigrant Swahili community; implying that it is the perceived ‘weaklings or deviants who first converted to the new ways’ (Washiali, ibid). The reason for intermarriage was cited as the Wanga’s acceptance into Swahili culture and conversion to Islam.

Unlike the Wanga boys who sometimes dropped out of school upon initiation, those circumcised in hospital and the Swahili boys continued with their education. Those initiated in hospital may not have considered circumcision to endow them with courage, a higher status or any special liberties.

The Swahili may not have, therefore considered male circumcision as being a privileged male domain that conferred them higher status among other community members.

As we have already noted, the Swahili, Wanga and Sabaot boys went through circumcision but there were different approaches to training them. It is said that the Swahili boys were more respectful of authority, while the Wanga and Sabaot rebelled to the extent that initiated boys would not remain in school to be 'taught by female teachers' (Said Namiti, personal communication, July 7, 2013). Circumcised Wanga and Sabaot boys may also have felt that female teachers were 'similar to any other women with whom they can have sex and even marry' because they were considered adults after circumcision.

The above observation from respondents is not without foundation. Prior to colonial and Christian intervention, both male circumcision and FGM were associated with acquiring social status and coming of age for the initiates, including involvement in sexual activity. Three primary school head teachers in Mumias stated that to this day, they discourage circumcision of boys in their schools because 'boys would become uncontrollable'. Women teachers related facing difficulties in disciplining circumcised Sabaot and Wanga boys. However, the teachers claimed that the Swahili boys, who are circumcised at a tender age, do not exhibit such behaviour.

Male circumcision between the Wanga and Sabaot was an important event for the initiates, parents and the entire community. The people came together for elaborate ceremonies marked with song, dance, beer drinking, feasting and exchange of gifts. Participants were allowed to publicly sing and chant what on normal days would have been considered obscenities and profanities. Wanga and Sabaot boys were also taught sexual matters through song and dance (Sakwa Okwara, personal communication, December 21, 2012; Ambani Kassim, personal communication December 23, 2012).

The circumcision songs may, therefore, be considered to have been part of social commentary and had a didactic function. By the time they emerged from their seclusion in the forest, the boys were considered adults who were capable of impregnating a girl. It was noted in this research that in some traditional Wanga and Sabaot communities, boys believed that it was not possible for an uncircumcised boy to impregnate a girl. It was generally believed that circumcision makes them adults who can sire children. Unlike for the Swahili, circumcision for the Wanga and Sabaot comes with societal pressure and expectation to prove their manhood, which, according to the local leaders, leads to an upsurge in teenage pregnancies and rape.

The indoctrination road to adulthood for Wanga and Sabaot boys started early in their lives. They were subjected to a wide range of physical exercises, mainly through rigorous dancing, wrestling and mock fights. The initiates were usually fed well to gain strength. They also went through traditional teachings to equip them with knowledge about their traditional gender-defined roles in society. During the circumcision and seclusion for the wounds to heal, the initiates were often beaten to instill them with courage and discipline (Women's-e-news, Kenya 2005). The beatings were also meant to transform the boys to hardened warriors. This was followed by a coming-out ceremony: "a big family and community celebration […] where abusive songs were often sung" (Cheserem, 2011:9).

The trend observed in Mumias concerning the Sabaot, Wanga, and Swahili communities, points to several ways in which the communities influenced each other regarding circumcision based on their contact with one another. The Swahili, for instance, influenced the Wanga to take some of their boys for the Swahili type of circumcision. The Wanga started to have their boys circumcised at the hospital and to convert to Islam. There were also cases of intermarriages between the communities.

The reason for the aggressive behaviour can be traced to the fact that circumcision initiated boys into the traditional system of acquiring manhood, status and wealth. The warriors became capable of owning property such as livestock. In the past, the acquisition of wealth came in the form of cattle raided from neighboring tribes. The foundation for male circumcision is capitalist materialism in that it prepared boys to own wealth and means of production such as land and labour (women and children).

On the other hand, male circumcision among the Swahili of Mumias was more of a religious obligation performed at a tender age. Swahili boys are circumcised on the seventh day as a religious obligation or *fitrah*. Consequently, circumcision has little to do with promoting boys to adulthood. Circumcision made the Wanga and Sabaot marriageable men, warlike and aggressive warriors, the Swahili considered it more of religious purification (*tohara*). Later in life, the Swahili boys' *jando* ritual is marked by their immersion into Islamic teachings by attending religious classes. Swahili male circumcision is therefore more of a religious edict than something that accords them masculine privileges.

Today, however, some families circumcise their boys at the adolescent stage. This cultural transformation can be attributed to the integration of the Swahili with other communities, such as

the Wanga, the Sabaot, the Nubians and the Somalis. There are families from these communities who have converted to Islam but still practice some of their cultural rites, such as the circumcision of boys at adolescence (Shitawa, 2012). Other factors include education whereby the boy's parents are encouraged to have their son circumcised before going to secondary school.

Nowadays, most Wanga and Sabaot families take their boys to hospital where the operation is done under hygienic conditions with facilities such as sterilized instruments and medication. On the other hand, boys and girls in the Swahili community attend religious *madras* teachings to learn how to read and recite the Koran. However, the boys do not get further instruction on sexuality the way *unyago* does for the girls.

All communities used some form of 'anesthesia' during male circumcision. The circumcision for boys was done by the riverside in the early morning hours after the boys had been dipped in cold water and their bodies smeared with mud from the riverbanks. The procedure was meant to numb the body and reduce immediate pain to the initiates. On the other hand, girls were sometimes circumcised at night. Some were ambushed in their sleep. Because they were still warm from their sleep, their pain must be much worse than the boys must. It is therefore likely that Swahili women were continuously devising ways to reduce such pain.

5.3. Swahili Girls' Rite of Passage

Whereas the *unyago* initiation ceremonies among the Swahili of Zanzibar, for instance, originated from present day southern Tanzania communities and had spread throughout the Swahili coast by the late nineteenth century (Fair, 1996: 151), their performance and practice has always varied from one Swahili community to another. Such changes validate the cultural dynamism perspective as culture changes according to time and space (Boyd & Richardson, 2006).

According to field data on the rationale for *unyago*, it was confirmed that some of the reasons women condon it are socio-economic and religious concerns such as gaining acceptance in the community, preserving their virginity, increasing their chances of getting married and, receiving a big dowry. *Unyago* was, therefore, the only way girls could gain acceptance into womanhood and it was the only avenue available to women to better their marriage prospects.

Although the Swahili *unyago* rite of passage was solely a woman's affair, most adult respondents were certain that the training component was aimed at addressing male concerns because the initiates' training mainly dwelt on feminine roles such as ways of keeping their husbands happy by cooking for them nice meals, massaging them and providing sexual pleasure. The men on their part

were supposed to work hard to provide for their families without much sexual obligation in satisfying their wives sexually (Amina Faki, personal communication, December 23, 2012; Amina Zaina, personal communication, July 22, 2012).

The lack of an *ngariba* (circumciser) may have also contributed to the demise or lack of circumcision among the Swahili community in Mumias. According to field data, the Swahili immigrant community had only one *kungwi* who died in the early 1980s. The *kungwi* had not trained anyone to replace her. For two years, the Swahili community in Mumias sought the services of an nga*riba* from the Somali community. The Swahili, therefore, were slowly running out of performing artists and circumcisers to perpetuate the traditional *unyago*. Their status as an immigrant community settled among communities that did not practice FGM did not help them to perpetuate the practice. Whereas the *unyago* easily transformed into the modern training ceremonies, male circumcision morphed into safe male circumcision performed at the hospital and the nearby clinic.

5.3.1. Unyago Instruction for Girls

Girls observed their mothers, other members of the family and the community and imitated them. By the time the girls were formally instructed through the *unyago*, they had learnt several desirable feminine traits, such as how to dress properly by covering the face with a veil, applying make-up, perfume and *henna*. They also learnt to carry out a few household chores, such as fetching water and firewood.

Actual *unyago* training commenced when a girl began to menstruate. At the onset of puberty, the girl-child (*mwanamwali*) was taken through the first formal *unyago* instruction called *dari ya mwanamwali*, the ritual of the virgin. Most of the training during the *dari ya mwanamwali* was done by a traditional instructor, the *kungwi*. Among some Swahili communities girls were taken to the *kungwi' s* home for training and preparation for a collective initiation ceremony involving all the girls who had attained puberty in a village. The *kungwi* could be a maternal aunt or a close friend of the girl's mother.

The *unyago* training and seclusion can be seen as what Okpewho (1992: 22) called the initiates being "trained in a 'school' or association established to bring up young persons in a particular form of oral art." Within a traditional setup, therefore, the *unyago* was a socially relevant cultural and educational institution.

The *kungwi* was supposed to be a successfully married woman who was knowledgeable in the customs of her people. She was also expected to be a good composer and/or dancer who could take the initiates through the rigorous *unyago* process. The *kungwi* played multiple roles by having a broad understanding and appreciation of her community's customs, art, social institutions and food ways. She was expected to impart knowledge that appertains to the beliefs, customs, taboos and rules of her people (Saumu binti Maitha, personal communication, July 21, 2011).

The girls were taught skills that were passed on from one generation to another through word of mouth, observations, imitation, demonstrations and repeated performances covering a wide range of topics on behaviour, work (especially housekeeping and cookery), perseverance and courage, wifely duties, health and hygiene. During the training, the fast-maturing girls' movements and behaviour were unobtrusively observed by their parents and relatives.

Parents with marriageable sons also keenly followed a girl's development with the hope of identifying a suitable bride for their sons. Whenever a prospective bride was identified, an *mshenga* (betrothal emissary) would be dispatched to the girl's parents to ask for her hand in marriage. In Swahili tradition, girls were betrothed to a close relative, especially a cousin. Among the Swahili of Mumias, who are minority immigrants, however, some of the girls attained puberty without a suitor. Parents with young men ready for marriage made overtures to the girls' parents during the onset of the *dari ya mwanamwali*, when they were still virgins (Amina Zaina, personal communication July, 22, 2013).

Sometimes, such overtures came from fellow Muslim migrant communities such as the Nubians and Somalis, or the native Wanga converts. This resulted in a multicultural and possibly alienated group, which practised FGM.

5.3.2. *Unyago* Seclusion

According to Turner (1969), rites of passage consist of three phases: *preliminal rites* (separation from a previous world order), *liminal* or *threshold* rites (transition stage), and *post liminal rites* (re-incorporation into society within a new world order). In the separation phase, initiates withdraw from their current status and transit from one place or status to another through symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group from an earlier fixed point in the social structure (Turner, 1969:80). There is often a detachment or "cutting away" from the former self in this phase, which is signified in symbolic actions and rituals such as the shaving of bodily hair before circumcision.

During the latter part of the *dari ya mwanamwali* training, the girls were secluded for more intimate formalized training on womanhood. With reference to Yoruba divination poetry training, Okpewho (1992: 24) states that "the formal training in the practice of various forms of the oral tradition shows how seriously this aspect of culture is taken in the traditional society. Such formal training is so strictly organized that we may see the system much in the same sense we see schools in modern society."

The *unyago* was a prolonged period of both formal and informal training that mirrors Okpewho's observation about informal training in non-literate communities. For instance, the *kungwi* stayed with her candidates throughout the *unyago* seclusion. She reprimanded and punished them for any undesired behaviour. She always had an assistant to take care of the girl(s) whenever she left the courtyard. During this phase of the *unyago*, secrets of the rite were revealed to the initiates.

5.3.3. Pain in Swahili *Unyago*

As previously noted, no pain relieving measures were taken during the circumcision of girls. The procedure was extremely painful, which in itself symbolized the challenges of both wifehood and parenthood. The bearing of physical, psychological and social pain among traditional Swahili women was further manifested through the cutting of the girl's clitoris in that the hymen was supposed to be left intact.

According to respondents in Mumias, a small incision on the genitals was usually done around the third or fourth week of seclusion; during the *wanawali wa unyago* period. This procedure came after the girls had been spoilt with good food and bodily massages. Such a delicate procedure requires skills that only a few women, such as the *ngariba*, had. The *ngariba*, of necessity, provided medicare services to the initiates and in later years served as the *mkunga* (midwife) when the girl was giving birth. Evidence from the field indicates that the Swahili cut falls under the least severe type (iv) of the World Health Organization's category which entails 'pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterization' (http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/overview/en/).

The *ngariba* was held in high esteem among both men and women for her expertise. She was usually rewarded with gifts and money for her services. Therefore, the traditional role of the *ngariba* came with economic benefits for the practitioner. She also had traditional (indigenous) knowledge of herbal medicine. Sometimes bleeding, infections and deaths occurred. However, these were superstitiously attributed to the 'evil eye', witchcraft and curses.

The *ngariba* performed the clitoral cut without interfering with the girl's virginity; which was supposedly reserved for the husband on the wedding night. There was no anesthesia or medication used, as was the case with male circumcision which was done after they had been immersed in cold water at dawn. Although one may observe that circumcision for both girls and boys pointed to the fact that the society was fair to the sexes, the pain that the girls were subjected to and the outcome of the rite, seem to negate such a view. That the Swahili community in Mumias chose to reverse these dichotomies so that the repressed terms became the dominant or positive ones is a pointer to the cultural sophistication of the community.

Each Swahili village had its renowned circumcisers who at times doubled as midwives and/or herbalists. The circumcisers were a critical link in perpetuating customs and traditions such as FGM and midwifery. Their demise in the face of education, Christianity and illegitimization of FGM has dealt a big blow to the continuation of the ritual.

Furthermore, the training was sometimes accompanied by beatings, rebukes and admonition for perceived deviancy. The menstrual pains were explained to the girls with lessons on the kind of foods to avoid and the ones to eat during menstruation. The initiates were also given instructions on remedial herbs and spices to ease their pain. They were taught the correct ways of massaging themselves during the menstrual pains, pregnancy and labour. Girls were trained to accept and control pain on their own.

Most respondents were not aware of any skills that were taught to Swahili boys/men to assuage their wives' pain during menstrual and labour pains. They were also not aware of any teachings that men were given on how to satisfy their wives sexually or any training that enhanced interpersonal relationships especially at the household level. The girls were given lessons on wifely, household and domestic matters. Supporters of FGM argued that it has practical merits in a physically harsh society and is proof that a woman was mentally strong and able to deal with the difficult responsibilities of adult life. The shedding of blood was symbolically attributed to a cord connecting the woman to the rest of her close-knit community.

The *unyago* had a utilitarian function because it united the community members. However, the situation has changed tremendously and both girls and boys must acquire literacy through formal schooling. Nowadays, there are schools for both girls and boys in Mumias town (See figure 8 & 9 in the appendix 4). Moreover, basic education is free and compulsory in Kenya. Because of these

developments, *unyago*, FGM and male circumcision have lost their traditional value. Education is nowadays promoted as more desirable because it leads to getting employment.

5.3.4. *Unyago* Body Aesthetics

During the second phase of the *unyago*, the girls, now referred to as *wanawali wa unyago* (girls/virgins of the *unyago*) were bedecked with amulets and charms (*hirizi*) worn on the wrist, waist or neck to protect them from what the respondents called 'evil eyes'. The charms were made of cowry shells, animal bones and teeth, or, if the family could not afford expensive ones, onion, and garlic were used to ward off evil spirits. The protective charms gave them faith that nothing evil would befall them. This was despite the fact that they were separated from most members of the community and had no contact with unauthorized visitors.

The initiates also had their hair plaited and their ears pierced to accommodate the jewelry expected from suitors. In short, the girls were made to look and feel beautiful. The ear piercing also symbolized that they were now mature women. Field data indicates that one of the ways the girls were teased by their mentors was that they would later be 'pierced' in other ways implying that they would be circumcised. Beautification was not merely an aesthetic end in itself but preparation for circumcision and adult roles as a wife and mother.

The girls were taught how to take care of their bodies, especially during menstruation. They were also taught about the use of *manukato* (perfumes), *viungo* (spices), and *miti* (herbal medicine). The initiates' bodies were massaged daily by the *makungwi* to make them agile enough to dance and practice 'bedroom dances' in preparation for married life.

The separation from the rest of the community symbolized the 'death' of their old ways and transformation into womanhood. This can be viewed as a transition (liminal) phase of the ritual or the period between states, during which an initiate has left one state but has not yet entered or joined the next (Turner, 1969). This stage is a period of self-awareness and discovery as a human being and especially as a woman. The girls are made to be aware of their bodies and the power that resides in them. The aesthetic and symbolic protection of the female body, its protection from impurity and danger can be interpreted as a deliberate awakening of the girls' sensibilities to adulthood. The body here becomes a vehicle for self-realization and enlightment.

5.4. Fertility and Procreation

The symbolic interpretations of *unyago* as death spreads to most rites of passage which symbolize the abandonment of the old and entering the new: a total emersion into another life (Grof, 1996).

The *unyago* ritual was perceived as a transition through which the 'unproductive' period of virginity gave way to the productive stage of womanhood. Uncircumcised girls and boys were forbidden from having sexual relations. In some communities, such as the Pokot, babies born of uncircumcised parent(s) are abandoned in the bush to die. Ironically too, some girls did not leave *unyago* seclusion alive as some died after the operation.

Among the practicing communities, *unyago* and FGM were at the core of their existence as human beings in that it opened doors to fertility and reproduction. Men and women discovered themselves by this way. *Unyago* may be viewed as an institution whose objective was to uphold family values, such as ensuring the survival of a marriage through social control. It served as a deterrent to determinism through a series of actions that ensured the self-preservation and continuity of the tribe. One may further argue that the *unyago* was also one of the methods traditional societies used to maintain good sexual health.

A Swahili woman was expected to uphold high moral standards. This was expressed through various *unyago* songs. Self-respect, respect for family members, the community, and elders were also considered core values. Emphasis was similarly placed on marital relationships and motherhood. The girls were warned to keep away from boys/men before marriage.

During *unyago* seclusion, the girls are taught to compose, recite, sing and dance to poetry/songs. The *unyago* songs and dance styles contained instructional messages and advice on various aspects of social life. The seclusion is a period for the training of performing artists in the Swahili community because they learn how to compose songs and poems. Some notable *unyago* artists include Siti binti Saad, Mwanakupona, and Fatima binti Baraka, alias Bi. Kidude. The *unyago* setting ensures compliance to the Swahili poetry rules of composition, such as rhythm and meter.

5.4.1. The Virginity Test

According to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginity_test, there are sources, which claim that virginity testing is controversial and that it is unethical. Despite being a highly contentious matter, however, the *unyago* seclusion period was also the time of the first virginity (*ubikira*) test. The Swahili noun for a virgin is '*mwanamwali*' or '*bikira*'. The terms denote the virtue of being a sexually untouched or pure woman. After the *kungwi* had created rapport with the girls, a virginity test started by asking direct questions on whether she had been sexually active.

A physical examination of the genitalia by the *kungwi* came after the oral questioning. The *kungwi* and the trainees shared experiences, especially with the experienced *kungwi* tricking the trainees

with fictional stories around her personal sexual escapades. The intimate conversation could take several days. The girls were often disarmed to disclose their intimate past. If a girl has had sexual relations with any boy/man, she would eventually reveal this to her mentor, the *kungwi*. The *kungwi* would then apply her gynecological knowledge and experience to determine whether the girl's hymen had been broken through a physical examination.

Contrary to the common belief among Swahili men that a girl's virginity is proved during the first night of marriage, *unyago* was the instance when the virginity test was carried out by the *kungwi*. In case the girl had lost her virginity, the *kungwi* would later devise a method of 'proving' her 'virginity' to the husband during the consummation through the use of special vaginal 'tightening herbs'. This remained a well-kept secret between the *kungwi* and the initiate, creating a lifelong bond between them; and the honour of the girl and the families were upheld.

5.4.2. Secondary Virginity

The implication of the secrecy surrounding virginity is interesting, because husbands were always made to believe that the girl they had married was a virgin even when it may not have been the case. Viewed this way, therefore, the *unyago* ritual is a vehicle through which family values and unity are upheld. It was desirable to be a virgin before marriage and *unyago*; but it was possible to induce 'secondary virginity' if the situation so demanded.

Philosophically, this perspective points to the fact that the *unyago* rite served a symbolic gender function. I propose the use of such methods in dealing with sex before marriage by advancing the view that young girls who have lost their virginity are capable of inducing secondary virginity through abstinence. Abstinence can form part of the ARP training to avoid teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

The first intercourse between a husband and wife on the first day of marriage was the second virginity test, often referred to as "*ushuhuda wa damu*" (proof of blood), which as earlier observed, could be manipulated for the women to 'prove' that a girl was a virgin. It became a well-kept secret, which the men never discovered. Virginity and the symbolism surrounding it may therefore have been merely ornamental and/or aesthetic rather than a strictly practical ideal that the Swahili maintained.

Studies have shown that FGM leaves a girl traumatized and in pain, and that some victims may bleed to death (Obermeyer, 1999). According to custom, a similarly painful episode took place during the consummation of the marriage. According to the respondents, the successful completion

of both circumcision and the breaking of the hymen were unavoidable occurrences. FGM among the Swahili in Mumias was considered less painful than *kuvunja ubikira* (losing one's virginity/breaking the hymen) because FGM was carried out more swiftly without being repeated. The consummation of a traditional Swahili marriage was done repeatedly and would be considered to have been the post-liminal phase of traditional *unyago*.

During the consummation, women awaited the bloodstained white sheet which they paraded around the village amid ululations and cries of joy. The bride was later massaged with hot salty water by the same *kungwi* who had taken care of her during circumcision. Thereafter, ejaculatory sex continued after one hour as the women sang '*lelemama*' songs and feasted throughout the night.

Previous research on Swahili marriage rituals indicates that the husband had to break the hymen and withdraw without ejaculation to allow the blood to stain the white sheet. Mwai (200:53) states that it was believed that if the husband ejaculated into her, "his semen will push blood into the girl's stomach and it will take days to come out and therefore no one can tell whether the girl had retained her virginity or not". The first sexual encounter was therefore considered as painful, if not more so, as the circumcision. Although the Swahili in Mumias do not practice FGM any more, virginity is still highly valued and therefore the blood stained bed-sheet is still a mark of a successful and honourable consummation.

A deconstruction of the way both the first and secondary virginity are structured indicates a construction of difference as opposition. A virgin is pure, unblemished and the ideal bride. A socio-cultural investigation of the Swahili community reveals that the Swahili men were not under a strict regulation to remain chaste until marriage. In addition, after marriage, the men could acquire as many as four wives as culture and Islam, which the majority of the Swahili are members of, allow it. However, the women experts subvert the privileging of virginity (presence) over lack of virginity (absence). Why did the *unyago* women subvert or undermine the virginity tests?

Virginity for both men and women, therefore, exists only within a first relationship, and cannot be defined on its own terms in subsequent relationships. However, the term is predominantly linked with one particular sex: female. In my view, Swahili women were directly challenging a phallocratic culture, which privileges one sex over the other.

It is in the light of the foregoing that we summon the words of Cixous (1981; 440), that: "…everything that's organized as discourse, art, religion, the family, language,

> everything that seizes us, everything that acts on us-it is all ordered around the hierarchical oppositions that come back to the man/woman opposition, an opposition that can only be sustained by means of a difference posed by cultural discourse as 'natural'".

5.4.3. *Unyago* Space

The actual operation was usually done inside the special inner chamber (*ndani*). The Swahili live in town villages within an enclosed courtyard complete with a seclusion area for women. Women usually retreated to these quarters to make room for male guests in the inner part of the house. The courtyards of the rich were large enough to accommodate several women, who at times, sang and danced without outside interference.

The spatial segregration is important in understanding the *unyago* ritual, because it is in this inner part of the house that women spent most of their time. It can be argued that the inner sanctums were in fact a woman's space and/or domain. Men rarely, if at all, entered the women's quarters. In traditional Swahili society, this seclusion symbolized religious purity or sacredness. The *kungwi*, the *ngariba* and about two assistants/trainees were usually the ones inside the inner sanctums with the girls, while the other women sang and danced in the courtyard.

5.5. Conclusion

It was noted that the *unyago* played a central role in the socialization of girls. It was an important medium for education and training on various aspects of Swahili life. It also provided an avenue through which women acquired their identity within society. Consequently, the Swahili retained the *unyago* practice but abandoned its FGM component.

The next chapter explores the role of song, dance and music in Swahili *unyago*. It employs, inter alia, a literary analysis of folkloristic data to elicit perceptions and philosophy of the Swahili community in Mumias regarding *unyago*.

CHAPTER 6

SONG AND DANCE IN SWAHILI *UNYAGO*

6.1. Introduction

It is generally observed by folklorists that music is the foundation of African education. It forms a big part of a child's everyday life in playing, working and learning. On the other hand, dance is the product of song and provides a multi-dimensional approach to leisure and learning. Although the songs, demonstrations and dancing styles in *unyago* training differed, they were all aimed at teaching lessons on a wide range of women's issues. In particular, the girls learnt to seductively sway their bodies while walking. The girls were trained how to 'dance' with their men in bed. However, they were warned against behaving seductively outside their houses or in the presence of any other men apart from their husbands.

6.2. The *Chakacha* and *Msondo*

The *chakacha* was initially a private dance (*ngoma ya ndani*) which was performed exclusively by women for entertainment and relaxation. With time and the dynamism of Swahili culture, it has, however, evolved into popular music that is performed in public places. The *chakacha* was (and still is) used for sexual instruction during Swahili weddings. It has become a part of popular secular music in East Africa. The movements during *chakacha* performance are slow, deliberate and intentionally erotic. Nowadays, the *chakacha* is performed any time for relaxation and has gained popularity in public functions.

On the other hand, the *msondo* dance was performed in a lying or horizontal position. The *msondo* refers to the drum played during the dance but in the case of *unyago*, it is used as a euphemism for sexual intercourse. The *msondo* dance is erotic with the focus being on gyration of the waist in tandem with varied singing and drumbeats. Sexual practices like the bed dance were carefully taught because they were meant to keep husbands from straying and therefore from unnecessary divorce. The girls were made to understand that they had to keep their husbands interested in them by satisfying them sexually, making them nice meals and talking to them politely.

Although both *chakacha* and *msondo* songs and dances were sexually explicit performances aimed at teaching the girls "how to achieve sexual satisfaction for themselves and their partners, as well as various ways of having sexual intercourse" (Fair, 1996: 152); I argue that they had the aim of empowering women to be sexually in control, assertive and confident. The songs taught women to be comfortable with their bodies.

Other songs and dance mimicry styles related to the household tasks that the initiates would undertake when they had homes of their own were baby-sitting, winnowing, digging, pottery, basketry, rope-making and threshing grain. For example:

Mahindi hutwangwa au sagwa (maize is grinded, say, with a mortar and pestle)

Mawele yanatwangwa au sagwa (millet is grinded)

Mhogo hutafunwa (the cassava is chewed)

Nazi inakunwa (the coconut is grated)

Although such songs are classified as work songs, their rendition and the accompanying gestures are replete with sexual connotations in the 'unsaid.' The use of grinding, chewing and grating movements makes them sexual metaphors.

Generally, *lelemama* (lullabies), work and praise songs were performed during the *unyago* ceremony. Some of the songs were used to pace work rather than being 'songs while working'. Work is an essential component of livelihood and material growth, therefore, a lot of importance was placed on teaching the girls how to work with songs. The initiates were trained and their skills tested during the entire seclusion period and sometimes competed in an open arena in the courtyard. The *kungwi* and other elderly women relatives were present during such sessions and they all played a role in molding the future crop of adults.

Drumming and clapping to the rhythms accompanying well-known women's songs such as '*wape vidonge vyao*' (give them (men) their medicine) took place. The girls were punished if they displayed sloppiness or laziness. The punishment was intended to make them responsible adults.

6.3. Instrumentation and Gender Constructions in *Unyago*

One of the musical instruments used in the *unyago* dance was the horn of the kudu or antelope. It was blown at intervals from a small hole made in the slim end to produce a mellow sound that adds a unique accent to music. The horn is appropriate for the feminine voices of the singers. Whereas the traditional ox horn was used as a signal for war, a meeting, or a hunting expedition, a buffalo horn was blown during the circumcision of boys.

Both the buffalo and ox horns yield one tone that emulates a deep masculine voice. Compared to the kudu, buffalo and ox are animals that are more powerful. Though important, the women's initiation rites were, metaphorically speaking, considered less significant to those of men.

In most traditional African communities, the spiral-shaped horn was used to communicate amongst villages. The horn acquires many symbolic overtones, meanings and practical uses among

communities that practice FGM. Among the Pokot, for instance, a bull's horn was usually used to re-open the narrowed vagina opening for the husband to consummate a marriage with the circumcised bride. The horn was considered a masculine symbol, which elders carried in their skin-bags. It was used to store tobacco-snuff, while bigger ones were used for drinking traditional beer, a preserve of the male members of the community. The horn thus becomes a symbol of patriarchal order and signifies the respect, which the owner is accorded.

Then, why did women blow a small horn during the *unyago* ceremonies? Respondents insisted that women blew the *kudu* horn only during the *unyago* rite of passage and not during any other ceremonies because this is the only time they were openly involved in an act of courage like their male counterparts. The girls were also being 'cleansed' like their male counterparts. The blowing of a horn by a woman represents the uniformity, the similarity and therefore inclusion of women in Swahili society. It implies gender equality in as far as the circumcision is concerned. Circumcision makes both women and men equal, a *Dasein* similar to Heidegger's gender-neutral sense of Being. It implies there is a neutrality of gender but which also denotes the arbitrariness with which sexuality is deconstructed. At one level, a woman is human and undergoes circumcision same as the man, but at another level, she is considered as the 'Other' in that she is symbolically differentiated by the choice of musical instruments.

Other musical instruments that were used during the dances included shakers and a rattle made from gourds. A rattle is a percussion instrument that produces an endearing sound when shaken. Rattles could also be made of balls or string bags containing seeds. They were held by hand while others were attached on body parts such as the ankles and wrists. The bodily movements to produce melodious accompaniment to the songs activated the instruments.

The body was further accentuated and utilized as a human instrument in the form of swaying, jumping, stamping and clapping. Ululation at various intervals during the performance was a common spectacle because a circling motion with rapid hand movements accompanied it.

In some communities, such as the Meru, Maasai, Wanga and Sabaot, it was noted that men carried symbols of manhood such as machetes, swords, spears, shields, clubs, and knobkerries during the circumcision of boys. These were instruments of war sometimes used to scare away the womenfolk and children. They can be interpreted as physical manifestations of patriarchy and power. Further deconstruction exposes a paradoxical discrimination and Otherness within inclusion. This surface

reading presupposes that men, who wielded destructive weapons of warfare, were the superior members of the community.

6.4. Cultural Conditioning through *Unyago* Songs

An analysis of *unyago* songs indicates that culture is not inborn but is taught and acquired through repeated performance. Such an observation confirms that repeated performances and instruction play a pivotal role in cultural transmission, preservation, dissemination and survival of almost every aspect of African traditional life (Okpewho, 1992; P'Bitek, 1974).

Before entering the inner chamber for the operation, the initiates sang and danced with older women. Most of the songs encouraged them to face whatever lay ahead with fortitude. Other songs focused on the inevitability of the painful procedure and the meaning of the ritual. Some u*nyago* songs were performed in the open square inside the yard, while others were privately reserved for special instructions during the recuperation period.

The song *Tamaa* in Appendix 3 (a) clearly demonstrates that the socialization of the girls, together with their experiences as members of the Swahili community, programmed their minds to look forward to circumcision to reap the benefits accruing from the rite. Initiates performed the song on the eve of circumcision amid ululation from older women members of the community. The women usually converged to prepare food for the visitors and the initiates. They did their chores inside the house but sporadically entered the inner chambers to ululate, circle and gesture around the initiates, who danced in a semi-circle. Ululations were also used to conceal the groaning of an initiate.

Tamaa is about the willingness of the girls to undergo circumcision. The initiates exhibit the desire to be circumcised. They demonstrate that they are eager to undergo the operation under any circumstances. The Swahili words "tamaa" "*uchoyo*" "*ulafi",* "*pupa*", "*uroho*" or "*tutuo*" denote different types of 'greed' or desire to possess or have something done. The usage of greed in the song is exaggerated in that the girl merely craves to be circumcised. The persona desperately yearns for the ordeal.

In the song, "*tamaa*" is used to imply that the girl desires, craves, and therefore begs to be circumcised. When asked who or what may have created "the desire" to be circumcised, respondents were of the view that girls impulsively felt the need to become adults when their time came. Further analysis indicates that the desire for circumcision was because of cultural indoctrination and mental programming. This was done through the folklore, which serves to buttress and pass on tradition from generation to generation.

The girls know about the pain that awaits them, but like death or childbirth, the operation is inevitable. The song indicates that the girls have been programed to accept the operation as a *fait accompli*. They consider it a necessary pain, hence the self-encouragement in the repetition of "I will sing all night", which is aimed at re-affirming the girls' group commitment to undergo FGM.

In the song, the initiates let out the secret that they were coerced into this tight corner through various threats, such as being sold off as slaves to enemy tribes. The use of "*kuuzwa kweli kwa pombe*" (truly sold for beer!) denotes a business transaction rather than a social engagement that marriage offers. *Kuuzwa* (to be sold) is different from *kuozwa* (to be married off), so the choice of diction is deliberately made to convey the intensity of the desire to undergo *unyago* and FGM. The use of coercion to enforce FGM is real and it achieves the desired result: compliance.

In the song, resistance to FGM would also result in "*kuchinjwa*" (being slaughtered). This is another threat couched in metaphor. The Swahili word for slaughter is "*chinja/tinda*" but in this context, it implies to kill for no reason such as in killing an animal whose meat one cannot consume. The threat of death is used to enforce the custom.

The girl is the subject and focus of the operation and its outcomes. A further question would be who will sell her off? Who will be the beneficiary of the transaction? Within a patriarchal setting, the male members of the community were definitely the receivers of bridal wealth. The main reason the girls are going through circumcision is so that they can get married. A different interpretation is that, the girls who exhibit fear or refuse to undergo the operation will be married off to inferior foreigners. On the other hand, the courageous and obedient ones will get rich and worthy men from within the community.

The aforementioned threats introduce contradictions regarding traditional *unyago*. On the one hand, the girls plead for the operation because they desire to go through it; yet on the other, they have been threatened with dire consequences if they do not comply. The fact that the song introduces an element of coercion means that the singers, who are women, were not supportive of FGM. There is subtle resistance to FGM inherent in the song. It challenges a custom or tradition in a concealed rather than a bold manner. The obfuscation of the women's dislike for FGM must have been due to the dire consequences that would befall them for strongly opposing an established cultural practice.

The song is evidence to the fact that women in traditional Swahili society were quietly resisting FGM, but it was imposed on them through certain threats such as being sold into slavery. The deconstructionist question that arises is who or from which quarters did the coercion emanate? A scrutiny of Swahili community in Mumias reveals that the community was administered through a council of elders comprising the Imam, Sheikh or Kadhi, who are the religious leaders.

The council, which was composed of male members of the community, was in charge of enforcing compliance to both religious and secular law. The Imam, for instance, was both a judicial and religious leader in charge of marriage and divorce. Any opposition expressed in the song was therefore an indirect affront to the patriarchal wielders of power. The affront is so deliberately ambivalent as to elicit multiple interpretations. Therefore, it serves the purpose of an indirect resistance to authority without the singers being accused of open rebellion.

The song's allusion to the girls being sold off cheaply for only two pots of beer may point to the enemy being neighboring tribes such as the Wagalla, who had many running battles with the Swahili. The Swahili and Arabs who are Muslim by faith do not drink alcohol so this allusion contradicts Swahili culture and religious beliefs. That the girls would be sold for such, a useless and unholy beverage underscores the contempt with which a girl who avoided circumcision was treated. She was considered worthless. Another interpretation would be that the allusion is a referential sentiment that dates back to the days of the Arab slave trade. The reference therefore serves to link the Mumias Swahili with their coastal origin.

The song castigates girls of the "White" and "Black" age groups whom it classifies as 'useless'. Such criticism may imply that the performance is a contest between age groups, with each trying to leave a more memorable legacy in terms of performance and character. However, such age groups may also have been invoked due to the nature of *unyago* ritual continuity: hence the proposition in this dissertation that the *unyago* ritual represents an institution for cultural reproduction and conscientization. The girls identify themselves with a group and therefore consider other groupings as the inferior "Other".

Superficially, the references may seem to be empty rhetoric aimed at other age-sets with the claim that they "keep no promise" but, conversely, the current group of initiates must be claiming that, unlike white and black age groups, they themselves keep promises. The promises may include the apparently mundane ones, such as singing all night, not speaking carelessly, and leaving in the

morning, which are expressed in the song. By extension, the assertions are an indication of the initiates' stronger qualities of keeping the *unyago* secrets that arise from the teaching.

The *unyago* is a communal event but it also had many elements that were not disclosed to the public. The initiates were required, under oath, to uphold the *unyago* components that were categorized as secret. Anyone who broke those vows was punished for betraying the oath of secrecy. This is the context within which the phrase "I won't talk loosely!" should be understood because it affirms their commitment to keep the oath of secrecy.

The girls claim in the song "In the morning I will disappear!" The Swahili word "*tokomea*" means to leave, to go, or to arrive at a conclusion. In its context herein, it means to cease to exist or to cease to be visible. The implication, therefore, is that the initiates will acquire a new life, and their current life (of childhood) will cease and they will enter into adulthood. The girls will also go into seclusion and will therefore cease to be seen in public.

As argued earlier, the *unyago* was a transformative ritual that promoted girls from being children to becoming adults, from girls to women and from unmarriageable girls to prospective brides. The rite bestowed respect and certain privileges on the initiates. It provided motivation and impetus to undergo the operation and forms part of the philosophical explanation to the promotion of FGM. It further concretizes the concept of being a woman and an accepted female member of the Swahili community. Such a view confirms that *unyago* and FGM give rise to, (engender) feelings of womanhood, group identity and maturity.

The girls vow to face the ordeal together "as one unit". This sense of togetherness, of unity and cooperation is the very approach that Swahili women in Mumias used to transform the traditional *unyago* to a '*unyago wa mfereji*' without the genital piercing component. As we shall argue later, the ARP is also a collective approach to bringing change in the lives of girls and women.

Repetition is one of the most obvious aesthetic and stylistic features of *unyago* performance. Stanzas, lines, refrains and entire songs are repeated. The repetition provides variation from stanza to stanza and from one song to another. According to Okpewho (1992: 71), "repetition is no doubt one of the most fundamental characteristic features of oral literature. It has both an aesthetic and a utilitarian value… [That] serves certain practical purposes in the overall organization of the oral performance."

The repetition also lays emphasis on the celebratory nature of the *unyago*. The refrain section of the song is its most emotionally charged aspect. Heavy clapping, stamping and a blast from the kudu horn came during every repeat of the refrain:

I will sing all night!
In the morning,
I will go home
Under the urge

6.4.1. 'Being' through the *Unyago*

Another song, which rekindles the ambivalence and paradoxes of Swahili *unyago*, is the *Wanawali*/Virgins in appendix 3 (b). The single stanza song is addressed to girls who are of the same age as the initiate. The verse is ambiguous in that the girls appear to bid farewell to their own age mates whom they will share a blade and a shelter with during the seclusion period. This is further complicated by alluding to a "friendship" that has ended; yet these same girls will recuperate and often bond and create lasting friendships in adulthood.

The song can be best understood in its context to mean that although the girls will go for circumcision as a group, each initiate is bound to face her pain individually. FGM is performed on an individual's body and no one else can be substituted for the other. It is a personal experience yet it is also shared, which creates cohesion within the group. It may also imply that after the journey they are undertaking the girls will individually take their roles as wives in separate households. Each of the girls will be married off singly, hence the metaphorical ending of friendship.

Further probing and deconstruction of the "*Wanawali*" verse attests to how the *unyago* philosophy is produced and entrenched through separation, exclusivity and 'Otherness''. Transforming from childhood to adulthood through *unyago* implies a separation from age mates who have not undergone the rite of passage. The song was sung when the girls had left the arena for the operation. The dance used mainly hand gestures to signify 'goodbye'. Those who are not circumcised cannot share a friendship or bond with the circumcised. The song is also rendered in a sombre mood to signify the ending of one era.

This song carves notions of womanhood as being a member of a group of women, yet being an individual within the category. It demonstrates that a woman's humanness and personhood bring a sense of Being similar with others within a larger community. The song makes sense of what it means to be a woman in traditional Swahili society. The verse provides a backdrop against which one may configure a representation of a womanhood that mirrors an exteriority of one outside

oneself. Such an analysis echoes the words of Weedon (1987) and Alcoff (1995), which sees subjectivity in individuals as being mediated by social discourse and cultural practices rather than by individual motivations, intentions or preferences.

This song is indicative of the moment of "leap" to "truth" as described by Heidegger in that the uncircumcised girls are considered the other by those who have undergone the rite of passage. It is this subjectivity and realization that one is both an individual and a collective member of the womenfolk that compelled girls and their parents to succumb to FGM. The song is indicative of the paradox of living in a relationship with other human beings while being ultimately alone. Deeper probing elicited the view that the girls were symbolically cutting the bond with the outside world, as further demonstrated in *Kumekucha*/It is Dawn in appendix 3 (c).

Most of the *unyago* songs are brief but are repeated many times to make them appear longer. However, *Kumekucha* is long and stylish. The form of the song is closely embedded in its subject matter whose main objective is to encourage the girls to bear pain, instil fear in them so as not to run away; and to instruct them to be calm during the operation. Sometimes, songs were sung in a diversity of settings as a way of marking a recurrent and hence, popular song. The soloist gauged the appreciation or popularity of a song from the interjections by her 'audience' or by the enthusiasm displayed by the respondents.

6.4.2. Cultural Objectification of the Female Body

The *Kumekucha* song begins with a request to the mother to reward the initiate by decorating her neck with a bouquet of flowers. This is a symbolic indication of the rewards that will follow in the event that the girl proves to be brave and undergoes the ceremony without causing embarrassment to the family. It is an inducement to the girl to obey the senior women and especially the *ngariba* who may chop off the "entire clitoris" or cut her thighs if she displays cowardice. The visible decoration with flowers, new attire and hairstyle is a further pointer to the use of FGM as a form of inscription of the body which should be understood to be an aesthetic enhancement of the female body.

Within poststructuralism, the body is considered as a cultural rather than a natural object (Grosz, 1987: 1). A cultural object is an entity or thing made by humans for an empirical or spiritual purpose. Objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) postulates that many women are sexually objectified and treated as an object to be valued for its use by others. Ultimately, the women may start to self-objectify themselves by using outsiders' perspectives of their bodies.

Guindi (2006) equates FGM to body modifications such as facelifts, cosmetic nose surgeries, and breast and buttock enhancements that whose aim is beautifying the body in the Western cultures. However, she fails to explain that those who undergo the plastic surgeries do so willingly and that it is not forced on them as a condition to get married. The Swahili female body is socially reproduced through a complex process of inscription and *unyago* performance that includes massages, covering the face with a *hijab* (veil), applying make-up, perfume and *henna*. The process ensures that the absorption of ideologies of femininity is reinforced in the mind as well as the body. It should be noted that it is this inscription of the female body that leads to marriage and a demonstration of power relationships within the domestic domain.

The purification of the body through *unyago* is a reflection of the human body as the focus of the traditional ritual. Several rituals were performed to purify the body through cleansing and the application of various oils, water and '*liwa*' (sandalwood). The initiates were decorated on their hands and feet with *henna* and their bodies massaged regularly until they were silken. They were also scented with essential spice and herbal oils. Their rooms were consecrated with incense smoke. During the consummation of the marriage, the bedchamber was also meticulously decorated with special perfumes and incense. The cutting of the clitoris was considered both part of the purification and beautification of the female body that echoes Edmund Burke's (http://ebooks.edelaide.edu.au/b/burke/edmund/sublime/) conceptualization of the sublime, beauty, horror, astonishment, fear, pleasure, pain and passion.

As indicated earlier, the Swahili practiced *Sunna* (as required by custom) circumcision. *Sunna* circumcision may have been motivated by the desire to aesthetically modify or beautify the female genitalia/body. The threat in the song that a bigger portion of the genitals might be cut is aimed at instilling fear in the girls to make them comply with as little resistance as possible. The excision of a bigger portion would not only be more painful but it would also not bring the desired aesthetic value. The physical transformation of the girls' bodies through FGM, the women's conceptualization of power, autonomy, and infliction of pain were intertwined in a complex gendered social institution whose real meaning was best perceived by the participants.

As earlier observed, the *unyago* bestowed status and honour on the subjects. However, the positions ascribed to the *unyago* women are associated with roles, which come with rights, privileges, expectations and responsibilities befitting adult women while those of male circumcision confer tangible rights to own property. The status accorded to a girl at the post-liminal phase of the ritual emanates from a community that has been programmed to believe in the efficacy of the ritual.

According to Raiji (2007: 54), "belief is the foundation on which ritual is based" and, if people stop believing in a ritual, it loses its potency, efficacy, purpose and meaning. The foundation of a ritual is belief which, once eroded by cultural transformations such as those brought about by education, globalization, and religion; renders it ineffective. There is a possibility that the Mumias Swahili community stopped believing in the effectiveness of female circumcision and abandoned it in favour of *unyago wa mfereji* concept. This means that the eradication of FGM in other communities may also lie in applying strategies that ensure that practicing communities stop believing in it.

6.4.3. *Unyago* Performance Aesthetics

Further threats in the song include the inescapability of the operation as evidenced in the metaphorical indomitability of the buffalo that is killed. The image is further embellished in the song with the '*kipanga*', (kite or eagle) which swoops on its prey. The comparison foregrounds how the circumciser, the *ngariba* (kite) swoops on the girls (prey).

The hand gestures used in this line are indicative of the fast movement of the kite, and at the same time, rendered in a way that portrays a fast cutting of flesh. This song portrays the girls and women as helpless victims of a custom, which, as members of the Swahili community, they cannot avoid. The ritual ultimately defines who they are as members of the Swahili community.

An interesting aspect of the rendition is the "Eee" used to indicate agreement with whatever assertion the soloist makes. It can be rendered in the English translation as "That is the thing" or "That is true". In other songs cited in this chapter, "Eee" is used either as an exclamation or to convey sarcasm rather than agreement/affirmation. This manipulation of voice in the process of the performance improves the repetitive song's effectiveness.

The most prominent gesture used in the song is the tilting of the head to indicate attentiveness to the words of the soloist. The words of the soloist might vary, indicating some form of innovativeness, manipulation and resourcefulness of the soloists. As the respondents agree with the words of the soloist, there is pandemonium and spectacle in the form of the blowing of the kudu horn, stamping, ululation and swaying of the body to produce various sounds from rattles and shakers.

However, during the soloist's interlude, the instrumentation ceases and the dancers revert to the attentive posture. The attention allows the words of the soloist to be heard. It also creates tension as the audience awaits the next lines, which, as intimated earlier, may vary from one soloist to another. The message in the song is emphasized through repetition for maximum impact. The song can be

repeated with each of the women serving as the soloist. This creates variety and is an indication of the communal nature of *unyago* performance.

The singing is usually interspersed with ululation, clapping, a sustained blowing of the horn, and rapid hypnotic trances from some of the performers. The song is repeated long enough to induce trance, in which some participants faint or roll on the ground because of the strong emotions, the movements and the groaning of the initiates. During trance, some participants sang in unfamiliar languages to the accompaniment of a cacophony of drumming, rattles and blowing of horns. This song, which was performed during the liminal or threshold stage of the ritual, can be interpreted as further demonstration of a 'leap' to 'truth' because the participants no longer hold their pre-ritual status but are totally immersed in the ritual's realization and completion.

The song is recited, chanted, sang and spoken at different intervals. It does not sit squarely into any single mode of performance but oscillates between speech, song, poetry, and groaning (moaning). During performance, titles of songs are not announced, so it is only from the song that one can identify a refrain, a motif or a recurrent theme to apportion a title. Sometimes, songs were repeated in such a way that it was not easy to tell when one song had ended and another had begun. Thus, the refrain delineates the beginning and end of a particular song.

Immediately after the circumcision, women ululated and sung *hongera* (congratulatory) songs. The pain of circumcision was expressed in the literal lament of most of the *unyago* songs which expressed bitterness and joy at the same time. This is so because *unyago* songs refer to sweetness and joy on the one hand, and to pain and bitterness, on the other. This ambivalence is also noticeable in songs that refer to *kuvunja ubikira* (breaking/losing virginity), marriage and childbirth. Such pain is aptly demonstrated through going through FGM, which the girls were prepared to overcome. However, a painful experience, FGM elevated girls to womanhood different from that of the uncircumcised. The ritual thus conferred a higher status to the girls. This explains one of the reasons it was valued and deeply entrenched in the minds of the people.

After circumcision, the girls and women sang, ululated, danced and feasted to mark and comment on the event with songs such as *Kutinda simba*/Slaughtering a Lion (in appendix 3 (d)). The song is a celebration of the initiate's bravery. We learn from "I spent the night encouraging her not to fear" that the girl has been psychologically prepared by the *kungwi* and older women to withstand the pain. From the song, we also learn that the soloist, who is the *kungwi* whose responsibility was to take care of the initiate before and after undergoing the ritual, spent the whole night encouraging the

girl(s) to be brave. The fact that the girl has been brave ("killed a lion") is the reason for celebration. The participants in the ritual are feted by the girl's mother whom they rhetorically ask in the song: '*What then can be a hindrance, from eating sweet things'*.

The cited phrase can also be deconstructed to mean that the girl is now an adult and she can now enjoy the benefits of being an adult, such as, in being sexually active. The ritual has removed the barrier that existed in her previous life.

6.4.4. The Gender Neutrality Paradox

In most traditional African cultures, sex and the human body are taboo topics that are rarely discussed. However, *unyago* songs are bold and bawdy enough to mention topics that are restricted during the day-to-day lives of the community members. According to respondents, some aspects of the song are also sung during the circumcision of boys, where the initiate is praised for 'killing a lion', a feat that was traditionally ascribed to men who were trained to be warriors to protect the community.

At the surface level, the "lion" analogy indicates the courage of the girl. It is an equally appropriate metaphor because in the lion kingdom the lioness is actually the better hunter. The killing of a lion is a sign of courage and bravery. Some versions of this song refer to the killing of a shark (*papa*) or a crocodile (*mamba*). It maintains that the Swahili *unyago* was a way of elevating girls (and women) to an equal pedestal as their male counterparts. The women can also achieve what men can achieve, such as killing a lion. This analogy is reminiscent of the features of *Dasein*'s gender-neutrality (Heidegger, 1953).

The metaphorical reference to the killing of a lion further indicates that traditional Swahili *unyago* held much significance for the women. The analogy invokes deep-rooted psychological and philosophical imperatives that may have provided a basic prerequisite for the establishment of FGM among the Swahili in Mumias. This view is further given credence with other metaphors in the song. For instance, one may argue that the initiation places the girl on an equal footing with the men in the community. She becomes a woman. She is not a girl any more because she has been 'plucked, dressed and smoothened like a feather' and, therefore, she can 'rub against the other'.

6.4.5. Esotericism

One of the characteristics of Swahili *unyago* is the secrecy with which the participants kept its innermost secrets. Most of the teachings and practices that this study exposes were only understood

and preserved by a small group of initiated womenfolk. This explains why the language used in some of the *unyago* songs, such as *Kumekucha*, is covert and figuratively obscured in imagery.

The social context of *Kumekucha* is such that the clitoris, "useless thing", is considered to be 'dirty' 'ugly' and an 'impediment' to good sexual activity, but now that it has been removed, the girl is considered clean and beautiful enough to mix freely with the other members of the community ('rub against the other'). Due to the use of words such as "smoothened" "adorn" and "dress", the removal of the clitoris is thus viewed from the aesthetic point of view.

FGM is considered an improvement or a modification of the female genitalia. Some supporters of FGM have variously argued that tattooing, ear-piercing, hip and breast modifications are similar to female circumcision and that therefore, it should not be vilified. However, one observes that although some people as having aesthetic value may consider FGM, the said modifications are voluntary, whereas FGM is a cultural practice that is enforced through several ways. FGM is neither a personal lifestyle choice nor a free choice for many women. However, should a woman freely choose to undergo it, it would not be considered a violation of her rights.

To 'rub against the other, penetrating' is an equally loaded metaphor which implies that the girl is now mature enough to 'be rubbed by men' or to get involved in sexual relations by getting married. The word "*kikiingiliya*" (when it is entering in there), in reference to a penetrative act, exposes the supposedly "sweet things" that the song alludes to. The song suggests that the girl is now a marriageable adult. However, the girl is yet to recuperate, hence she will have to go into seclusion where she will be massaged by the *kungwi* and other women. During this period, the girl will undergo several types of training to 'smoothen' her even more.

From the above, "to rub against the other" can be further described in a more symbolic manner.
To understand this metaphorical use of language, one has to assume that the most accurate meaning of it is what is left unstated. It is not only veiled but it is deliberately concealed in tradition and history. The meaning lies in what the song does not say.

According to traditional lore upheld by the Nabongo council of elders, male circumcision among the Wanga entailed a careful modification of the foreskin in such a way that a clitoris-like appendage (*sikio* (Kiswahili) or *ngwati* (Kikuyu), *ndigi* (Meru) designed from the foreskin was left to hang on the penis. The elders believe that this kind of operation by the Wanga was adopted from their Sabaot and Maasai neighbours, who plied the plains in search of pasture for their livestock.

Whereas the clitoris was cut during FGM, male circumcision seems to have "added an extra penis" to the male genitalia. Symbolically, the clitoris was removed from the woman and "attached" to the man. The metaphor of the *sikio* appendage can be used to draw a comparison between the way female sexuality is inscribed as an absence or lack within phallocratic cultures, which is the privileging or valuing only of one organ on one kind of body. The values and traits associated with femininity are likewise inscribed within phallocratic discourse as absence of the positive traits. In phallocratic discourse, the woman is considered to be deficient in that she does not have a penis; yet in an interesting psychological twist, she is further denied the little she has through circumcision and has it 'attached' on the man, who is considered to be already complete.

The psychological enhancement of the male ego at the expense of the female was also practiced among some other communities in Kenya. Further research indicates that among some communities where FGM was practiced, they had similar types of male circumcision. The importance of the modification of the penis is aptly captured in the Meru, saying "*mutanirwa kwa itha ati ndigi ndaja*" (A man who is circumcised in somebody else's homestead does not have a long appendage). The appendage, it is argued, provides extra friction during intercourse, hence the allusion to rubbing against the scar left by FGM as demonstrated in another female circumcision song from the Meru people with the refrain "*Nkirithagia kino muthuuki, muthuuki; karomo ka ndigi kari matendero*!" (I rub my vagina with nettles [because] the tip of the *ndigi* is slippery).

6.4.6. FGM and Gender Roles

The notion that the girl is being prepared for marriage through FGM is given further credence by the allusion to bananas and cows in the song. This allusion demands a closer deconstructive reading to unravel the underlying meaning. In most Bantu communities, food crops such as bananas were a woman's crops, while livestock such as cattle, goats, donkeys and camels belonged to men. However, men tended the banana trees by propping them up with poles when they were heavy with fruit to prevent them from falling prematurely. The men also cleared, ploughed the farms for planting, and took care of livestock.

On the other hand, women milked the cows, weeded the farms, harvested the crops and cooked. This complementary division of gender roles and labour brought food and wealth to a family. It is in this context that the *kungwi'*s excitement at the show of bravery by the girl is so satisfying that she makes the following promise:

You are my sister, I tell you,
If you prove to be, brave,

And those bananas, I will un-prop
The unripe ones, will be eaten by cows

The verse states that the *kungwi* will harvest unripe bananas, which will be eaten by cows.
The metaphorical reference to bananas and cows carries several meanings. First, the young bride, who has proved her worth, will attract plenty of wealth to her family, so there will be plenty of food. Secondly, it symbolically binds the girl with her farming roles as a woman now that she is mature. Thirdly, it implies that she (the banana) can now be formally permitted (un-propped) to be 'eaten' by the cows (men) because, as an adult, the girl is eligible for marriage.

Bananas also played another role in FGM. A banana flower which had been peeled to the appropriate size was inserted into the vagina of an initiate during the first few days of recuperation to prevent the labia minora from sticking together due to the wound inflicted during excision of the clitoris.

The call and response nature of this song makes it aesthetically appealing as it creates a dialogic style of presentation. Emphasis in the song is achieved with rhetorical questions such as "Has she been brave?", "Has the child been pierced courageously?", and "The child of the heroes?"; "While the useless thing was being cut?"; "Is the child brave?" and "What then can be a hindrance from eating sweet things?" The response to each of these questions is "Eee!" (Yes!). The chorus follows this. Bearing in mind that the soloists keep revolving from one participant to the other, the rendition of the song makes it a complex one, with manipulation of words and different nuances of tonality and meaning. However, most of the songs, such as "*Leo ni Leo*", (Today is the day) in appendix 3 (e) were linguistically and semantically simple.

6.4.7. Religious Overtones in *Unyago* Songs

The "Today" song is performed to herald the dawn when the actual operation is performed on the girls. A literal translation of "*Leo ni leo*" is "today is today", an indication of the inevitability of the ritual. The song passes the message that the day has arrived and that the circumcision is irreversible and cannot be postponed. A girl had to brace herself for the "*mpambano*" (wrestling match) to avoid embarrassing her family when the day of reckoning comes. FGM is compared to a wrestling match or a fight because of the struggle involved. The girl is, metaphorically, wrestling with a deeply entrenched cultural practice.

Based on this verse, one can conclude that the Swahili women in Mumias were resigned to the belief that the FGM was a necessary pain that they had to go through and which, though painful,

was considered a harbinger of good things comparable only to being anointed with oil, as illustrated in *Kupakwa Mafuta* (Anointment) found in appendix 3 (f).

In *unyago*, it is common for a song to be centered on one sustained metaphor, which gives depth to its meaning. A song such as "Anointment" exploits the ritualized application of oil or fat to put across its message. In the song, the blood that the initiates shed is equated with anointing oil in that it is "fatty oil, we anoint ourselves with that!"

It is a loaded metaphor which points to the religious nature of the blood that is shed during *unyago* because it is viewed as linking the initiates with the other members of the community, past and present. The severed flesh and blood were buried in the soil, in the belief that they bound the initiates with their ancestors. The symbolism demonstrates the deep philosophical and spiritual nature of Swahili *unyago*. This metaphor exposes the religious link in *unyago* and the artistic sophistication of Swahili oral culture. Its usage cements the spiritual and sacred nature of *unyago*.

The last line, "It is not Hand daughter of Hamisi" is a figurative and semantic play on words. In Kiswahili '*mkono*' is a noun that means 'hand' or 'arm'. Among the Swahili of Mumias, *mkono* is sometimes used as a personal noun or a person's nickname. The singer cautions the inanimate hand is the witness to the other, not the "daughter of Hamisi". The personification of the hand emphasizes the fact that there are witnesses to the initiation. The person (the hand) witnesses the actual operation, hence the allusion to:

In addition, when you hear,
The hand is a witness to the other,
The ones helped us.

The first witness is the *ngariba*'s assistant who holds down the girl during the operation. The other witnesses are the women participants. FGM is a communal affair with many women participants as witnesses. The metaphor therefore shows that the girl is circumcised indeed, with plenty of witnesses to attest to that fact. The metaphor further reveals the highly figurative nature of the language of *unyago* songs. The response "That is the thing" is the vivid and emphatic way in which the respondent singers agree with all that the soloist says. It is the equivalent of 'It is so, or 'It is true'.

Swahili girls were encouraged by their mothers, peers and other relatives to undergo the *unyago* rite because it was perceived as a socially relevant practice. Moreover, pain and the shedding of blood

have been associated with rituals and religious sacrifices in many communities. The use of the anointing metaphor in the song therefore introduces religious overtones to the practice of FGM.

However, some respondents felt that FGM had been overtaken by modernity (*usasa*), and that even the *imams* and pastors have preached against it. Swahili women had accepted and succumbed to tradition and performed FGM on themselves in the belief that it was both socially and religiously desirable. Moreover, *unyago* and FGM were the available institutions through which social education was imparted to community members. Okpewho (1992: 115) observes that in traditional African societies, there were no educational institutions to teach men and women lessons about life and conduct and that "various forms of literature practiced in society such as songs, narratives, proverbs, riddles" operated as forms of cultural education.

Although the initiates are too young to go through all the pain of FGM, it was a cultural requirement whose suffering was considered rewarding. Some respondents who went through the ritual felt that at the time it was being practiced, FGM was their fate, something they could not have avoided without the dire consequence of losing their place in society. Respondents recalled that a lot of foot thumping accompanied the songs sung during the cutting of the clitoris, blowing of the horn and noisy rattles to drown the cries of the girl. The words in the song were aimed at encouraging the girl to overcome the pain, to express solidarity with her.

6.4.8. Perseverance

The juxtaposition of pain, suffering and joy in the *unyago* ritual is so symbiotic in both FGM and the consummation of marriage that similar songs were performed during the two ceremonies. The *Vumilia*/Persevere song in appendix 3 (h) was, for instance, performed during both the FGM and wedding segments of the *unyago* ritual. In the song, the girl is told to stand firm despite the pain because she has willingly sought to undergo the ordeal of circumcision or sexual intercourse.

The song is addressed to the girl who is the focus of the performance. In this song, it is the women rather than the initiate(s) who sing while they enact the cutting or penetration act, which they knew, was taking place (during either circumcision or consummation of a marriage). In this song, FGM or sexual intercourse are simply referred to as "it". However, 'it' is equated with something the girl had hankered for ("What you wanted is what you have got").The performance involves the dramatization of pain, yet the women celebrate both circumcision and consummation with feasting, song, dance, and ululations.

The pain of FGM, consummation of marriage and child labour form what anti-FGM lobbyists have called the "three feminine sorrows" in a woman's sexuality (Fourcroy, 1998). These sorrows are painful but they are believed to bring much satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment and belonging as a female member of the community. However, FGM need not be among the 'sorrows' that women go through. It is for this reason that *Mwanangu*/My Child) in appendix 3 (g) expresses opposition to FGM by Swahili women.

6.5. Resistance and Protest in *Unyago* Songs

Mwanangu is a mother's lament and protest against FGM. The song depicts the mother's agony because FGM comes with consequences that affect the girls' lives. It portrays the girl as too young (small), too beautiful, too immature (green) to be inducted into adulthood. Moreover, the song categorically states that the girl still needs to continue with schooling. This is a more recent song which reflects the changing nature of Swahili and post-independence Kenya. Formal education started to be more valued than the traditional type of education that *unyago* imparted to women.

One of the consequences of *unyago* and FGM in a changing Swahili community was that the initiates dropped out of school to get married. The song is an indication that Swahili women, at a certain historical point, started to interrogate the merits and demerits of FGM through the available song genre. The song refers to the schooling of the girl-child, a more recent development in Swahili society. It indicates a changing culture whereby formal education is valued and cherished.

The yearning for the education of girls in Swahili society is also a further indication of the changing cultural attitudes towards the empowerment of women within a patriarchal society. The song lays claim to the liberation of women through acquiring an education that would ensure socio-economic gains for the women. Male circumcision does not deny boys advancement through education but denies girls a similar opportunity. The song is therefore a protest against gender imbalances and double standards that designate careers or roles based on sex.

The protest phenomenon through song and dance underscores the role of folklore as a tool for social commentary. In this instance, the genre is used as a medium of protest against discrimination against women through FGM. Seen thus, the song serves as a critical social commentary on a harmful customary practice. It demonstrates that Swahili women started by slowly questioning the FGM practice before they finally abandoned it.

One may argue that the Swahili women were opposed to FGM and devised methods to challenge it. This opposition, among other factors, must have contributed to its transformation to the *unyago wa*

mfereji in Mumias. This abandonment was a gradual, rather than a revolutionary or abrupt, cultural transformation that spanned several decades of social commentary. It took many years of silence and subtle resistance to challenge the practice.

"*Mwanangu*" best represents Swahili women has sustained, but cleverly understated, opposition to FGM. It is not only reflective of the way life is, but also goes outside the acceptable and the then prevailing social framework. The song introduces a vision of where the community should go: allow the girl-child to continue with education rather than undergo FGM to get married.

Such sustained efforts calling for respect for the rights of the girl-child must have cumulatively resulted in the abandonment of FGM in Mumias. Traditional Swahili community was in conflict with itself and the women used the folk medium of song that was available to them to modify a rite that they felt undermined them. Ultimately, the song is an indication of the dynamic nature of culture in that it reflects the changes taking place due to modernization, such as the introduction of formal education.

In traditional Swahili society, the more attractive girls were usually married early. For this reason, beautiful, agile and hard-working girls were circumcised earlier based on demand from suitors. Sometimes a girl was betrothed and circumcised alone to join her husband because a girl could never be married without undergoing the *unyago* rite. A rich elder seeking a young wife would sponsor her entire *unyago* ritual. It was painful to undergo the unyago, but, at the same time, it was considered an achievement for the girl, the mother, the *kungwi* and the entire village and community. The *unyago* philosophy rationalized that since the older women in the community had also gone through a similar ordeal and survived, so would the girls. The song subverts and negates such an assumption because it opposes FGM because of furthering the education of the girl-child.

6.5.1. Lampoon

Apart from the song entitled '*My Child'*; all the other cited *unyago* songs reflect elements of submission and the powerlessness of the women in the face of FGM. No family would have risked the consequences of defying custom, lest the entire family be barred from interacting with other members of the community. The family would not be allowed to share the common river or water well, nor to accompany other women to the market or to collect firewood or clay for making pots. It was unheard of for any girl to forego FGM, for fear of ostracizing her family.

One of the punishments imposed on a family when a girl refused to be circumcised was to excommunicate her entire family until they complied. The excommunication ceremony was a

spectacular event on its own. It was usually performed during the night and enforced during the day. Members of the community, composed of the age-mates of the girl's mother and father, went around the village as they sang songs of ridicule, as demonstrated in the excommunication song in appendix 3 (i) entitled *Kite* (groaning).

In traditional Swahili society in Mumias, parents, especially the mother, are expected to bring up their children to obey the traditions of the society. The song is addressed to the parents of a girl who has supposedly refused to undergo the ritual. It mocks, insults and ridicules the father and mother of the girl. The song goes beyond mere taunts to the actualization of the ban that may follow if any member of the community defies the tradition. The song blackmails the family to adhere to traditions.

For instance, the father is accused of committing incest with his daughter, as indicated in the vulgar phrase that claims, "He has licked the buttocks of his daughter". The community is unsympathetic to girls and families that resisted FGM. Ridiculing and shaming has to do with culture and traditional values whose aim is to abuse the family into submission. The song heaps insults on not only the girl but also the entire family. During the event, villagers defecated at the entrance to the family's home to signify that the family members were outcasts.

Most actions that were done during the excommunication event are extempore because they are done in the heat of the moment. The night performance involves the laying of twigs, ashes and logs at the 'offender's' gate and yard. As the men sing around the targeted homestead, they destroy property, such as cutting down plants and bananas with machetes. A curse was also placed on the family and no visitor would enter the homestead until the curse was lifted after the girl had undergone the rite of passage.

The lampoon severely ridicules the behaviour of the girl and her parents. It creates a spectacle that is geared towards eliciting a positive response from the targeted family. The lampoon uses virulent satire and abusive language against its target. Derogatory terms were used on girls and their parents if they avoided or feared to be circumcised. The assumption made by the song is that the father has colluded with his daughter, hence the supposed sexual liaisons between them. The mother is also indirectly accused of being uncircumcised, which is seen as the reason why the daughter refuses to be circumcised. This is why the song says the mother requires cleansing: "*And your mother? To be cleansed!*"

The allusion to cleansing also implies that the mother has violated the *unyago* code of conduct by condoning her daughter's action, which is considered an affront by the community. By extension, it means that she has become an uncircumcised woman and therefore she is as 'unclean' as her daughter is. A person who has been excommunicated ceases to be an acceptable member of the group. One is denied an identity, or the sense of Being somebody in the community.

One of the reasons why *unyago* and FGM are enforceable is that it is fundamental in clarifying the meaning of being a woman in communities where it is practiced. In such communities, one gains access to Being through other being, and one may not be defined in one's own terms but rather in communally approved methods. Ostracism denies the subjects power using coercion and manipulation to compel them to comply. The song is a demonstration of what Okpewho (1992: 148) states as having:

> "very little support for the charges made in the songs, and the whole attack may be an outright lie; the essential aim is to use the resources of words, coupled with music, dance, and spectacle, in the most poetically effective way to do utmost harm to the object of the attack".

Ember and Ember (1988) observe that power is the ability to make others do what they do not want to do. In the *unyago* practice, power was exerted with threats, instilling fear and the use of force. These methods are part of the cultural conditioning aimed at replicating, maintaining and ensuring the continuity of a practice. The song demonstrates that Being is engraved in the human mind or consciousness and that a human being is the product of history and culture. Enculturation through *unyago* and FGM can be interpreted as the exertion of power through cultural hegemony or domination which in Antonio Gramsci's (1982) terms, refers to the use of cultural institutions (such as *unyago* and FGM) to maintain power within a patriarchal society.

The sub-text of this song also conceals more than it reveals. It makes wild but serious allegations that mask truth and reality. The subjects are stripped of being human. Following poststructuralist thought (Henriques et al. 1984: 117), I argue that this song fragments the identity of the subjects and denies them their agency or humanism as members of the society. Any sane, adult individual has identity. However, this identity is defined within the parameters set by the community to which s/he belongs.

One of the ways that one became an acceptable member of the Swahili society was through the inscription of the body (Grosz, 1990). It is in this light that the girl's mother is stripped of her

bodily inscription and rendered 'uncircumcised'. The function of the available social repertoire of song is to remind the supposedly errant members of their obligations as members of the Mumias Swahili community. Failure to comply leads to such membership being taken away.

Decisions on FGM are rarely made by the girl but mostly by adults such as parents, aunts, grandmothers and, sometimes, by the prospective husband (FPAK, 1994; MYWO, 1991). Girls who choose not to go through FGM are considered irrational and/or deviant. This is borne out by the fact that within patriarchal cultures, the values and norms of the dominant class (male hegemony) are propagated by the dominant hegemonic ideology. The ideology of the dominant class is transmitted across generations as the common sense value of all members of the community. People who do not make choices on the basis of the prescribed ideology are therefore regarded as faulty or lacking in some essential aspect of their humanness. In the context of the Swahili *unyago*, the refusal to undergo the ritual is not an option, and one has to comply to realize her Being.

The choice of diction in this song is interesting in that it is vulgar, abusive and sarcastic. Vulgarity and profanity during the *unyago* and excommunication ceremonies portrays a society's seasonal poetic license because such songs are not performed during any other time. The language is aimed at causing anger and shame to the family of the girl. The "Eee!" in this song is an imitation of a crying child, yet the song is addressed to adults. One can argue that FGM was enforced through the use of fear, insults, ridicule, intimidation, threats, coercion, sanctions, and excommunication.

The song claims that to ignore one's traditions is to court death. This statement indicates that a potent curse was unleashed on the family. Death here may be interpreted as physical, psychological or spiritual. In this song, however, death is explained in terms of the excommunication of a person or family from the community. To emphasize this further, the song uses words that evoke reactions to death, such as *kupiga nduru* (to wail), *kite* (groaning) and *kuomboleza* (mourning). The song therefore takes the form of a dirge because it is mourning the 'death' of an entire family.

6.5.2. Artistic License and Satire in *Unyago*

Although most of the songs express sorrow that *unyago* is distressful to women, some respondents argued that the *unyago* period generally accorded the women an artistic license and opportunity to verbally ridicule and satirize irresponsible men. Men who could not meet the economic, physical and sexual needs of women were satirized in song and dance, as demonstrated in *Kisu Butu* (Blunt Knife) in appendix 3 (j).

In this song, a woman ridicules a man for insisting on having sexual relations with her yet he is incapable of satisfying her. Apparently, the man has been making sexual overtures but the woman feels that he is not good enough for her because his 'sword is blunt', which is euphemism for the man's impotence or poor sexual prowess. The song operates at two levels. The first level seems to be making a simple description of a common domestic exercise, the cutting of meat for cooking. But the hidden meaning smacks of ridicule of a man's powerlessness and disappointing performance in the domestic domain.

The song could also be targeting a fictitious husband who is found sexually or materially dissatisfying to his spouse. It draws its strength from the extended metaphor of a knife that is too blunt to cut the meat properly and even spoils the aesthetic appearance of the meat. As noted earlier, whereas Swahili women received instructions on sex techniques, the men did not. That is why, in this song, the man is portrayed as clueless in matters of pleasing and satisfying a woman.

In most African cultures, men were perceived as strong, invulnerable and full of vigour. They were usually held with extreme respect in the Swahili community. Among the Swahili, like in many African cultures, manhood, masculinity and virility have been equated with strength, power and productivity through social and psychological conditioning. An impotent man is considered a weak, powerless and an incomplete being, in fact, as useless as a blunt knife. In this song, the man is fallible and his frailty is ridiculed. The song demonstrates that in traditional Mumias society, there was no single, universalized masculinity, and that masculinity has multiple and ambiguous meanings that change according to context.

The *unyago* provided an opportune moment for Swahili women to collectively express their inner emotions in situations that society did not provide in ordinary daily life. Women got away with verbal assessment of men or husbands during the *unyago* season. It can also be argued that the songs provided a cathartic release to pent-up emotions, pain and anger. The flourishing of FGM in traditional Swahili society was cause for great pain and anguish to women. Save for the fact that men gave their consent and collectively determined when the circumcision season should begin, they did not directly participate in the FGM ceremony.

However, men were symbiotically linked to FGM because they were the direct beneficiaries of the rite in that they acquired wives who gave them children. Within a predominantly polygamous set-up, the women and children they bore brought more wealth to the patriarch through the provision of labour.

6.6. *Unyago* Training and Marriage

The training of the girls during the recuperation period was partly in regard to how to please their husbands and how to maintain their marriages within a challenging social set-up. As earlier noted, the girls were taught rhythmic body movements through dance. *Mpenzi*/ Sweetheart, in appendix 3 (k), is an example of a song which was performed in the open but which was also silently recited during the sexual act.

The song addresses itself to the issue of love which, in Swahili culture, is actualized within marriage. It expresses deep love for a husband. This song is to be understood, in the context of *unyago*, as underscoring the fact that the ultimate aim of *unyago* was transiting the girls to womanhood, marriage and its consummation.

The repeated parts of the song are expected to be used by the girls in future especially to sustain the event of love-making. According to the respondents, this romantic song could be sung in "the heart" over and over again during the act of love-making.

The facial expressions, gestures, voice modulations and repetition have the power to hypnotize the performers beyond the present place and space to an ethereal realm. The *makungwi* respondents pointed out that sexual intercourse between husband and wife was pleasure and work, all rolled into one. The songs were supposed to pace the sexual activity through rhythmic movements, measured, and controlled speed.

The most overt and manifest functions of the *unyago* songs emanate from the meanings attached to the words. However, there is always a latent function which is closely related to the performance itself. This function is also linked with the *unyago* institution in general.

The song is used to create a rhythm, build emotion and reduce tiredness through the use of balanced lines containing twelve syllables that are divided into six metered hemstitches. The song displays a proper balance between the pace of the music, dramatic work movements, and that of words.

It implores the husband to embrace her and love her until she falls asleep. It also reaffirms the love this singer has for her man. The woman moves her hips rhythmically to the muted music in her mind. The song serves as a motivation to do her best and enjoy intimacy with her husband.

Respondents observed that sex is considered to be work. The *Mpenzi* song is therefore an illustration of both a love and work song. Through the repeated, exaggerated and prolonged syllables such as "*mpenziii*i" (sweetheart/lover) and "*nipeepeee*" (to fan); the song has the ability to induce a trance-like state of euphoria in which the performer achieves sexual satisfaction. In the song, the singer requests the lover to blow gently so as to cool her after the sexual act. This interpretation implies that the husband fans the wife till she sleeps.

The women were also taught the importance of using endearing words such as "*mpenzi*" (sweetheart/lover) during intercourse. In other words, Swahili women were trained how to make love. However, the men were not similarly inducted, thus making women sexually superior and in control of their sexuality than the men.

According to *kungwi* Mungai (personal communication, December 27, 2013), the women's confidence and assertiveness in bed may at times have caused discomfort and low self-esteem in some men. When the song is performed in public, however, it brings out vivid recall of sexual fantasies from past experiences of the performers. *Unyago* training therefore empowered women to be sexually confident.

As we have noted earlier, the women were taught to solicit pleasure through rhythmic body movements. Having undergone no coaching comparable to that of the women, the men were obviously no match for their wives. This was bound to create a sexual mismatch and tension among some couples.

Whereas Swahili men may have initially designed circumcision to reduce women's libido, the women may have come up with a training regimen that beat men at their own game. Could the women have deliberately formulated a method to subvert men's perceived injustices? During *unyago*, men's amateur skills were generally ridiculed through songs. However, wives were protective of their husbands, but in a polygamous society such as the Swahili one, open jealousies among co-wives and other young women were inevitable, as illustrated in the song *Vidonge Vyao* (Their Medicine) in appendix 3 (l).

The message in this popular *taarab* song is directed at a perceived rival, a lady, who is apparently, bent on catching the eye of the singer's husband. The artist confesses her deep love for her husband and vows that they will never separate. The rival therefore stands little chance of breaking their marriage because "We are forever together, eternally in love".

In the Swahili society, both polygamy and divorce are acceptable under Islamic and customary laws. Among the Swahili Muslims, a man can divorce his wife by uttering "I divorce you" (*talaka*) three times. The official divorce is later formalized by the *Kadhi* at the religious and judicial court. Women were therefore careful not to offend their husbands, lest they earn an unwarranted divorce. Instead, they discouraged other women from enticing their men, who may have been tempted to take more wives simply because tradition and religion allowed it.

In the song, the singer defends her marriage by asserting that she is in a strong relationship which can withstand any temptation. The performer is confident of her relationship and challenges her rival to try any tricks to entice her man. Today the song is common even in non-*unyago* settings. It has become popular in gatherings where Swahili Taarab music is played.

6.6.1. *Unyago* and Gender Identity

Unyago aimed at teaching women to withstand pain as part of married life. Women relatives and older circumcised girls visited the initiates with gifts that included food, jewellery and clothing. During the healing period, the initiates were bathed by their *kungwi*, a symbolic action signifying a transition from the 'womb' or enclosure to the rest of the world. The girls were also enthralled by stories of motherhood and the triumph of women over men. The initiates were, however, advised to treat their men with respect as was culturally and religiously required.

According to *kungwi* respondents, *unyago* enhanced social identity among the womenfolk. The traditional *unyago* rite of passage in its entirety created distinct gender categories. These categories demarcated the young/old, children/adults and female/male social roles. On the other hand, the *unyago* constructed culturally-entrenched binary oppositions of circumcised/uncircumcised (men and men and women and women); and immature/mature (circumcised equals mature; uncircumcised equals immature) and so forth.

As far as the *unyago* and FGM were concerned, the children, the uninitiated and non-community members were not privy to what was going on. As earlier demonstrated in two of the songs, the un-circumcised girls looked forward to the time they would undergo the rite. The men were supposed to be the main beneficiaries of the *unyago* because they acquired wives and all the accruing benefits of a domestic worker. However, men too did not fully comprehend the *unyago*. For instance, despite many social changes within the Mumias community, men have not yet penetrated the core of the *unyago* performance and its secrecy.

After observing the population in this study, I propose that the *unyago* seclusion was a vehicle for female solidarity, self-expression and empowerment. For instance, women respondents referred to most of the *unyago* songs as '*nyimbo za kimasomaso'* (songs of looking each other in the eye/bold songs). The songs literally enabled women to 'come face to face' with sensitive gender issues expressed within the *unyago*, an unchallenged women's domain. In light of this, a song such as *Sitaki* (I Oppose), in appendix 3 (m), demonstrates a woman's defiance in the face of male abuse.

The song further illustrates that Swahili women sometimes used the *unyago* as a platform to advocate for their rights and recognition from fellow women and also from men. Moreover, women who had gone through the *unyago* may not have felt subordinate but equal to the men who had similarly undergone male circumcision or, as they put it, 'faced the knife'. Although the addressee has not been explicitly mentioned by the singer, respondents were of the view that the song was aimed at men who mistreat women on account of being poor or physically weak. However, the message could also apply to any friend who was taking advantage of the friendship to mistreat her partner.

The repeated verses basically explore the same issues but in different ways. This song is one of the *unyago* songs that have had a lot of impact in the public domain to the point of becoming a popular Swahili song. The soloist emphasizes the ways in which the friend-turned-adversary has broken the trust that had been bestowed on her/him. The singer categorically states that she can no longer condone a relationship that discriminates, oppresses and humiliates her. This explains the emphasis on "me!" in contestation with "people!" in the refrain.

The song implies that the persona is in competition with, or stands pitted against the entire world. It therefore expresses the paradox of being a human being who lives in a community of people, yet who also has a responsibility for her existence as an individual who deserves respect. The singer argues that she deserves her dignity as a human being regardless of her situation in life.

The phrase "*sina changu*" (I have nothing or I am poor) is further foregrounded through the use of synonymous words such as "*mnyonge*" (weak/poor) and situations of "*kunyanyaswa*" (to be discriminated against, "*kunidhalilisha*" (to humiliate me), and "*kuonewa*" (to be despised/discriminated against). This song makes a powerful and bold statement about what the woman wants and how she expects to be treated. The singer castigates her oppressor and points out that she will not tolerate any more humiliation or embarrassment from him/her.

The song further reveals a number of socio-cultural characteristics of Swahili life. In line 31 for instance, '*mitaani*' refers to the village-town structure of Swahili architecture. The Swahili houses are usually constructed facing each other, with narrow passages in between them.

On the other hand, "If you are incapable, why should you desire them?" in line 30 is an allusion to the polygamous nature of Swahili households. Apparently, the addressee of the song desires many wives or women, yet he cannot maintain them.

As well as the Swahili community allowing men to marry as many as four wives, it also obliges them to take care of the wives' needs. In this song, the man seems unable to take care of the needs of his women. Further credence to this interpretation is reflected in line 23 "*Ya kunitoa nyumbani, sitosahau maisha*" (for taking me from our home, I will never forget), which seems to indicate that the man had married her, only to, regrettably, let her down possibly through a divorce.

The style of the song is simple but well balanced through the use of metric rhyme and parallelism. Each line is divided into hemstitches of eight syllabic meters, as exemplified in line 39. In this particular song, the composer uses elision by omitting some sounds in the words so as to achieve the required rhyme scheme. The word "*t'abu*" has two syllabic sounds because the sound 'a' has been omitted to avoid the three syllables of "*taabu*". The same applies to "nilotenda" in the same line, instead of the longer word "*niliyotenda*". This style is a common and distinctive feature in Swahili prosody. The sounds in some words have also been skilfully changed with the aim of creating rhyme at the end of each hemistich. In line 38, for instance, the word "*madhulubu*" would have been "*madhulumu*", but it has been changed so as to rhyme with the other end-rhyme '*bu*' in the previous line.

6.6.2. Unyago and Work

Unlike men who in the Swahili community were categorized according to the work they did, such as fishermen, carpenters, traders, clergy, and so forth, women considered their religiously and socially controlled lives of childbearing and domestic work as their ultimate occupation. This was further complemented by learning work songs whose rhythm mirrored the activities they undertook, such as taking care of babies, digging, planting, weeding, harvesting, threshing, winnowing, and other domestic chores, as indicated in the song *Kazi* (Work) in appendix 3 (n).

"*Kazi*" is a simple work song and a celebration of the variety of food crops that the Swahili women grow. It also portrays the nature of the rural economic activities that the women are involved in and remotely points to the farming roles ascribed to women. The song can be expanded by mentioning

any type of food crops whenever a farming activity is taking place. The only rhyming scheme that the work song attempts to utilize is the repeated syllable "*ka*" at the end of each line. This is testimony to the simplicity with which work songs are composed.

Work songs are performed while performing a task. They do not make use of any musical instruments as these would interfere with the work. They are utilitarian in orientation and, therefore, make use of a simple structure that does not need adhering to simple prosody such as the rhythmic *a Capella*.

Work songs reduce feelings of boredom and increase productivity. They also provide women with avenues for making social commentary regarding issues that concern them as indicated in *Nilisikia* (I Heard) in appendix 3 (o). Work songs accompany most household, farming, and harvesting chores. Its short lines are constructed to depict the rhythm of the work at hand which the women were tasked to undertake together. The song provides a relaxing work environment. It acts as a form of relief to ease off tiredness as the women undertake their daily duties of improving their livelihoods. It mirrors a play song that mimics the light-heartedness with which most routine chores are considered. However, its message is an indictment and censure of women who do not adhere to the expected social norms regarding team spirit, unity and solidarity among women.

This song contains derisive and rude expletives to indicate the disgust the singers hold towards a woman who shuns her role as a mother and who avoids team or communal work. It is easy to understand. The women repeat the various chores that the deviant woman is averse to performing. The song can be extended and prolonged by mentioning various duties that the target of ridicule does not do.

The singers claim that they have heard what was said about the addressee, implying that they have not witnessed it themselves. The fact that they have only heard it as a rumour may be interpreted to mean that it is rare to find such a kind of woman in the community. The "Eee!" that appears at the end of some of the lines is both an indication of the rarity of such behaviour and the contempt with which such a character is held. "Eee" is produced in the form of surprise and gossip that is hard to believe. "Whoever heard of a woman who tells her husband that she cannot join other women or she cannot breastfeed her baby?" the song asks.

It has been variously argued that the cultural context of FGM was such that it provided peasants with avenues through which they could unite and therefore empower themselves through communal

labour. Robertson (2008: 234-235) confirms that FGM contributed a lot to the formation of women's groups in Kenya during the 1940s and 1950s (http://www.jstor.org/3175173). Robertson further outlines an interesting transition of *unyago* from a sexually based category to a social-economic one by arguing that circumcised Kikuyu and Kamba women were strongly bound by a common rite which transformed their efforts into collective economic action as small-scale traders. She further observes that FGM provided group identity that laid the foundation for the massive women's movement, Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO). Ironically, the MYWO has been in the forefront in efforts to eradicate FGM in Kenya, yet its own origins can be traced to FGM during the pre-independence period.

FGM was a highly valued custom that brought joy to the older members of the community in the belief that they had done their duty of handing down a tradition. A family that ensured that their children adhered to custom was highly respected for successfully bringing up their children, as demonstrated in the following discourse:

Mgeni:	Jambo, mama!	**Visitor:**	Greetings, mother!
	Mama umetimu!		Mother you have succeeded!
	Kumlea mama!		To bring up (another) mother!
Mother's response:	Iwe kwenu hivyo pia!		May it be the same to you as well!
Wote:	Lilobaki ni kufurahia,	**All:**	The rest then is to enjoy,
	Karamu ya *unyago*!		The *unyago* feast!

A conversation like the one above is held between a visitor and the mother of an initiate to demonstrate the admiration for a mother who has successfully brought up a *mwanamwali wa unyago.* The context of the above discourse is the 'coming out' day for the initiates. During the graduation ceremony, women do not use the conventional greeting but they engage in appreciative talk such as in the conversation above. The ceremony is marked with pomp, song and dance. The conversation demonstrates the respect accorded to mothers who have succeeded in bringing up another mother, as indicated in the text by:

"Mother you have succeeded! To bring up (another) mother!"

The *unyago* practice called for unity of purpose based on a similar experience. Women brought food which was shared by all the people at the ceremony. There was plenty of food and drink during the ceremony when the girls rejoined the society as adults. The Swahili food display is a spectacle to behold. There are many varieties of food with inspiration from African, Arabic, Indian, Somali and Portuguese cuisine. Colour and decoration are important aesthetic features in preparing and serving Swahili foods during *unyago*, weddings and other ceremonies, such as the religious festival of Maulidi and Eid al-Fitr.

This post-liminal phase of the *unyago* is marked by ostentatious display of merriment when all the pains of FGM and *unyago* are forgotten. The women sing and dance as they prepare for the feast with chants and conversations of merriment, such as in the following verse:

	Tamaa	**Desire**
1.	Tamaa ya mwili,	The bodily desire,
2.	Imetufanya tule,	It has made us eat,
3.	Ni bwana na bibi!	It is the husband and wife.
	(Vigelegele)	(Merriment/Ululations)

The chant means that the community has been brought together in feasting because of the bodily desires of the husband and wife which brought forth the child who is now reason for the celebration. The song, by extension, also indicates that the initiate is like a newborn child whose coming is also marked by pomp and ceremony.

Initiates usually re-enter society after completing the rite of passage and after assuming a "new" identity and status. Re-incorporation is characterized by elaborate rituals and ceremonies, like new names, clothes, jewellery and other rewards which result in “stronger group identity, attractions and conformity among members” (Kamau, 2012: 1). The coming-out ceremony represents a new beginning and further defines the individual being with an elevated status in society.

6.7. Cultural Reproduction through *Unyago*

Initiation rites are considered as fundamental to individual and community development as well as to the socialization processes in many African communities (Mbiti, 1969). The rites function by ritually marking the transition of someone to full group membership. Furthermore, rites also link individuals to the community and the broader and more potent spiritual world. Consequently, initiation rites are a natural and necessary component of a community.

Unyago was also considered a continuous avenue for the acquisition of skills and knowledge to the girl-child. Life skills were passed on to younger community members during the seclusion period. The institution thereafter accorded girls a life-long learning and support mechanism through which they collectively belonged to and controlled. Seen thus, the u*nyago* institution is a valid cultural reproduction mechanism through which existing cultural practices from previous generations are transmitted.

The *unyago* tradition facilitates the reproduction, transmission and preservation of community beliefs through ritual. Cultural reproduction often results in social reproduction or the process of transferring aspects of society (such as class) from generation to generation (Bilton, 1996). The performances are repeated during the circumcision period or season. Moreover, the initiated women continued to seek advice from their *kungwi* and other senior womenfolk, as illustrated in the wedding song, *Wosia* (Advice) in appendix 3 (p)).

The advice given to the bride in the song focuses on creating harmony in a marriage. The womenfolk, who included the *kungwi*, recited, chanted or sang this song/poem during weddings. This song was repeated several times as a Swahili wedding took several days, depending on the wealth and generosity of the groom and his family. The bride is advised to live respectfully with her husband, as he is the head of the family regardless of his financial status. This song calls for patience, tolerance, and understanding in marriage.

In the song, the husband is advised to be "well-behaved" to deserve the wife's respect. The song also indicates that sometimes there will be misunderstandings in marriage and the husband may lose his temper to the extent of beating her. This is aptly captured through the idiom "A husband is like the fire of the '*ukoko*' (crust), if it doesn't burn it smokes furiously" (line 4).

In this context, '*ukoko*' refers to hardened layers of food inside a pot, as demonstrated in the Swahili proverb "*Jungu kuu halikosi ukoko*" (A big pot is not without some crust). Children sometimes eat food crusts. They produce a lot of smoke when burnt but they cannot sustain an overnight fire in the hearth. This simile warns the bride to be patient with the man, who may irritate her (smoke does this to the eyes). The husband may also become temperamental and scorch her like a furious fire. However, the *ukoko* fire does not last for long.

As pointed out earlier in this study, the entire *unyago* rite of passage was aimed at bringing about the maturity of a girl in preparation for marriage. It is imperative to note that during the post liminal stage of the *unyago*, which the wedding was part of, a lot of advice on marital life, is given. Such messages included traditional folklore handed down from previous generations, such as those contained in the selected verses in the *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* (appendix 3 (s) by Mwanakupona.

6.7.1. The *Utendi* wa Mwanakupona Legacy in *Unyago*

The *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* is a homily which dates to about 1858 A.D (Hinnebusch, undated). It consists of motherly teaching and advice of Mwanakupona to her daughter. The long poem is about marriage and the duties of a wife. The poem is considered a popular tool of instruction in

unyago. The *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* (see appendix 3 (s) used to be taught to the Swahili girls and, at some point in history, they had to memorize the entire poem which, depending on the version, had more than one hundred stanzas.

Although the poem deals with predominantly religious themes, some verses are dedicated to how a woman should treat her husband because, even on the Day of Judgment; the husband will decide whether she goes to Hell or Paradise.

> *And on the day you rise from the dead, the*
> *award belongs to your husband, he will be*
> *asked what he wants, it is that which will*
> *be done for him.*
>
> *If he wishes you go to Paradise, you will be*
> *brought there immediately, if he says that*
> *you go to the Fire, you cannot avoid it-*
> *you will be put there.*

The *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* is usually quoted extensively during *unyago* and wedding ceremonies because it is considered the pillar of traditional Swahili *unyago* training. One may argue that the Swahili *unyago* teachings are anchored on the 'wisdom' enshrined in this poem. It teaches the woman to be obedient, loving, polite and at the service of her man. It also enumerates the duties of a wife: cooking, massaging, caressing, and shaving her man, among other obligations. All the teachings in the *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* are purportedly hinged on the teachings of Islam.

The poem has also been studied and analyzed from feminist, gender and religious perspectives by many scholars. On the other hand, it has also been criticized as a tool that undermines women (Momanyi, 2007). According to one of the lady respondents from Mumias, the *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* is no longer highly valued by the Swahili because the Swahili woman is now more liberated and does not have to fit into the apparently submissive role that is described in the poem. In her view, the advice given in the poem has been overtaken by modernity.

The *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* provides an opportunity to compare its message with those of *unyago wa mfereji* and ARP. It is clear that the focus of the message has shifted from preparing the girls for immediate marriage to one of encouraging them to pursue education and to stand for their rights within a gender-equalized environment.

The Swahili *unyago* usually culminated in the wedding ceremony and such advice as that from the *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* may have been relevant then. It was expected that whatever an initiate learned during the seclusion period was to be practiced in marriage. The candidates were expected to meet the expectations of good wives to sustain their marriage and get societal approval. This aspect of Swahili culture has been retained to this day. However, the training is voluntary and the women themselves seek it.

The fact that the Swahili *unyago*'s climax was a wedding is important to fully appreciating why it is unique for the Mumias community to have repackaged it. The philosophical framing of *unyago* as a cultural requirement prior to marriage provided impetus to community members to implement its dictums. It also legitimized *unyago*'s perceived negative components, such as the pain of FGM.

Unyago is inherently a social institution whose discourse is part of the structuring principles ingrained in the Swahili community and which relies on oral testimonies and repeated performances to perpetuate it. The FGM component, for instance, is submerged in ritual as a vehicle of psychological conditioning to achieve the desired social objectives (marriage, family units and procreation); religious (the belief in the efficacy of the ritual); and economic (women and children provided labour and security in old age).

6.8. Conclusion

There were many reasons for the practice of *unyago* in traditional Swahili society. The *unyago* songs were performed for diverse functions: social, psychological and physical. They represent the values of the community regarding *unyago*. The success of FGM was supported by a combination of beliefs, intimidation, compliance and reward. Other *unyago* songs were performed to praise, to teach, to encourage and to ridicule. The rhythmic nature, choice of words and dramatic techniques used in *unyago* songs arouse an overflow of powerful emotions in the performers and audience. During delivery, the exclusive expressive quality of *unyago* songs accomplishes certain cathartic functions for the women. Some of the songs indirectly question the prevailing dispensation. Others propose a different view from that which prevailed at the time, a world without FGM. Traditional Swahili *unyago* entailed practical modes of socialization. With time however, the *unyago* that had the FGM component gave way to another variety called the *unyago wa mfereji*, an alternative rite of passage (ARP).

The next chapter focuses on how the *unyago wa mfereji* has been adapted as an alternative rite of passage among other communities in Kenya.

CHAPTER 7

THE TRANSFORMATION FROM TRADITIONAL *UNYAGO* TO *UNYAGO WA MFEREJI*

7.1. Introduction

This chapter traces the changes that have taken place in the *unyago* rite of passage. It assesses the performance and aesthetic features of ARP ceremonies in Kenya and determines the implication of the ARP among other communities practicing FGM in the country. The chapter compares the ARP to *unyago* and draws conclusions based on data collected from participants, social workers and non-governmental organizations. Finally, a case study of a CBO that has adapted and revamped the *unyago wa mfereji* concept among the Maasai is presented.

7.2. Origins of the ARP

As noted in the previous chapter, Swahili women in Mumias used songs to challenge the traditional *unyago* which included the FGM component. Ultimately, the *unyago wa mfereji* collapsed the perceived harmful elements of traditional *unyago* and replaced it with a new *unyago* which does not advocate for female circumcision but which embraced a celebratory and training session called the "*unyago wa mfereji*" (Mwai & Runo, 2013: 13). The *unyago wa mfereji* refers to a rite of passage in which girls are taken through a process of training on adulthood without undergoing the FGM operation. In essence, it means that the ARP preserves cultural traditions while eliminating the cutting.

ARP is an intervention programme that mimics the traditional *unyago* aspect by putting the initiates in seclusion, training and counselling them while avoiding FGM. Women who have gone through FGM as children speak to the girls informing them of the physical and emotional effects of FGM. Parents of young girls are also approached by educators to discuss the economic future of their girls. Typically, girls drop out of school after FGM. They hardly ever find jobs to support themselves.

ARP ceremonies are similar to *unyago wa mfereji* because there are certain components, such as the teachings on hygiene, festivities, song and dance, partying, and exchange of gifts that have been retained. The ARP has adopted some of the general artistic performances and infused them with modern material. The adaptation of poems from various forms of publications (books, journals, and the internet) illustrates that African folklore, especially poetry, is a "continually self-adapting" genre (Nhlekisana, 1995).

Published poems and songs have been adapted to promote ARP values. The songs and poems performed during ARP are mainly those that promote ARP values, such as education, reproductive health, human rights and women's empowerment. There are no performances that deal with sexual activities as was the case in traditional *unyago*. Whereas the *unyago wa mfereji'*s transformation was unplanned and spontaneous, the ARP is a planned or directed cultural transformation.

ARP requires deliberate efforts, strategies and interventions to be implemented through various agencies. The ARP culminates in *sherehe ya kufuzu*, a graduation ceremony, rather than a wedding. The graduation is marked with song and dance. It is an adaptation of the *unyago wa mfereji* in that ARP has borrowed and enhanced its principles while discarding the negative attributes of *unyago*, such as FGM, vulgar songs, coercion, beatings, virginity tests and excommunication.

The concept behind the training component of ARP is the education of selected women from the community to act as agents of change. The trainees serve as exemplifiers and role models for the rest of the community.The ideological framing of the *unyago* space was such that it was an exclusively women's domain. ARP is different because it is an inclusive activity that target larger groups such as girls, boys, men, women, opinion leaders, elders, parents, *makungwi* and *ngariba*. During the traditional *unyago* ritual, men were prohibited from seeing the initiates when they were in seclusion, but this is not the case with ARP.

Generally, there are three levels of ARP training: training of trainers, residential training of girls, and site training. The training of trainers is a singular one-off event that is done through seminars. Unlike the *unyago*, which was held at home and predominantly in the women's inner chambers, ARP ceremonies are held in schools, churches or rescue centres during the school vacations. Most of the teachings are formal and the girls receive visitors, especially parents, friends and relatives. After the training the ARP graduands normally leave for their homes to continue with their normal lives and schooling. However, the girls who have run away from their homes to the rescue centres remain at the centres, where they are taken care of and continue to attend school. Apart from receiving instruction on hygiene and reproductive health, their genitalia are not modified in any way.

The approach includes educating traditional circumcisers (*ngariba*) on the retrogressive effects of FGM and offering them alternative means of livelihood such as livestock rearing (see figure 17 in appendix 4). During the ceremony, the *ngariba* undertake to stop excising the girls and hand over

the tools of their trade, such as razors and knives (see figure 11 in the appendix 4). Thereafter, the *ngariba* are co-opted to become part of the team to eradicate FGM.

7.2.1. Poetic Aesthetics and ARP Performance

One noticeable feature of ARP performances is the use of Kiswahili and poetry in communicating pro-ARP messages. The main explanation for this development is that ARP is modelled after the *unyago wa mfereji*, which was rendered in Kiswahili. Swahili poetic aesthetics have therefore been incorporated into the communication strategies that ARP utilises.

The poems performed during ARP ceremonies are in different languages, such as, English and not only in Kiswahili. This change can be attributed to literacy because the targeted girls are usually those that are attending primary school. Other indigenous languages are also used in communicating the pro-ARP messages. This development can be attributed to the popularity of Kiswahili poetry which, according to Mulokozi & Sengo (1995:25), is evident in "public rallies, social and political festivities, religious services (Muslim, Christian, traditionalist), and school syllabi and activities [and]…the admission of Kiswahili language and poetry into formerly indigenous-language preserves, such as ethnic rituals, dances and festivals."

There is no single theory to describe Swahili verse, and discussions on Swahili poetic aesthetics have been as contentious as their origins and their language. However, scholars have observed that there are two notable prosodic styles in Swahili poetry mirroring the conservatists/traditionalists and the liberals/reformists (Mazrui, 2007; Wendo & Ngugi, 2012).

The conservative Swahili verse forms are replete with rhyme, meter and the use of archaic language, while the liberal poetry is basically in the form of free verse that uses standard Kiswahili that is more understandable to the majority of the non-indigenous Swahili population. These two distinct styles have evolved over time in what scholars felt were efforts to render Swahili poetry in a language that was understood by the 'common people' rather than by a small clique of indigenous Swahili elite (Kezilahabi, 1974: xiv).

As earlier observed, the traditional *unyago* rite of passage was informed, and partially egged on, by the *Utendi wa Mwanakupona*, alongside other traditional musical compositions, such as the *chakacha*, *msondo* and *lelemama*. The Swahili *unyago* was perpetuated through esoteric versified instructions contained in coded musical performances. *Unyago* songs were sometimes rendered in a language that only the initiated could understand. During the ARP graduation ceremonies,

however, it was observed that although both conservative and liberal types of poetry are performed, the language is not coded but straightforward. Moreover, the poetic compositions performed during ARP ceremonies are not original but carefully selected poems from, at times, published anthologies. The rendition is geared towards communicating certain messages in a clear and open manner so as to cause behavioural change, as exemplified in the poem entitled *Elimu* (Education) in appendix 3 (q).

The poems are rehearsed and recited during an ARP graduation ceremony. Recitation of traditional Swahili poetry is a measured rendition of the lines with special emphasis on the second hemistich in the fourth line in each stanza, "Education is an ocean without a shoreline". This refrain emphasizes the importance of education in girls' lives. The possibilities and opportunities that accrue from a good education are equated with a shore-less ocean. The hyperbolic metaphor reflects the seriousness with which a girl-child's education is accorded in modern society. Other rich metaphors in the poem include 'bright lamp' and 'door' to refer to the benefits of education.

The poem belongs to the traditional genre of Swahili poetry because it adheres to the strict conventions of poetic composition through a rhyme and meter scheme of eight syllables in a double hemistich (two clauses in which the second clause completes the idea started in the first clause). Each line has sixteen syllables divided into two equal parts, as shown below:

Ta-ma-ti ha-pa 'ta-ko-ma (8), ndu-za-ngu ku-mbu-sha-na-ni (8) [line 21].

The elision of "ni" in "*takoma*", '*gu*' in "*ndu'zangu*" is done to adhere to the strict syllabic rule that is basic to conservative Swahili poetry. This rule is also followed in the second hemistich of the last line, which is repeated at the close of every stanza (*'so ufuo'*) instead of the more lengthy "*isiyo na ufuo*". Failure to follow this rule would render the poem metrically unbalanced and therefore a "*shairi guni*" because the syllables would not be eight as required by the conventions of Swahili prosody in the "*tarbia*". *Tarbia* is a four-lined poem with a last line or parts of the lines that is repeated in the form of a chorus or refrain. The refrain, or *kibwagizo* in the above poem is, "*ni bahari 'so ufuo*" (education is an ocean without a shoreline).

The rhyme scheme in the above poem is such that the first lines end with "ni" in the second hemistich. In the fourth line, however, "*ni*" is used in the first hemistich. The first three lines of the hemistich have consistently varying penultimate syllables as follows: '*ma*', '*ke*', '*to*', '*ngo*', '*ra*' and '*ma*', respectively.

Aesthetically, it is a dramatized poem accompanied by enactment, voice projection, tonal variation and gestures. When the poem is recited amid ululations, this prosodic scheme is foregrounded through emphasis and tonal stressing. The poetic language used in the poem draws out ordinary words into frameworks of meaning, thus drawing particular attention to the rhyme feature, which is normally ignored in ordinary speech.

One of the other striking characteristics of traditional *unyago* poetry was the elevated style and language employed as opposed to the less formal or commonplace style of the *unyago* songs. Besides adherence to the strict prosodic conventions (*umbuji*), the poems, as evidenced in Swahili prosody require more artistic and technical creativity.

There were, consequently, several *viwango* (levels or categories of composers) ranging from the amateurs to the most qualified *malenga* and *shaha* poets who compose spontaneously and randomly. At times, such poets engaged in poetic composition, recitation and competition, figuratively referred to as "*kufunga nyama*" (to tie the meat). In "untying the meat", the poems are literally composed spontaneously, with each poet composing a verse in response to the other without breaking the rhyme scheme and the theme in a pattern not much unlike the 'composition in performance' espoused by Albert Lord (1960).

At other times, the performers engaged in the *ngonjera* (dialogic/performed poetry). *Ngonjera* is poetic dialogue in a call and response pattern that is popular with Swahili poetry. During such spontaneous public compositions, the poets were expected to follow the prosodic rules of Swahili poetry. The competitive sessions provided an opportunity for a form of apprenticeship in poetic composition. The oral nature of the composition, transmission and performance of traditional *unyago* was therefore different from the written and rehearsed poetry of ARP ceremonies.

7.2.2. Modern Technology in ARP

ARP songs and poems have experienced accelerated transmission due to modern methods of communication. Most notable is the fact that ARP ceremonies are recorded by the sponsors for use as training material, to attract further donor funding, and also as a way of archiving their activities. The media houses also cover the events for transmission as news material. The recorded video clips are also disseminated via the internet. Most of the videos are available on YouTube and can therefore be accessed by many people for onward transmission through sharing on social media and email. Visits to different social media sites and requests from bloggers provided innumerable

relevant materials on ARP ceremonies, an indication of the critical points of interdependence between oral and visual communication.

First, there is diachronic interdependence, arising from the fact that the oral transmissions precede the technologically mediated transmissions. Secondly, there is the literary transmission, whereby literate members of the community select an oral tradition that serves their purpose of discouraging FGM, encouraging the ARP and advancing the rights of women and children. The selected songs, skits, drama, documentaries and poems are further complemented by printed messages on T-shirts with similar thematic objectives. This study has further proposed the printing of the messages on the *kanga* wrappers worn by women participants.

Lastly, we have the mnemonic interdependence, which is exhibited through the vows and the slogans that the participants chant repeatedly during the crowd-sourcing demonstrations and the ARP graduation ceremony. The mnemonics enable all the participants and audiences to remember the pro-ARP and anti-FGM messages.

The use of modern technology has affected the social nature of ARP ceremonies. Traditionally, the transmission of *unyago* lore took place through a face-to-face interaction between the performers and audience during annual *unyago* ceremonies. In indigenous *unyago* festivities, knowledge was passed on, preserved and maintained across time and space through repeated performances.

The performances in traditional *unyago* were spread across geographical and historical periods by being passed on from generation to generation through the spoken word and repetition. The storage and transfer of knowledge through radio, television, newspapers and the internet is, therefore, a remarkable transformation in the *unyago* ritual. Moreover, the ARP texts are no longer in local languages only. The performances are rendered in multiple languages or they are translated, as evidenced in ARP documentaries. This is testimony that ARP ensures continuity of the *unyago* by combining traditional and modern methods of communication. Indeed, modern technology and literacy do not dispense with the need for oral communication but rather enhances it (Ong 1982: 17).

The advent of modern communication technology has led to expansions in the repertoire of *unyago* performance to include new genres such as film, documentaries, crowd-sourcing and modern drama. The addresses given during the ARP graduation ceremonies are replete with instances of folk speech, such as slang, euphemisms and proverbs, due to the diversity of the audience. This is in

stark contrast to the vulgar language that was noted in some of the *unyago* songs in the previous chapter.

7.2.3. The Influence of the Media on ARP

In a 2011 report by UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting discusses their third goal concerning the media and other forms of communication to spread anti-FGM messages. It was reported that Kenya had 122 radio and/or TV programmes covering FGM. It was also observed that the Kenya Media Network on Population and Development (KEMEP) has continued to play a significant role to develop media coverage of the campaign to eliminate FGM. The use of the drama, video, press, television, radio, film, and social media is vital to educating the public on the dangers of FGM and increasing awareness. Radio was ranked as the second highest source of anti-FGM messages (Chege et al., 2004).

Most television stations in Kenya have, at one time or the other, highlighted the dangers of FGM. They have also covered various positive aspects of ARP practice to encourage communities to abandon FGM in favour of ARP. There are documentary films, such as "I will never be cut: Kenyan girls fight back against genital mutilation", that are available on http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/video/2011/apr/18/female-genital-mutilation-video. The documentary is the real life story of Nancy, a Kenyan girl about to face FGM. The video won a 2012 Webby and People's Voice Award for individual documentary. It is used in sensitizing communities about the reasons for, and dangers of FGM and why change is desirable. In the documentary, Nancy runs away from home to a rescue centre to escape from being cut and married off to an old man who has already paid dowry for her hand in marriage. The documentary aims at showing that there is no shame in being un-cut and that girls who are in danger should speak out. It exposes the lies and fear about FGM which have spread for many generations through inscription and cultural reproduction. The documentary is an indication of the use of personal testimonies in advocating for the rights of the girl-child (http://28toomany.org/fgm-resources/films-and-videos/#sthash.suWBPVRR.dpuf).

'The Cutting Tradition' video covers FGM in Ethiopia, Egypt and Djibouti is another film that is often used during ARP training while 'True Story' is about FGM in the Afar region of Ethiopia (www.safehands.org).

In addition, Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL), which operates in west Pokot in Kenya, has a documentary about the dangers of FGM. It was filmed in collaboration with a group of grassroots

women leaders from the community. The documentary indicates that women who used to perform circumcision have abandoned the practice (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZWPhPPkT0U).

Other videos gleaned from the Kenyan television stations include "Knife of Fate: Tradition defies Law" www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNpwgSz_180. August 6, 2012-Uploaded by NTV Kenya [http:www.ntv.co.ke]

"Untold Stories: Female Genital Mutilation Part 1-3" www.youtube.com/watch/tv=DJoNfUqqNO February 7, 2012-Uploaded by K24TV

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdbZOhFQNNo March 16, 2013 -Uploaded by KTN.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_o4K-fwOgM-Uploaded on December 26, 2012 by NTV Kenya. It deals with an ARP graduation ceremony of more than 200 girls in Bissil, Kajiado County. In this video, a social worker discloses that some parents hide girls among boys to be circumcised while other parents send them to their grandparents to be secretly circumcised to avoid legal consequences. The revelation is an indication of how entrenched FGM ideology is in Maasai community; hence the quest by this study to understand the mental conditioning that has established it.

The above scenario indicates that some community members try to circumvent the law by avoiding the publicized celebratory methods of the *unyago* ritual. Under such circumstances, it should be noted that both the training and festive elements of *unyago* are undermined. When FGM goes underground and it is performed in secrecy, it robs the ritual of all its positive training components. It is partly an indication that culture cannot be enforced or its dynamism propelled by legislation. Legislating FGM appears to have turned it into an underground ceremony. FGM performed without the attendant ceremony, communal sanction and acceptance is no longer effective or useful. It is effete, a non-ritual.

On the other hand, the ARP ceremony lays emphasis on the instructions given to the girls rather than the physical operation. Mwai & Runo (2013) argue that the *unyago* nurtures "Multiple Intelligences (MI)" and therefore has the capacity "to cultivate social and emotional intelligence in girls…" I fully agree with this assertion and maintain that the positive attributes of traditional *unyago* should be thoroughly investigated to come up with an equally strong model of cultural

conditioning cast in modernity but with similar lasting psychological impact on community members. The positive aspects of *unyago* should be encouraged.

Apart from mainstream media, there are numerous websites, Facebook and twitter accounts, such as *Global Alliance against FGM*, *Say No to FGM*, and several others, dedicated to the fight against FGM. As earlier observed, the fight against FGM has gone viral and global. The use of electronic media in the fight against FGM is testimony to the recent developments in African folklore.

In fact, it signifies a continuum that links old forms of expression with the new. This development speaks to Finnegan's (1988) approach of the orality-literacy paradigm that pervades her latter works. It also mirrors what Kaschula (2004) calls 'technauriture', a term that "was coined in response to the intersection of orality, the written word and digital technology".

Technauriture captures the "oral-literate-techno continuum" (Kaschula & Mostert, 2011: 143) [which] embraces the spoken, printed and technologically mediated word. This is to say that the technologized versions of anti-FGM campaigns are found on online platforms. For instance, Videos, such as that of the worldwide performances, the "Vagina Monologues", have been used during ARP training to create awareness on the dangers of FGM (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Vagina_Monologues).

According to the online Wikipedia dictionary, the vagina monologues "are made up of a varying number of monologues read by a varying number of women… Each of the monologues deals with an aspect of the feminine experience touching on matters such as sex, love, rape, menstruation, female genital mutilation, masturbation, birth, orgasm, the various common names for the vagina, or simply as a physical aspect of the body. A recurring theme in the monologues is the vagina as a tool of female empowerment, and the ultimate embodiment of individuality".

There is also plenty of anti-FGM material trending on the internet, such as "The Worst Outrage" in Appendix 3 (u) which is a hip-hop song composed to specifically address the issues surrounding FGM and the need to stop it. The original song in French and the English translation have become a popular video that is played during ARP training. The girls are encouraged to sing along during its presentation.Blee Gijoe, the composer and singer of the song is a Senegalese rapper engaged in the fight against FGM. In the song Gijoe, sings about the trauma and horror of one who has undergone FGM.

The song denounces FGM as an out-dated and unjustifiable custom. It further identifies some of the consequences of FGM, such as death, fistula and incontinence of urine which sometimes leads to the women being rejected by their families. The musician sees the need to break the silence on FGM and further advocates the creation of awareness so as to sensitize communities on the dangers of FGM. The song calls for a dialogue to break the silence on FGM. ARP is driven by an acquisition of knowledge as opposed to the secrecy associated with *unyago* and FGM.

Most importantly, the radio, which reaches all corners of Kenya, is being used to spread the ARP messages and advocacy for the abandonment of FGM. Education programs that are sensitive to the cultural and religious importance of FGM seem to be the best hope of eradicating the practice. The Ministry of Education uses radio broadcasts to warn about the dangers of FGM. According to the Communication Commission of Kenya (CCK), there are more than 90 radio stations on air in the country. The main broadcast languages are English and Kiswahili. These stations, with both local and national outreach, should be put to more use as tools of cultural conditioning and reproduction. The radio has the advantage of reaching even the remotest areas in the country. It is also affordable to most members of the society.

Discussions about stopping FGM are surrounded by negativity and stigma. Consequently, the radio provides a platform for girls and women from affected communities to discuss FGM without necessarily exposing themselves to the eyes of the public. Girls from affected communities can therefore use the radio to discuss the practice. For instance, Wangari Migwi, a Kenyan radio journalist, uses Coro FM, a local language radio station, to address sensitive issues that include FGM. (http://www.internews.org/our-stories/profiles/wangari-migwi-%E2%80%93-young-kenyan-radio-journalist-tackles-local-taboos). The ARP project is not only about the eradication of FGM but also about building communities that are free of FGM, fears of curses, myths, taboos, and related cultural beliefs and practices that lower the dignity of women.

The seminars targeting adults are held in all places in remote villages with community leaders such as chiefs, the police, government officers, health workers including birth attendants, medical officers, circumcisers, village elders, youth leaders, school committees, and organized groups in the community: including catechists, imams, and pastors and their wives, pastoral council members, women and youth leaders. Moreover, the local communities, especially the elderly who receive them in their vernacular languages, easily embrace all folk media that the grassroots communities are familiar with, such as oral poetry, proverbs, skits, community theatre, music and dance. By taking a community-focused approach, the ARP is succeeding because community members

themselves affirm their commitment to uphold the new practice. Folk media is close to the people and serves as a channel for conveying issues that are of concern to them. Moreover, folk media is abundant and more available in areas where mass media has not penetrated.

These seminars for adults offer many facts on FGM, including participants' current knowledge of FGM and related issues, culture and culture change, and religion. Another change in the schools is that the boys have begun to feel that they, too, matter. In the past few years, the trend has put so much emphasis on the rights of the girl-child, that the boy-child has at times been "forgotten". The ARP project is one of the few that address concerns of both boys and girls in primary schools. The men and boys take a vow to accept and marry girls who have not gone through FGM, as proposed in the convention theory of FGM (Mackie, 1996).

The chiefs, who are respected elders of the community, are mandated to arrest any person who plans or performs FGM. Another category of partners in the ARP project is the police. They, too, like the chiefs, appreciate the deep knowledge of FGM that the ARP program offers.

7.3. Gender, Education and Human Rights Dimension in ARP

ARP ceremonies provide an avenue through which art is used to sensitize community members about human rights. The main means of eradicating FGM is the fostering of education for girls. Although education is important to everyone, it is especially significant for girls and women due to its ripple effect within the family and across generations so that many people benefit. Education enables people to know their rights and to gain confidence to claim them.

For instance, the poem entitled "*Elimu*" (Education) in appendix 3 (q), encourages the girls and the community to value education to stand a better chance in life. It should be remembered that FGM often leads to the girls discontinuing with education and getting married.

In another poem entitled "*Namsifu Mwanamke*" (In Praise of a Woman) in appendix 3 (r), by the renowned Swahili poet, Said A. Mohamed, the girls praise the African woman. The narrative poem recognizes and celebrates the strength of a woman. She is not only strong-willed, tough and courageous, but she is also a fighter who is ready to defend her rights and dignity. The poem, which was dramatized by Maasai girls in Kajiado during an ARP ceremony in December 2011, portrays women as heroes and encourages the girls to stand for their rights. It is also a pointer to the postmodern trajectory that the *unyago wa mfereji* has taken because it represents a poem that was initially composed in writing, and which is currently rehearsed and recited for an audience. The traditional *unyago* relied on orally transmitted folklore but with advanced literacy and globalization,

the ARP performances are able to tap onto multi-medial materials, such as from the print and electronic media.

The poem is about the liberation of women, who are portrayed not only as strong but also as caring enough to do what may have been considered men's work, such as breaking rocks, construction and the like. The song encourages girls to take up any careers in adult-life, regardless of their sex. The poem is an illustration of the feminist empowerment nature of ARP ceremonies, which are about the promotion of the rights of women and the girl-child. It also resonates with Negritude's overtones in the way it romanticizes the woman, as evidenced in the refrain "I praise you for being a rock", found in every stanza. Other praises for the woman include 'Your eyes are beautiful', 'well-endowed bosom', and 'smooth but unyielding hands with a firm grip'.

During the ARP training, a more formal approach is used in discussing issues such as reproductive health, hygiene and health. Scientific and/or medical terminology is repeatedly used because the audience consists of school-going children. Efforts made to ensure the cultural maintenance of *unyago* may be best demonstrated through the analysis of song and poetry, which were an integral part of the traditional ritual. However, unlike the traditional u*nyago* ceremonies, whose performances were esoteric, ARP performances are intended for, and to be understood by all and not by only a small number of initiated women. The following citations from the ARP ceremonies illustrate this assertion:

Example 1

(**Reciting**)

Down the valley,
Pushing the wheelbarrow, push!
Push mother, push!
Push father, push!
The road is rough
In addition, the going is tough
In our life a struggle

(**Singing in Swahili**)

Sasa mimi nimechoka	I am fed up with this
Sitaki kudhulumiwa	I do not want to be discriminated

Kila siku nabaki nyuma	I stay at home daily
Ni ndugu yangu shuleni	while my brother goes to school
Dhuluma x2	Discrimination! X2
Mama yangu, usinidhulumu!	Mother, do not discriminate against me!
Dhuluma x2	Discrimination! X2
Baba yangu usinidhulumu!	Father, do not discriminate against me!

(**Reciting in English**)

This is the time
For my mother and sister
To say no!
To this discrimination!

Example 2

Anti-FGM Chant

Hatutaki kukeketwa!	We do not want to be mutilated!
Tunataka masomo!	We want an education!

Example 3

Anti-FGM Crowd Sourcing Chant

(**Shouting**)

Zima! Zima!	Extinguish! Extinguish!

(Singing)

Zima moto wa tohara!	Extinguish the fire of FGM!
Zima kabisa!	Extinguish completely!

Example 4

ARP affirmation by girls

Mimi ni mheshimiwa!	I am honourable /respectable!

The above illustrations are testimony to the fact that the ARP ceremony is a well-coordinated activity that has morphed into a cogent protest strategy. The reinforcement through committing

messages to memory underscores the role of education and mnemonics in the cultural reproduction process.

Illustration 1 is a song and poem rendered in both English and Kiswahili. This is a reflection of the relaxed nature of ARP performances and points to the fact that the main reason for the performance is to communicate a message rather than to obfuscate it. In the song (poem), the girls lament over the burden ('wheelbarrow') of FGM and appeal for collective efforts and help to eradicate it.

The poem also points to the fact that the boy-child is favoured when it comes to acquiring an education. Therefore, the girl-child boldly demands to be granted a right to education as well. The observation about the suppression of the girl-child is evidence of a patriarchal society that feminist theories attempt to rectify. We can reasonably argue that the ARP program is anchored on gender parity in that it advocates for the rights of both girls and boys.

The poem is a strong message to parents to stop discriminating against girls. "*Dhuluma*" is a strong word that means injustice, prejudice and discrimination. The song (poem) is therefore a bare-knuckled protest against the denial of girls' rights.

The second illustration states that the girls want education and not FGM. The illustration is a statement of fact, that the girls have made a decision not to be violated. They know their rights and categorically state that they do not want to be circumcised.

The third illustration is also the girls' protest against being subjected to FGM. It is an appeal to the entire community to stop FGM and embrace the ARP. The chant uses the simple metaphor of fire to get its message across more poignantly.

The last chant is usually the final affirmation that the girls respect themselves and that they should be accorded equal respect. The girls are advised to repeat it to themselves that they are to be respected about not only FGM but also whenever anyone wants to violate their rights. It is an affirmation and reminder of their pride and worth as human beings. It is also an indication that they understand and value themselves as people of integrity.

The first three illustrations are usually, but not exclusively, used during the crowd sourcing, a procession through the streets to attract crowds to the graduation ceremony. Apart from the above well-orchestrated strategies, there are also poems and songs that are deliberately selected by the

social workers, trainers and sometimes by the girls themselves, to be rehearsed and performed during the ARP graduation ceremony.

The selection is guided by relevance to the theme of women empowerment and human rights, as demonstrated in appendix 3 (t) by Thuto Vanessa Seabe, from Maun in Botswana. The poem was deliberately selected and recited by girls in West Pokot during an ARP graduation ceremony because it touches on the plight and suffering of women. A girl who comes from a community where FGM is not practiced composed it. The poem's theme is universally feminist. It serves to motivate the girls and their mothers to stand for their rights and to be proud of whom they are, members of the society and women. The poem is available in http://www.users.drew.edu/-jlenz/whynot .html . It captures the pain, the fears and suffering of women in society.

One of the most basic motives for the ARP song and dance is to express and communicate the emotions of the initiates. The performances witnessed in this study express powerful feelings, such as anger at parents who force their girls to undergo FGM, interfering with their future lives. Other songs express hope and joy about the future. The accompanying dances are dramatic expressions of a newfound freedom.

Unlike the traditional Swahili *unyago,* performances the ARP ceremonies exhibit a national and international character. The sexually explicit traditional genres, such as *chakacha*, *msondo* and *lelemama*, which were noted as having been an integral component of traditional *unyago*, have not been incorporated into the ARP ceremony. The ARP lays emphasis on the message rather than the design (arrangement, movement and form) of the dances. The ARP trainers felt that the message is more important than the aesthetics of the performances. Therefore, great care is taken in the selection of thematically appropriate songs. The sexual education that is offered during ARP training is mainly based on scientific information on human anatomy, reproductive health, and sexually transmitted diseases rather than on the sexual intercourse per se.

Traditional *unyago* performances were well orchestrated with musical instruments such as drums and other accompaniments played by well-seasoned performers. Some affluent families hired the services of professional musicians during the *unyago* performances. Most important was the inter-connectedness between the dances such as the *kukata kiuno*, or rhythmic waist movement of traditional *unyago,* and the explicit sexual connotations attached to the ritual. On the other hand, the ARP is devoid of bodily movements or gestures, which may be construed to be erotic and/or inappropriate. ARP performances do not accentuate the waistline and butt with the accessorized

Swahili *kanga* aesthetic. Instead, during the ARP ceremonies, the *kanga* is given as a gift to the girls for undergoing the FGM-free rite of passage to symbolize that they are now mature and responsible women. The *kanga* is also a popular dress for the initiates' mothers.

According to the Centre for African Studies of the University of Illinois, the *kanga* carries important messages that "are often in the form of riddles, sayings, aphorisms, metaphors, a poetic phrase or proverbs". (http://swahiliproverbs.afrst.illinois.edu/kangas.htm). The *kanga* has many uses ranging from the decorative (aesthetic) to that of communicating a didactic message. The messages that are printed on the *kanga* are important to the people who understand the message.

Although the *kanga* has been used as a medium of communication and has found a place within the ARP ceremony, it is yet to be printed with pro-ARP messages. Based on its popularity in other areas of communication, this research study observes that the *kanga* can be used more effectively to communicate the anti-FGM message because it is popular attire among women in Kenya and other parts of the world. It is instructive that the *buibui* and *hijab*, which are associated with Islam, have not been copied by other communities in Kenya. They have remained as a religious dress code among Muslim women. The *kanga* does not suffer such inhibitions and can be easily adapted to convey the anti-FGM messages.

Other adornments that are given to ARP graduates include bangles, bracelets, shoes, dresses, sanitary towels and any other presents they would have received if they got married. The gifts are meant to make the girls feel that they lose nothing by undergoing ARP instead of FGM, and that ARP has more future benefits. During the ARP graduation ceremony, the girls usually dress in similar clothes with printed messages to underscore the expressive power, identity and their resolve to collectively remain true to their 'vows' of not succumbing to FGM pressure. Sometimes, therefore, they adorn similar hairstyle or festive costuming as a mark of group identity. The girls are also encouraged to be physically fit and alert and to take up martial arts such as *karate* and *taekwondo do* for self-defense. These are radical improvements to the *unyago* rite of passage and demonstrate innovations inherent in the engineering of cultures.

The ARP graduands between the Pokot and Maasai are garlanded with the traditional woman's costume consisting of decorated necklaces. In the past, men gave girls necklaces as a sign of betrothal, engagement, and endearment during and after marriage. The richness of the beads and decorations demonstrated the affluence of the husband and was therefore highly valued. The most popular design of the necklace is the concentric circle patterning. The women also wear large coiled

metal earrings. Both costumes and signs had multiple functions, such as the practical (that a girl is betrothed or taken by a man of means); ritual (that she has undergone FGM); the religious (that she is now cleansed and can indulge in sexual activity and sire children); and ideological (that the girl is now an adult or a mature woman with responsibilities).

The culture-specific gifts given to the ARP graduands today, and in this case the necklace, can be interpreted as merely ornamental. During the ARP ceremony girls may wear traditional attire as a costume for the performances, but they usually resort to their 'modern' attire after the ceremony as an indication of their liberation to pursue their educational goals.

7.3.1. Advocacy

The production of pro-ARP messages is participatory and involves all stakeholders so that the slogan that is coined is culturally accepted. After discussions the participants settle on one slogan that aptly carries the message in a culturally accepted way. For example, the ARP project has produced slogans in several local languages:

(i) *Kwabeire omoiseke otanachiri* (Kisii). You are now a woman even without FGM.

(ii) *Taana na Mugambo* (Meru). Circumcise through words.

(iii) *Emabung'ata matapal emuratare oo ntoyie* (Maasai). Let us all stand against FGM.

(iv) *Tohara bila ukeketaji* (Swahili). Cleansing without mutilation.

(v) *Unyago wa mfereji* (Swahili). Tunnel rite of passage or ARP.

(vi) *Kapteno Rotwo Tipin* (Pokot). Say 'No' to circumcision of girls.

The major aim of information, media and advocacy is to raise awareness and create a debate on the negative effects of FGM. By wearing printed T- shirts, banners and caps with slogans such as "Say No to FGM", field workers and ARP graduates attract attention to FGM and the implications suggested by the printed messages. Advocacy further creates an ideal opportunity to explain in detail why FGM is considered an out-dated practice. In this way younger girls get to know about the ARP.

The involvement of high-profile traditional and government leaders in the campaign (see figure 13 and 14 in appendix 4) is also an effective strategy that can cause communities to abandon the practice. Further, the involvement of traditional communicators is not only effective in this campaign, it also reinforces local culture. Using spokespersons from within a community helps to engage the support of that community and results in these persons continuing as advocates in the campaign.

The convention theory of FGM, as reflected by events in Mumias, suggests a tripartite strategy of abandonment: basic education, public discussion, and public declaration. Mackie (1996) observes that the educational information that brings attitudinal change must be from a credible source. During public discussion, a motivated core carries information to ever broader audiences. Information and discussion are standard techniques in changing people's attitudes towards FGM. Public declaration and campaigns within the local, national and international pool of marriageable girls can cause them to refuse undergoing FGM because there would be no benefits to undergo the rite.

7.4. A Case Study of an ARP Rescue Centre

This case study underscores the impact of ARP on education, the rights of the girl-child and, ultimately, provides arguments for mobility, planning and deliberate engineering of culture to effect social change. The example of interventions whereby ARP project has been initiated with tangible outcomes on health, education, human rights and dignity is discussed to emphasize the success of this study in meeting its objectives.

Tasaru Ntomonok Initiative (TNI) is a community based organization (CBO) which works among the Maasai in Narok County in Kenya. The organization was established in 1999 and has worked to promote awareness on women issues and to advocate for the abandonment of traditional customs and practices that are harmful to girls and women. TNI has employed a multiple strategy campaign to ensure that all the families in the community abandon FGM and early marriages. The strategies that are used include community mobilization, education and the protection of girls fleeing from FGM and/or forced marriages.

Community awareness is achieved through the facilitation of workshops and seminars that target specific stakeholders, such as leaders in the community (religious, political, traditional), circumcisers, teachers, women groups, peer educators, boys and girls. Separate focused group discussions (FGD) and seminars for men and women are held. This way, more and more women have come out to speak more freely about FGM and other issues affecting them.

One of the challenges is brought about by men who are culturally inclined to benefit from the payment of dowry for the circumcised girls who have graduated to womanhood. Traditionally, a Maasai woman who has been circumcised fetches a higher dowry than a woman who has not undergone the rite. The practice of grooming girls for marriage at the tender age of 9 years in exchange for cattle is prevalent in Maasai. (http://www.nation.co.ke/Features/DN2/Let-girls-be-girls/-/957860/1651092/-/122li2oz/-/index.html).

The TNI initiative has contracted community monitors who are mandated to rescue and protect girls who have run away from their homes. It has sponsored shelters where the rescued girls are given refuge and undergo education on important aspects of their lives. TNI also applies for legal protection of the girls and provides guidance and counselling. The shelters have succeeded in not only offering protection for the girls but also overseeing the arrest and prosecution of errant parents and circumcisers. The escapees from forced marriage and circumcision are supported morally, socially and educationally. Whenever possible, the escapees are reunited with their families after a reconciliation process.

The organization legally takes the children into custody and receives them at Tasaru Girls Rescue Centre. Reconciliation meetings are held with the girls' parents to assess the situation and, in the case of unsuccessful reconciliation efforts, the girls are retained at the centre until they complete secondary school. Those who reconcile with their parents are released to join their families. In order to ensure that the girls stay in school and are not forced into FGM and early marriages, follow up activities are periodically carried out.

The program ensures that the extended family members are involved in reconciliation talks. During these discussions, parents and the extended family are educated on the health complications of FGM, as well as on the legal consequences of practicing FGM.

Basic education is provided to vulnerable girls who have never gone to school. Likewise, others are given an opportunity to complete school as well as professional training in various fields. This is aimed at giving the girls the chance to involve themselves in sustainable economic and social programs.

According to the TNI founder, Agnes Pareyio, the ARP initiative initially faced a lot of opposition from the Maasai community when it was introduced. However, after vigorous sensitization and awareness campaigns, it is gradually being accepted by the local community (see figure 14 in the appendix 4). Some families are now allowing their children to voluntarily undergo the training. Consequently, there has been a marked decrease in FGM and forced marriages among the Maasai in Narok. Additionally, the education of women has apparently taken root and many girls and women are more aware of their rights.

Polygamy is gradually being phased out as many girls are now more aware of their rights and they are opposed to playing second fiddle as second or even third wives. Furthermore, reproductive health issues that were regarded as taboo have been demystified and are openly discussed. Girls and women are gradually being admitted into mainstream community affairs and their opinions are no longer ignored. From an initial class of 28 girls participating in the ceremony, the program has grown to currently accommodate 350 girls. It has achieved success in that none of the girls who graduated through the ARP have given in to societal pressure to be circumcised. It has also expanded to cover other areas, such as the neighbouring Kajiado and Pokot districts.

The TNI program has successfully engineered a way of eradicating FGM. The girls are trained on various topics, ranging from Maasai culture and children rights to the dangers of FGM and early marriage. Training takes five days, and at termination, they are issued with graduation certificates.

7.5. Conclusion

The *unyago wa mfereji* concept has undergone a lot of changes, one of the most notable being its adoption and transformation from being a sacred ritual to a symbolic performance whose agenda is sponsored by the government, NGOs and religious bodies. The main focus of ARP training is correct information, conscientization, sensitization, and awareness, with little focus on performance aesthetics. As opposed to traditional *unyago*, ARP is not part of a traditional ritual but a mundane initiative based on imparting knowledge. ARP does not use intimidation, secrecy, fear or coercion. It is a knowledge-based undertaking whose agenda is the empowerment of women in society.

With time, the Swahili *unyago* has been transformed into a cultural change agent that has impacted other communities, such as those cited in the case study among the Maasai. The new ARP aims to empower women through the education of the girl-child. The outcomes of the application of the ARP are evidenced by the rescuing of girls who would otherwise be out of school (see figure 15 & 16 in appendix 4). The ARP also addresses issues of human rights, dignity and reproductive health. The total eradication of FGM calls for a mental shift through a cultural transformation which is informed by a sound philosophical understanding of how the practice became entrenched. However, unlike the *unyago* and FGM, which are deeply rooted in the philosophy, psychology and culture of the communities that practice them, the ARP is yet to become the core of their being and identity.

In the next chapter we draw conclusions and make recommendations based on the importance of understanding the philosophical foundation that has hitherto stood in the way of eradicating FGM.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMEDATIONS

8.1. Introduction

The overall objective of the study was to explore the philosophical foundation that entrenched the Swahili *unyago*. The specific objectives of the study were investigated, explored, assessed and determined. The study was motivated by the fact that, although previous studies had pointed out the challenges leading to resistance to change, none of them had investigated how psychological programming contributes to reproducing, transmitting and preserving the *unyago* and FGM. The use of philosophical approaches enabled the study to (de)construct performances to arrive at the conclusions contained in this chapter.

8.2. Research Objectives

Through deconstruction, the study determined that the *unyago* performances had inherent symbolic signifiers that ensured that the ritual was ingrained or entrenched in the minds of the community members. The *unyago* ritual and FGM were found to have been promoted as desirable practices that had tangible benefits. It was discovered that u*nyago* and FGM engendered women by defining who they are as human beings. A woman who had not gone through the ritual was denied existence and a livelihood as a human being. The conclusion was that *unyago* and FGM are at the core of Being and provide reason to exist as an individual and also as a member of the Swahili community in Mumias.

Moreover, *unyago* and FGM were deemed to confer privileges, identity and a sense of belonging to a category of women who were elevated to a position that mirrored that of the male members of the community. Womanhood is defined through the prism of undergoing the ritual and gaining acceptance and status. The indoctrination through orally transmitted performances led to a mental conditioning and a strong belief system that was shrouded in the *unyago* ritual. The study proposes that the best method of eradicating FGM would, therefore, entail the application of similar methods of cultural conditioning and/or engineering. This is recommended as being most applicable through the revamping of ARP training to include repeated cultural reproduction components, such as its institutionalization.

The study does not consider the practice of *unyago* and FGM as right or wrong but as cultural institutions that, at some point in time, and as defined by the cultural history of a community, had utilitarian values that ensured the survival of family units and the entire community.

The eradication of FGM, therefore, requires interventions that address the core of Being by considering the numerous centuries of cultural reproduction and bringing them to bear on an ARP training manual that should possibly be embedded into the formal school curriculum in Kenya.

Culture is learnt. What is learnt can be unlearnt, such as is implied in the assessment of secondary virginity in Swahili *unyago*. The study found out that attitudes towards *unyago* and FGM in Mumias have changed and that FGM had not been practiced since 1982. Prior to this period, *unyago* and FGM were exclusively geared towards preparing girls for marriage and motherhood. The practice of *unyago* was one of the main methods by which Swahili women were socialized to take up adult roles in the community. The study determined that the Swahili community in Mumias does not currently consider FGM as a requirement for marriage. However, the study determined that the *unyago wa mfereji*'s acceptable to the Swahili community in Mumias. It was further determined that FGM is not a religious requirement but a cultural edict that was done away with, paving way for the FGM-free *unyago wa mfereji*.

ARP is an agent of directed cultural change or of cultural engineering. The *unyago wa mfereji* concept that took over from traditional *unyago* and FGM has been adopted for use in the rest of the country in the form of ARP. The research confirmed that ARP is facing challenges owing to the cultural entrenchment of FGM in communities where it is practised. That is why it is proposed that ARP needs to be equally entrenched through rigorous indoctrination processes, such as formal education, religion and legislation. Other methods of permanently changing the people's mind-set include repeated performances, rewards, use of role models and more exposure to modern media technologies.

Another finding that requires mention is the capacity of Swahili *unyago* to change from within. The analysis of some of the songs indicated the Swahili women's early opposition and resistance to FGM. This compelled the study to conclude that *unyago* was, at some point in time, interrogated by the Mumias women themselves and found wanting. This finding was further complemented by the fact that some of the *unyago* songs ridiculed men, pointing to an internal tension that may have precipitated its abandonment in Mumias. Ironically, the *unyago* provided the women with an opportunity to voice their fears and worries and to seek ways of remedying them.

The performance aesthetics of *unyago* were found to be highly artistic and elevated in terms of style, language and theme. The symbolic use of language, parallelism, imagery, metaphor and allusions was weighed against the strong messages that convey highly contested themes that ranged

from acceptance, submissiveness, perseverance, fear, and worry, to those of defiance, questioning and criticism. It is from the deconstruction of the themes that the study was able to conclude that the songs and dances were not routine but were deliberately framed to convey messages that, with time, led to the reassessment of the practice of FGM in Mumias, leading to its modification.

The study also noted that the *unyago* ritual performances were more aesthetically rigorous and relevant than the ARP. The ARP performances come through multi-media and multi-lingual channels are thus more global in outlook. However, they lack the communal and primordial oral composition, improvisation and transmission aspects that dominated traditional *unyago* performances. The study therefore concludes that there is need for re-thinking the ARP so as to make it more communally-owned and accepted.

The study also assessed the performance and aesthetic features of *unyago wa mfereji* ceremonies which were adapted as ARP ceremonies. This adaptation was considered to be a breakthrough in terms of modifying an old tradition to reflect current trends in the social life of communities where FGM is prevalent. The study concluded that the *unyago wa mfereji* has been deliberately and purposively implemented in other communities that practice FGM. This latter development lends credence to the notion that culture can be planned. It is also proof that the *unyago wa mfereji* type of *unyago* and ARP complement each other.

The *unyago*, FGM and ARP are perceived as conferring certain privileges and status to the girls who undergo them. The *unyago* and FGM are precursors of ARP and are therefore more endowed with psycho-social factors that ensure the practices remain relevant. Ultimately, this study concludes that the transformative power of ARP can be enhanced and reinforced through the infusion of some useful components of traditional *unyago*.

8.3. Suggestions for Further Research

There are opportunities to conduct further research on *unyago*, FGM and ARP so as to shed more light on the nature of their practice. Specialized research could focus on the following areas:

- FGM in specific communities, taking into consideration their unique cultural reproduction aspects.
- Research on *unyago* and FGM practice among other Swahili communities.
- The link between FGM and poverty and why so many international donors are interested in FGM in Africa.

- What replaces primary socialization of girls at home to teach them norms and values mainly from clan members?
- Why FGM is practiced by educated people in some communities.
- FGM in the Diaspora, and specifically in the Southern African region where members from the practising communities reside as refugees and immigrants.
- The scientific basis of opposing FGM and its validity.
- The use of folk media and technology in the preserving, restoring and dissemination of ARP training material.

8.4. Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations:

- That because the main impediment to eradicating FGM in communities that practice it is the many centuries of cultural indoctrination through rituals and performances, similar but modern approaches should be applied in reaching out to members of the community who are a product of the old social order.
- Philosophy may hold the key to instigating a cultural revolution in African culture by providing an understanding of why, rather than focusing on how, so as to ensure cultures are not swept away and re-introduced. This would help scholars and policy makers interrogate why it is Africans who have always been told what is right and what is not right for them even within their own culture. For instance, why is there a revival of *bogwera* and *bojale* rites of passage among the Bakgatla and Xhosa communities in the southern African region?
- More sensitization and education on the benefits of ARP at the community level are required. More information is required for people to understand the philosophical foundation of FGM by communities that still treasure it so as to devise strategies for them to unlearn what has taken centuries to instil in their minds. This would in effect result in identifying the various forms of FGM depending on particular societies, and to isolate the ones which are acceptable from those that are not so as to avoid placing all of them in one basket.
- For ARP to achieve similar power and efficacy, such as those inherent in *unyago* and FGM, certain psychological repositioning and conditioning need to be put in place. ARP needs to gain currency and acceptance. People need to embrace ARP without necessarily being preached at. Apart from planning culture, a strategy needs to be found, such as sustained indoctrination especially of older members of the society.
- ARP is expensive to sustain and maintain. It requires a lot of funding from the government and NGOs. A cheaper method of implementing the program would be through incorporating the ARP lessons into the school curricula. Furthermore, there is a big gap that has been

created by the non-incorporation of sex education in the ARP training. It is imperative that the training of mature women should be stepped up to fill the gap left by *unyago* training. Such voluntary training can be done among mature men and women on a need basis.

- The ARP ceremonies have watered down the rich aesthetic and communal experience of the *unyago* ritual. There is therefore a need to address the fate of aesthetics in performances so as to encourage individual and group creativity. The modernity of folklore need not bring about the death of the transfer of knowledge from generation to generation. Modern folklore can and should be planned so as to preserve the rich stylistic and thematic excellence of Africa's cultural heritage.

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Appendix 1: QUESTIONNAIRES

Appendix 1A

Questionnaire for Primary School Teachers

You have been selected to participate in this study. Please fill the questionnaire provided accordingly. Your response will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

(a) Name of your school……..

(b) Gender A [Male]…..B. [Female]…..

(c) Name of Village……

(d) Are you aware of the existence of *unyago* in this area? Yes…No…

(e) If yes, state the possible reasons for the practice.

(i)……

(ii)……...

(iii)……..

(iv)……..

(f) (i) Do girls who have undergone *unyago* rite come back to school after healing? Yes…No…Some…Do not know…

(ii) If no, state what happens to those who never return? (explain)……

……

……

(g) Would you recommend *unyago* to your pupils? Yes…No…

(h) If yes, state the benefits of *unyago* that you know of……...

(i) State any disadvantages of *unyago* that you know of…….**....**

(j) What in your opinion should be done with the *unyago*?

[A]Encouraged … [B] Discouraged…..[C] Modified….. [D] Abolished…..

(k) Have you heard about Alternative Rites of Passage (ARP)?

(l) If yes, what is ARP? ……

(m) Is ARP similar or different from *unyago*? Similar…Not similar…

Explain…….

……

……

Appendix 1B

Questionnaire for Social Workers, *Kungwi* and Clergy

You have been selected to participate in this study. Please fill the questionnaire provided accordingly. Your response will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

(a) Occupation……

(b) Gender A [Male]…..B. [Female]…..

(c) Name of Village……...

(d) Religion:

Christian……

Muslim……..

Other (specify)……....

(e) How long have you known about *unyago* among the Swahili in Mumias?

(f) Are you aware of female circumcision among the Swahili in Mumias? Yes…No…

(g) Are you familiar with any other closely related ceremony in other communities? Yes...No…

(h) If yes, which ones…….....

(i) In your opinion, has the *unyago* which is practiced by the Swahili in Mumias influenced other communities in any way? Yes…No….

(j) If yes, how? (Please elaborate).....

(k) In your line of duty have you experienced other communities practicing female rites of passage? Yes…No…

(l) If Yes, how is it different from the one practiced by Swahili women in Mumias? ……

(m) If yes to (l) above please explain the nature of the female rites of passage…….....

(n) In your line of duty, have you personally or the organization you represent applied any methods of Swahili *unyago* on any other community/communities? Yes...No...

(o) If yes, Please list the communities and the reasons why you used the methods of Swahili *unyago* on other communities.....

(p) Have you personally witnessed a *unyago* performance? Yes…No…

(q) If yes, where…….and when…….(the year/month)

(r) Have you noticed any change/s in the way *unyago* is practiced in your community? ....

(s) If yes, which changes have you noticed? ....

(t) Have you participated in the *unyago* ceremonies in your community? Yes....No…

(u) If the answer to (w) above is yes, specify the capacity you were involved: (i) initiate (ii) trainer (iii) observer (iv) circumciser (v) guest (vi) religious leader (vii) Any other (specify)…….

Appendix 1C

Interview Guide for Primary School Pupils

You have been selected to participate in this study. Your responses shall be highly confidential.

(a) Can you tell me where you were born/home area? .....

(b) Age……..

(c) Name of your school…….

(d) In which class are you? .....

(e) Tell me the person who takes care of you at home e.g. mother, father, siblings, relatives …….....

(f) Are you aware of the *unyago* rite of passage that young girls undergo? Yes…No…

(g) Have you undergone *unyago*? Yes…No…

(h) If yes, when? (Month/Year).....

(i) Who are the people you know who talk about *unyago* the most?

I. Parents…
II. Friends/peers…
III. Spouse (if married)…
IV. Brothers/sisters…
V. Teacher(s)...
VI. Imam…
VII. Pastor…
VIII. Chief…
IX. Member of Parliament
X. Any other (specify)……..

Appendix 1D

Interview Guide for the Chief

You have been selected to participate in this study. Your responses shall be highly confidential.

(a) Your location/ward……

(b) Are you aware of *unyago* practice in your area? Yes…No…

(c) If yes, what is *unyago*? ……

(d) Do you personally speak about *unyago* and to whom? Yes…No…

(e) If the answer to the above (d) is yes, what is it that you tell people about *unyago*? ……..……..

(f) If the answer to the above (d) is no, why don't you speak about *unyago*? …….

(g) Are you familiar with Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practiced by some communities in Kenya? Yes…No…

(h) If yes, how did you know about it? …….

(i) Have you heard about Alternative Rites of Passage (ARP)? Yes…No…

(j) If yes, how did you know about ARP?

(k) Would you prefer or not prefer FGM or ARP to be practiced in your location/ward? I prefer…I do not prefer…

(l) Please explain the reasons for your answer in (k) above……...

Appendix 1E

Observation List for ARP Performances

The following schedule aims at eliciting information on the significance of the *unyago* performances during the graduation phase. The list will be complemented by probing into the meanings attached to:

1.Body Language: will include hairstyles, facial and other bodily decorations, posture, poise and demenour (confidence or lack thereof).

1.Attire/dress of the initiates (graduands): Does it have any significance in, say, indicating their new status as adults? This may include any other adornments/costumes such as bangles, rings, shawls etc.

2.Gifts: What is the nature of gifts given to the graduands? Do they convey a significant/memorable meaning to the rite?

1.Songs, poems and dances: Does the arrangement, movements, gestures etc add value to the purpose of the ceremony?

1.Content/themes and language of the poetry, songs, films and other artistic presentations during ARP training.

1.Rhythm: Weak/strong; Erotic/Non-erotic?

2.Venue: (a) How significant is the physical setting of the event? (b) Who are the participants (speakers, sponsors, media etc)?

3.General Observations: The diversity of performances eg choral music and dance, individual song and poetic performances: How do they portray creativity, confidence and personality qualities of the graduands?

Appendix 2

Informed Consent Form

My name is John Kirimi M'Raiji. I am collecting information for a University degree in African Languages and Literature at the University of Botswana. You are invited to take part in a research study on the *unyago* practice, FGM and ARP practices in Kenya. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. You will thereafter give your information which will be treated with utmost confidentiality. The information you will provide will not be used for any other reasons apart from those explained to you. My colleague who is assisting me will be taking notes. NO NAMES WILL BE USED IN THE NOTES AND SO ANYTHING YOU SAY WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL. The notes will be used for this study only and will be destroyed afterwards.

Do you agree to participate in this interview? Yes…No…

Do you agree that notes can be taken of the interview? Yes…No…

Do you agree to have your picture taken? Yes…No…

Signature of interviewee……Date…….

Signature of interviewer……Date……..

Appendix 3

SONGS

Appendix 3 (A)

Tamaa		**Desire**
1		
Solo:	Kwayo tamaa ya tohara,	Because of the desire to be circumcised
Refrain:	Nitaimba!	I will sing!
	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn
	Kukicha 'tatokomea!	When it dawns, I will disappear!
2		
Solo:	Wosia niliopewa	The advice that I was given
Refrain:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!
3		
Solo:	Na Binti, mama yangu	By my daughter, my mother
Refrain:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!
4		
Solo:	Sikai kucheza tu!	I am not joking!
Refrain:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!
	Sitosema ovyo ovyo	I will not talk loosely!
5		
Solo:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!
Response:	Kukicha nitatokomea!	When it dawns, I will disappear!
	Kwayo tamaa!	Because of the urge!
	Ya tohara!	To be circumcised!
6		
Solo:	Nikija niliambiwa!	As I came I was told!
Refrain:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn
	Kuwa kushindwa balaa!	That to be defeated is trouble!
7		
Solo:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!
Refrain:	La sivyo, nitachinjwa!	If not, I will be slaughtered!
	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!
8		
Solo:	Na nikiepuka kifo?	And what if I escape death?
Refrain:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!
	Nitauzwa kwa adui!	I will be sold to enemies!
9		
Solo:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!
Refrain:	Kuuzwa kweli kwa pombe!	Surely sold for beer!
	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!

10

Solo:	Vibuyu viwili vya pombe?	For two pots of beer?
Chorus:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!
	Kukicha nitatokomea!	When it dawns, I will disappear!
	Kwayo tamaa!	Because of the desire!
	Ya tohara!	To be circumcised!

11

Solo:	Weupe bure kabisa!	The white ones are completely useless!
Refrain:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!

12

Solo:	Wasioweka ahadi!	They do not keep promises!
Response:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!

13

Solo:	Tukiwa kitu kimoja!	We shall be one thing!
Chorus:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!
	Asubuhi nitatokomea!	In the morning I will disappear!
	Kwayo tamaa!	Because of the desire!
	Ya tohara!	To be circumcised!

14

Solo:	Weusi bure kabisa!	The black ones are completely useless!
Refrain:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!

15

Solo:	Wasioweka ahadi!	They do not keep promises!
Response:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!

16

Solo:	Tukiwa kitu kimoja!	We shall be one thing!
Response:	Nitaimba mpaka kuche!	I will sing until dawn!
	Asubuhi nitatokomea!	In the morning I will disappear!

17

Wote:	Kwayo tamaa!	**All:**	Because of the desire
	Ya tohara!		To be circumcised!

Appendix 3 (B)

Wanawali	**Virgins**
Wanawali wa rika yangu	Virgins of my age-group
Usuhuba umekwisha,	My friendship with you has come to an end
Wimbi limefika ukingoni.	The tide has reached the shore

Appendix 3 (C)

Kumekucha		**It is Dawn**
1		
Solo:	Eee, angalia chini uone!	Eee, look to the east and see!
Refrain:	Kumekucha!	It has dawned!
2		
Solo:	Amsha mamako!	Awake your mother!
Response:	Akupambe!	To decorate you with a garland!
3		
Solo:	Na wepesi wa kifaru!	The buffalo with all his swiftness!
Response:	Aliuliwa!	He got killed!
4		
Solo:	Kipanga ‘karuka, katwaa nyama!	The kite swooped, picked the meat
Response:	Eee!	Eee!
5		
Solo:	Mwali kushindana na ngariba!	The girl struggles with the circumciser!
	Mwali kushindana na ngariba!	The girl struggles with the circumciser!
6		
Solo:	Kisu kunona, kondoo ndume!	The knife is fatty, a ram!
Response:	Eee!	Eee!
7		
Solo:	Sikaribie, sikimbie!	Do not get too close, do not run!
Response:	Eee!	Eee!
8		
Solo:	Kukaribia ndivyo kusonga!	Moving further from it, is getting closer to it!
Response:	Eee!	Eee!
9		
Chorus:	Mwali kushindana, naye ngariba!	The girl, she struggles with the circumciser!
	Mwali kushindana, naye ngariba!	The girl, she struggles with the circumciser!
10		
Solo:	Mwali ukisogeza miguu?	Girl, what if you move your legs?
	Kidogo miguu?	Your legs, a bit?
Response:	Kisimi chote kitakatwa!	The entire clitoris will be chopped off!

11

Solo:	Mwali ukisogeza miguu?	Girl, what if you move your legs?
	Kidogo miguu?	Your legs, a bit?
Response:	Mapaja yatakatwa!	The thighs will be chopped off!

12

Solo:	Mwali ukisogeza miguu?	Girl, what if you move your legs?
	Kidogo miguu?	Your legs, a bit?
Response:	Mapaja yote yamekatwa!	The entire thigh will be chopped off!

Appendix 3 (D)

Kutinda Simba	**Killing a Lion**
1	
Solo: Hiyo wasiwasi, kama yule yule	I was worried, like everybody else
Usiku wote, namfariji	I spent the entire night, consoling her
Nikifariji, woga asitiye	consoling her, not to fear
Nikifikiriya, yumo kundini	I was thinking, she belonged to the group
Lao waoga	of the cowards
Nikashitukia, hakuchelea	To my surprise, she was not afraid
2	
Chorus: Mwana eee!	The child eee!
Ametinda simba	She has slaughtered a lion.
Mwana eee!	The child eee!
Ametinda simba.	She has slaughtered a lion
3	
Solo: Uli dadangu, nilikwambiya,	You are my sister, I tell you,
Ukiwa jasiri,	If you prove to be brave,
Na hizo ndizi, siegemezi	And those bananas, I will un-prop
Zilizoiva, ng'ombe kiliya	The ripe ones, will be eaten by cows
4	
Chorus: Mwana eee!	The child eee!
Ametinda simba	She has slaughtered a lion.
Mwana eee!	The child eee!
Ametinda simba.	She has slaughtered a lion
5	
Solo: Tumemchuna, kumchukuwa	We have plucked her, taken her
Kwenda viishwa, naja unyoya,	To be dressed, and like a feather,
Kulainishwa	To be smoothened
6	
Chorus: Mwana eee!	The child eee!
Ametinda simba	She has slaughtered a lion.
Mwana eee!	The child eee!
Ametinda simba.	She has slaughtered a lion
7	
Solo: Mwana eee!	The child eee!
Amejasiri?	Has she been brave?
Response: Eee! Amejasiri!	Eee! She has been brave!
8	
Solo: Mwana kadungwa, kiujasiri?	Has the child been pierced, courageously?
Response: Eee! Amejasiri!	Eee! She has been brave!

9

Solo:	Kisicho na thamani, kikikatwa?	While the useless thing, was being cut?
Response:	Eee! Amejasiri!	Eee! She has been brave!

10

Solo:	Bila huruma?	Mercilessly?
Response:	Eee! Amejasiri!	Eee! She has been brave!

11

Solo:	Mwanae jabali?	The child of the heroes?
Response:	Eee! Amejasiri!	Eee! She has been brave!

12

Chorus:	Mwana eee!	The child eee!
	Ametinda simba	She has slaughtered a lion.
	Mwana eee!	The child eee!
	Ametinda simba.	She has slaughtered a lion

13

Solo:	Eee, oh, mama eee!	Eee, oh, mama eee!
Response:	Leta mwanangu	Bring the child
	Kumfikicha, kikiingiliya	To rub against the other penetrating
	Mwanae mama	Mother's daughter

14

Solo:	Mwana hodari?	Is the child brave?
Response:	Eee! Amejasiri!	Eee! She has been brave!

15

Solo:	Kizuizi kipi,	What then can be a hindrance,
	Kula vya tamu?	From eating sweet things?

16

Chorus:	Mwana eee!	The child eee!
	Ametinda simba	She has slaughtered a lion
	Mwana eee!	The child eee!
	Ametinda simba.	She has slaughtered a lion

Appendix 3 (E)

Leo ni leo	**Today is the day**
Leo ni leo,	Today is the day,
Leo ni leo	Today is the day
Utauona mpambano,	You will witness the wrestling match
Kweli si uongo!	For sure, it is not a lie!

Appendix 3 (F)

Kupakwa mafuta	**Anointment**
11	
Solo: Damu ya kisu mafuta!	The blood of the knife is fatty oil!
Tunajipaka!	We anoint ourselves with it, eee!
Response: Eee!	That is true!
12	
Solo: Mkono shahidi wa mwenziwe!	The hand is a witness to the other!
Kashika kinembe!	That it has held the clitoris!
Response: Eee!	That is the thing!
13	
Solo: 'Kisikia "shahidi ya mwenziwe,"	And when you hear, "a witness to the other,"
Response: Ni waliotufaa!	It is the ones that helped us!
14	
Solo: Ukisikia "Mkono shahidi wa mwenziwe,"	And when you hear, "The hand is a witness, to the other,"
Si Mkono, mwana-Hamisi	it is not Hand, daughter of Hamisi!
Response: Eee!	That is the thing!

Appendix 3 (G)

Mwanangu	**My Child**
Mwanangu bado mdogo	my child is still too small
Mwanangu bado kipusa	my child is still beautiful
Mwanangu bado mbichi	my child is still green (young)
Mwanangu bado asoma	my child is still in school
Utamkata wapi mwanangu?	Where will you cut my child?

Appendix 3 (H)

Vumilia	**Persevere**
1	
Vumilia mwanangu	Persevere my child,
Uliyoyataka ni hayo	This is what you wanted
2	
Vumilia mwanangu	Persevere my child,
Na hayo yote, vumilia	all that, persevere
3	
Umeyakubali kuonja	you have agreed to taste it.
Nyama zote nimezila mie	All the meat I have ever eaten
4	
Mwanangu kakubali kuonja	my child has accepted to taste it
Mwailambaje?	How do you lick it?
5	
Yauma x2	It hurts x2
Mwaila ya mwana!	You eat of the child!
Yauma!	It hurts

Appendix 3 (I)

1

Kite	**Groaning**
Woga wa nini?	Why the fear?
Kite cha nini?	Why the groaning?

2

Kukataa mwito,	To reject the call (custom)
Ni kufa kijinga	It is to die foolishly

3

Eee! Eee!	Eee! Eee!
Wa fulani!	Daughter of somebody!

4

Ameramba mkundu!	Has licked the ass!
Wake mwanawe!	Of his daughter!

5

Eee! Eee!	Eee! Eee!
Ameonja matako yake mtoto!	He has tasted the buttocks of his daughter!

6

Waomboleza?	You are mourning?
Usaidiwe na nani?	Who will help you?

7

Eee! Eee!	Eee! Eee!
Unapiga nduru?	You are groaning!

8

Eee! Eee!	Eee! Eee!
Usaidiwe na mamako?	To be helped by your mother?

9

Na huyo mamako?	And your mother?
Ni wa kutakaswa!	She is to be cleansed!

Appendix 3 (J)

Kisu Butu	**Blunt Knife**
1	
Kisu chako hakikati	Your knife does not cut
Kisu chako hakikati	Your knife does not cut
2	
Kisu chako butu	Your knife is blunt
Usiniharibie nyama,	Do not spoil my meat
3	
Usiniharibie nyama	Do not spoil my meat
Si sharuti nakwambia	It is not a must, I say
4	
Si lazima	It is not compulsory
Sasa ‘we ‘naona waniandama!	Now you see, you are still after me!
5	
Chako hakikati!	Yours does not cut!
Usiniharibie nyama	Do not spoil my meat.

Appendix 3 (K)

Mpenzi	**Sweetheart**
Chorus	
Mpeeeenziiii x2	Sweetheart x2
Nipeepeee!	Let me soar!
1	
Nina usingizi, nataka kulala x 2	I am dozing, I want to sleep x 2
Mpenzi nipoze, kwa yako hisani x 2	Cool me my love, I beg you x 2
Na unibembeze, niwe furahani	Caress me, to happiness
Mpenzi nipoze, kwa yako hisani	Cool me my love, I beg you
2	
Mapenzi yatunze, yaweke moyoni	Take care of our love, keep it in your heart
Mpenzi wa dhati, mwenye nyingi shani x 2	My beloved, with plenty of praise x 2
Huna tafauti, najua yakini x 2	You have no weaknesses, I know for sure x 2
Sikuepuki katu	I cannot escape (your love)
Nakupa undani	I submit to you wholesomely
Chorus	
Mpeeeenziiii x 2	Sweetheart x2
Nipeepeee!	Fan me!
Nina usingizi, nataka kulala x 2	I am dozing, I want to sleep x 2
3	
Mpenzi nipoze, kwa yako hisani x 2	Cool me my love, I beg you x 2
Mungu akuadi, utizame ndani x 2	Let God enlighten you, to see deeply x 2
Hapo utazidi, kujua yakini x 2	So that you can, fully fathom x 2
Nakupenda hadi, nakupa undani	I love you, so, I submit to you wholesomely
Chorus	
Mpeeeenziiii x 2	Sweetheart! X 2
Nipeepeee!	Fan me!
Nina usingizi, nataka kulala x 2	I am dozing, I want to sleep x 2
Mpenzi nipoze, kwa yako hisani x 2	Cool me my love, I beg you x 2

Appendix 3 (L)

VIDONGE VYAO	**THEIR MEDICINE**
Solo: Mfanyayo mfanyeni, hayanipi shughuli Msichoke midomoni, myasemayo sijali	Do whatever you wish, it doesn't bother me do not tire in the mouth, whatever you say I do not care
Niko naye mikononi, tuko wawili	I have him in my hands; we are only the two of us
Chorus	
Jama! Wape wapee vidonge vyao, Wakimeza wakitema, ni shauri yao x2	People! Give them their medicine, Whether they swallow, or spit it out it is their choice x2
Solo: Mtoe uzito nyoyoni, heri muwe nasi mbali Kuyataka yawe ndani, hayatokuwa ya sili	Relax your hearts, you better keep off That you want them inside, it will not be a secret
Tuko naye maishani, tumeshikana kikweli	We are together, we are very close.
Chorus	
Jama! Wape wapee vidonge vyao, Wakimeza wakitema, ni shauri yao x2	People! Give them their medicine, Whether they swallow, or spit it out is their choice x2
Solo: Jamani wivu mwaona, mi silali peke yangu	You are jealous people, that I do not sleep alone
Mmezidi kusonona, mmeudhika wenzangu	You continue to suffer, you are hurting inside, my friends, because of my lover
Chorus: Jama! Wape wapee vidonge vyao, Wakimeza wakitema, ni shauri yao x2	People! Give them their medicine, Whether they swallow, or spit it out is their choice x2
Solo: Hata mkifanya nini, ni muhali kuachana	Whatever you do, it is difficult to separate us
Hata mwingie mbioni, hatuzihusiki tena	Even if you run to compete with us, we are not interested
Tu pamoja maishani, daima tunapendana	We are forever together, eternally in love
Chorus: Jama! Wape wapee vidonge vyao, Wakimeza wakitema, ni shauri yao x2	People! Give them their medicine, Whether they swallow, or spit it out is their choice x2

Solo: Mtachoka kututimba, kutukana hatuwezi	You will tire of provoking us, we are not capable of insults
Mkazishe zenu kamba, haiwi kwetu ni kazi	Even if you tighten your knots, it does not concern us
Mimi mwana wa mjomba, Yeye mwana wa shangazi	I am my uncle's child, and he is my aunt's child
Chorus:	
Jama! Wape wapee vidonge vyao, Wakimeza wakitema, ni shauri yao x 2	People! Give them their medicine, Whether they swallow, or spit it is their choice x 2
Response: Mfanyayo mfanyeni, Hayanipi shughuli x 2 Msichoke midomoni, myasemayo sijali	Do whatever you wish, it doesn't bother me x 2 Do not tire in the mouth, whatever you say I do not care
Niko naye mikononi, tuko wawili	We are forever together, eternally in love
Chorus:	
Jama! Wape wapee vidonge Wakimeza wakitema, ni shauri yao x 2	People! Give them their medicine, Whether they swallow or spit it out is their choice x 2

Appendix 3 (M)

Sitaki	**I oppose**
1. Sitaki x 2	I do not want x 2
2. Japokuwa sina changu, kweli kuonewa sitaki x2	Although I have nothing, for sure, being discriminated against, I do not want.
3. Sitaki x 2	I do not want x 2
4. Japokuwa ni mnyonge kunyanyaswa sitaki x 2	Although I am poor, for sure, being discriminated against I do not want x2.
5. Sitaki usuhuba, usokuwa na maana x 3	I do not want meaningless friendships x 3
6. Nitaukata uk'ruba, kuwa ni mbaya sana x 3	I will break toxic relationships x 3
7. Kwako wewe nimeshiba, kunifanyia hiana x 3	I am fed up with your evil schemes x 3
8. Mimi!	Me!
9. Sitaki x 2	I do not want x 2
10. Japokuwa sina changu, kuonewa sitaki x 2	Although I have nothing, being discriminated against, I do not want.
11. Sitaki x 2	I do not want x 2
12. Japokuwa ni mnyonge, kunyanyaswa sitaki x2	Although I am poor, for sure being oppressed, I do not want x 2.
13. Umeivunja hisani, ukae ukitambua x 2	You have broken the trust, you should know that x 2
14. Umejitoa thamani, ulotenda si sawa x 2	You have demeaned yourself, what you did is wrong x2
15. Umengia hadharani, watu wote wamejuwa x 2	You exposed yourself (to ridicule) everyone now knows about it x 2
16. Mimi!	Me!
17. Sitaki x 2	I do not want x 2
18. Japokuwa sina changu, kweli kuonewa sitaki x 2	Although I have nothing, for sure being discriminated against, I do not want

19. Sitaki x 2	I do not want x2
20. Japokuwa ni mnyonge kunyanyaswa sitaki x2	Although I am poor, for sure, being oppressed, I do not want x2.
21. Ulikusudia nini, kutaka kunidhalilisha? X2	What was your intention, Trying to humiliate me? X 2
22. Kunitia mtihani, vituko kunionyesha x2	You tested me, embarrassing me x 2
23. Ya kunitoa nyumbani, sitosahau maisha x4	For taking me from our home, I will never forget x4
24. Mimi!	Me!
25. Sitaki x 2	I do not want x2
26. Japokuwa sina changu, kweli kuonewa sitaki x2	Although I have nothing, being discriminated against, I do not want, for sure.
27. Sitaki x 2	I do not want x2
28. Japokuwa ni mnyonge kunyanyaswa sitaki x 2	Although I am poor, for sure, being oppressed, I do not want x2.
29. Kweli wewe ni mjinga, si mtu ni hayawani x 2	You are foolish, you are inhuman x 2
30. Mambo kama yakushinda, sababu kuyatamani x 2	If you are incapable, why should you desire them? X 2
31. Kunifanyia inda, na kashfa mitaani x2	You embarrassed me, with Your indignities in the streets.
32. Mimi!	Me!
33. Sitaki x 2	I do not want x2 For sure, being discriminated against, I do not want x2
35. Sitaki x 2	I do not want x2
36. Japokuwa ni mnyonge kunyanyaswa sitaki x 2	Although I am poor, for sure being oppressed, I do not wantx2.
37. Ulofanya ni aibu, kukwambia sitoshindwa x 2	Whatever you did is shameful, I will not shy away from telling you x2
38. Kuyapata madhulubu, na wewe makuu vunda x 2	Getting oppressed, you abused the

	hospitality x 2
39. Kujalia yako t'abu, na mazuri nilotenda x 2	Caring about you, with all My good deeds x 2
40. Mimi!	Me!
41. Sitaki x 2	I do not want x 2
42. Japokuwa sina changu, kweli kuonewa sitaki x 2	Although I have nothing, for sure, being discriminated against, I do not want.
43. Sitaki x 2	I do not want x2
44. Japokuwa ni mnyonge, kweli Kunyanyaswa sitaki x 2	Although I am poor, for sure, being oppressed, I do not want x 2.

Appendix 3 (N)

Kazi	**Work**
Solo: Mahindi!	Maize!
Response: Eee, mahindi ni nafaka	Yes, maize is grains
Solo: Mawele!	Millet!
Response: Eee, mawele ni fanaka	Yes, millet is success
Solo: Mhogo!	Cassava!
Response: Eee, mhogo ni baraka	Yes, cassava is blessings
Solo: Nazi!	Coconut!
Response: Eee, nazi ni tabaka	Yes, coconuts are classy

Appendix 3 (O)

Nilisikia	**I heard**
Nilisikia! X 2	I have heard! X 2
Kuna mke-eee! X 2	There is a woman!-eee! X 2
Aliambia mumewe!-eee!	Who told her husband!-eee!
Kikundi cha kina mama hatoingia!	She will not join the women's group!
Kikundi cha kina mama hatofika!	The women's group she will not attend!
Kuna mama-eee! X 2	There is a mother-eee! X 2
Mtoto kushika-eee! X 2	Holding a baby-eee! X 2
Kunyonyesha-eee!	To breastfeed-eee!
Hataki!	She does not want!
Kuna mrembo-eee! X 2	There is a beauty-eee! X 2
Mwanamwali-eee	A young girl-eee!
Kulima-ee	Digging-eee
Hataki!	She does not want!

Appendix 3 (P)

Wosia	**Advice**
1. Huu ni wosia,	This is advice,
2. Huu ni wosia wangu, mwanangu nakupa shika	This is my advice, am giving you my child
3. Itunze heshima yako, uweze kusetirika	Respect yourself, so that you can be respected
4. Mme ni moshi wa ukoko, usipowaka hufuka	A husband is like the smoke of the 'ukoko' crust, if it doesn't burn, it smokes furiously
5. Na wewe leo sikia, mme ni mwenye adabu	Listen to me today, a husband is one who is well-behaved
6. Mme akikukemea, sema naye taratibu	If he is harsh on you, speak to him politely
7. Umwambie "nimekosa, nisamehe nimetubu"	Tell him "I am sorry. Forgive me, I confess."
8. Na wewe leo sikia, maneno haya nanena	And you, listen to my words, I am not insulting you
9. Usidhani natukana, nisemayo leo shika	Take my words seriously
10. Hakika mume ni mume, hata kama hana kazi	Indeed, a husband is a husband, even if he were jobless
11. Leo ni arusi yako, tangu juzi twaalika	Today is your wedding day. We have celebrated since yesterday
12. Kaa na mume wako, upate kusetirika	Live with your husband, so as to be respected
13. Heri upigwe kwa lingine, usipigwe kwa kwenda.	It were better if he beat you for anything else, but not for loitering.

Appendix 3 (Q)

Elimu	**Education**
1	
1. Elimu ni kitu chema, kuwa nacho duniyani,	Education is a good thing to have in this life
2. Hukuza wenye kusoma, popote ulimwenguni	It builds the learned everywhere in the world
3. Msinayo huwa nyuma, usasa hizi zamani	The uneducated remain backward, especially in today's world
4. Tusomeni japo fani, ni bahari 'so ufuo	Let us study; education is [like] an ocean without a shoreline
2	
5. Elimu ni taa mbake, yenye mng'aro wa shani	Education is a bright lamp, it has a strong light
6. Huongoza wanawake, na waume duniyani	It guides women and men
7. Msinayo naitake, ya duniya na ya dini	Let the one without, yearn for it, about life and religion
8. Elimu ulimwenguni, ni bahari 'so ufuo	In this world, education is [like] an ocean without a shoreline
3	
6. Elimu huwa ni mato, kwa mwenye nayo yakini	Education is the eyes, to the discerning
7. Humpitisha mapito, ya unyokefu wa shani	It leads one to bright destinations
8. Msinayo ni mketo, ubora mzinduweni	Those without it are poor, it is better you enlighten them
9. Aelewe kuwa fani, ni bahari 'so ufuo	Let her understand, education is [like] an ocean without a shoreline
4	
10. Elimu ndiyo mlango, wa mangi ulimwenguni	Education is the door to many benefits on earth (in life)
11. Ina kikuu kiwango, cha shani iso kifani	It has immeasurably high value
12. Msinayo huwa tongo, apapasapo haoni	One without it is mono-eyed and cannot see well
13. Mkuza bongo ni fani, ni bahari 'so ufuo	Whoever develops the mind is wise, education is [like] an ocean without a shoreline

5

14. Elimu ni mali bora, yenye ifadi yakini	Education is wealth, it is invaluable
15. Hukupanuwa fikira, na maarifa bongoni	It opens your mind, and makes you an intellectual
16. Kuikosa ni hasara, ubora tutangeni	To miss an education is a big loss, it is good we say so
17. Tujuwe ya kuwa fani, ni bahari ‘so ufuo	Let us know that education is [like] an ocean without a shoreline

6

18. Tamati hapa ‘takoma, ndu’zangu kumbushanani	This is where I stop, let us remind one another
19. Na nyoyo tufanye hima, ya kwenda madarasani	And let us try our best to go to school
20. Tukadurusu uluma, za kutufaa mbeleni	Let us attend to learn, what will benefit us in future
21. Maana cheo cha fani, ni bahari ‘so ufuo.	Because of the value of learning, education is [like] an ocean without a

shoreline.

Appendix 3 (R)

Namsifu Mwanamke	**In Praise of a Woman**
1	
1. Macho yako mazuri, lakini makali, tena yamejaa	Your eyes are beautiful, but confident, and full
2. Na kifua cha kadiri, nacho huhimili, lolote balaa	And a well-endowed bosom that can withstand any challenge
3. Nakusifu jabari, mwanamke shujaa	I praise you for being a rock, woman, you are a heroine
2	
4. Na mikono laini, lakini shupavu, hushika hodari	And your smooth, but unyielding hands, with a firm grip
5. Una huruma moyoni, bali si mbivu, hujali kukiri	You are sympathetic (in your heart), but it is not immaturity, I confess
6. Nakusifu u jabari, mwanamke shujaa	I praise you for being a rock, woman, you are a heroine
3	
7. Sio wewe shujaa, mkamata chuma, nyundo ukigonga?	Is it not you heroine, who lifts iron, the hammer banging away?
8. Na ari ikijaa, unaposimama, na wako upanga?	With tempers rising, when you stand with your machete?
9. Nakusifu u jabari, mwanamke shujaa	I praise you for being a rock, woman, you are a heroine

Appendix 3 (S)

Utendi wa Mwanakupona	**The Mwanakupona Epic (Excerpt)**
Na awe radhi mumeo, siku zot̲e mkaao, siku mukhitari wao, awe radhi mekuwiya.	And may your husband be happy, all the days that you live, on the day when you both are chosen, may he be happy -- (this) he owes to you.
Na ufapo wewe mbee, radhi yake izengee, Wende uitukuzie, ndipo upatapo ndiya.	And if you die before (him), seek for yourself his blessing, and go that you may magnify it for yourself, it is then you find (your) way.
Na siku ufufuwao, nadhari nda mumeo, taulizwa atakao, Ndilo takalotendewa.	And on the day you rise from the dead, the award belongs to your husband, he will be asked what he wants, it is that which will be done for him.
Kipenda wende peponi, utapekwa dalihini, Kinena wende motoni, huna budi utatiwa.	If he wishes you go to Paradise, you will be brought there immediately, if he says that you go to the Fire, you cannot avoid it -- you will be put there.
Keti naye kwa adabu, usimtie ghadhabu, Akinena simjibu, itahidi kunyamaa.	Live with him with civility, do not anger him, if he rebukes you, do not answer back, make an effort to hold your tongue.
Enda naye kwa imani, atakalo simukhini, we naye sikindaneni, mkindani huumiya.	Keep faith with him, what he desires do not withhold from him, both of you, do not quarrel with each other, a quarreller is always hurt.
Kitoka agana naye, kingia mkongowee, kisa umtandikie, mahala pa kupumua.	When he goes out say goodbye to him, and when he comes in pleasantly greet him, And then set out for him, A place for resting.
Kilala siikukuse, mwegeme umpapase, na upepona ‘sikose, mtu wa kumpepeya.	When he is sleeping do not take yourself off, Go up to him and caress him, and as for fresh air let him not be without Someone to fan him.
Kivikia simwondoe, wala sinene kwa yowe, Keti papo siinue, chamka kakuzengeya.	When he is sleeping do not rouse him, nor speak with a loud voice, stay right there and do not get up, if he awakes then he has to search for you.

Chamka siimuhuli, mwandikie maakuli, na kumtunda muili, kumsinga na kumowa.	When he awakes do not hold yourself back, Prepare a meal for him, and take care of his body, massage him with perfume and bathe him.
Mnyoe umpalilize, sharafa umtengeze, Mkukize mfukize, bukurata wa ashiya.	Shave him and have him rubbed clean, Arrange his beard, wash him carefully and perfume him with incense, morning and evening.
Mtunde kama kijana, asioyua kunena, kitu changalie sana, kitokacho na kungiya.	Care for him as you would a child, who does not know how to speak, take care of one thing well, what goes out and comes in.
Mpumbaze apumbae, amriye sikatae, maovu kieta yeye, Mngu atakuteteya.	Take his mind off his concerns so he will be at ease, do not refuse his orders, if he brings (you) evil, God will defend you.

Appendix 3 (T)

AM I NOT A WOMAN?

Pain at times is an anchor
It pulls us down and drowns our cries
Pain is like a sea
You surf the waves
To reach the coast.
I have surfed the waves of pain
I have worn the mask that grins and lies
With a torn and bleeding heart
I have smiled and laughed
With a heart full of raw emotions
I have served lies
But now I stand tall and ask
Am I not a woman?
Am I not the mother of the nation?
Have I not born children?
Have I not cried in my motherly voice?
Through the pains of child birth
Have I not loved and cared?
Am I not a woman?
Look at me
Look beyond the mask
Look at my swollen eyes
Look at my bruised lips
I ask
Am I not a woman?
How many nights have I laid awake?
How many tear soaked pillows have I cried
on?
How many pleas have I made?
Am I not a woman?
I have surfed the waves of pain
I have defied waves
I stand tall and ask
Am I not a woman?
Am I not a woman?
Am I not a woman?

By Thuto Vanessa Seabe from Botswana

Appendix 3 (U)
‘The Worst Outrage’ by Blee Gijoe
Translated from French by Milene Pages

Forget, no, I cannot,
besides, have I got the right?
thinking about it....no
going up the river of my life, at night time
it's the worst I think that happened to me
it's unnamed

Look at where I am today
I lose my sleep in front of the cold mask
fixed on this abnormally long neck
of this woman with these evil long fingers
groping the blades of torment of horror
on these little girls so fragile and innocent
Marked for ever by the seal of this practice
Reactionary but so anchored for our
misfortune

Sacrificed on the altar of indecent traditions
For the conservation of chimeric customs
By blissful conformity to true fake values
Consuming our societies on glowing ashes
Let's stop mutilating our women it's awful
It is an attack on human integrity
Whatever point of view we take
Nothing justifies this removal, it is untenable
No compromise is possible in this area
Excisions has done too many ravages
How many are they who in an unfathomable
trouble
Have been suffering for too long
of these burdens and chains that they are
carrying

And the worse in a complete silence last insult
Penalize the rite to eradicate is something
but it is urgent to take up the challenge of
information
the loam of this problem is ignorance
it’s on belief that this practice relies on
it is perceived as an obligation for purification

as it's a guarantee of virtue in a way
to recast collective awareness on the problem
has to be done

it is urgent to take up the challenge of information
for the victims of excision has another meaning
it’s a cartload of complication that offenses

The sensitivity of these women is for always undermined
Do we have any idea of the frustration that must be theirs?
I doubt it, all their life in a couple is disrupted, gone
Without knowing who they should blame,

For childbirth, they suffer intense pain
And lots of them passed away because of bleeding, mothers
Leaving orphans with ruined childhood
Some of them contract fistula, incontinence or other diseases
And their stupid husband repudiate them, cowards

Poor women sometimes rejected by their families,
all narrow-minded minds,
Let's talk about this taboo to stop this tragedy
Too bad if some circles get angry
All against FGM it's too much harm
As a proof of respect to women, let's bury these damn blades
Yes, coercion is needed but above all awareness campaigns
Change of mentalities must be the aim.

Available: http://www.with-heart-_against-fgm.com/music/blee-gijoe/

Appendix 4: List of Figures

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Figure 3: *Unlike female circumcision that is mostly done in secrecy, Wanga male circumcision takes place in public* (Picture by Nicholas Murithi).

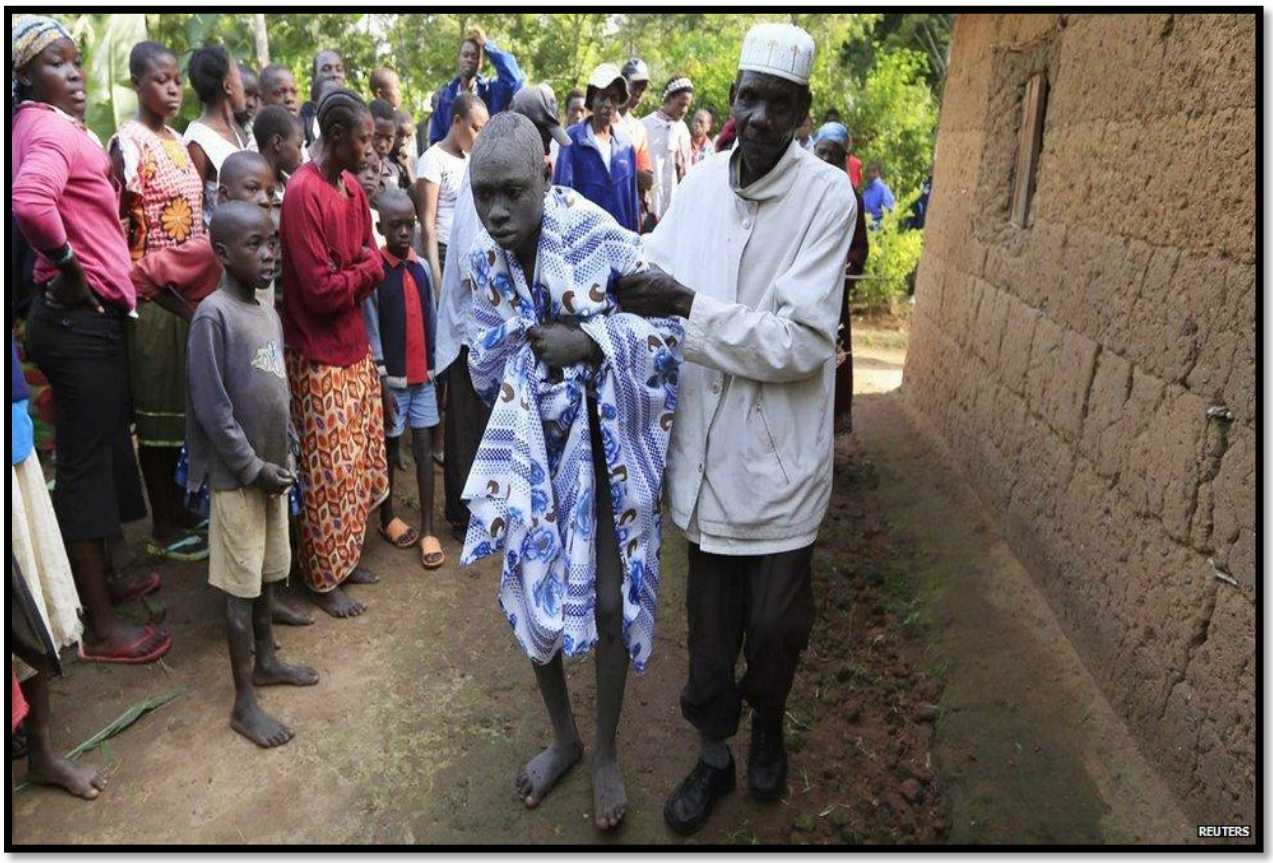

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Figure 12: *An ARP crowd-sourcing demonstration in Pokot. Note the messages on the placards and T-shirts; and the kanga worn by the women and girls* (Picture: Courtesy).

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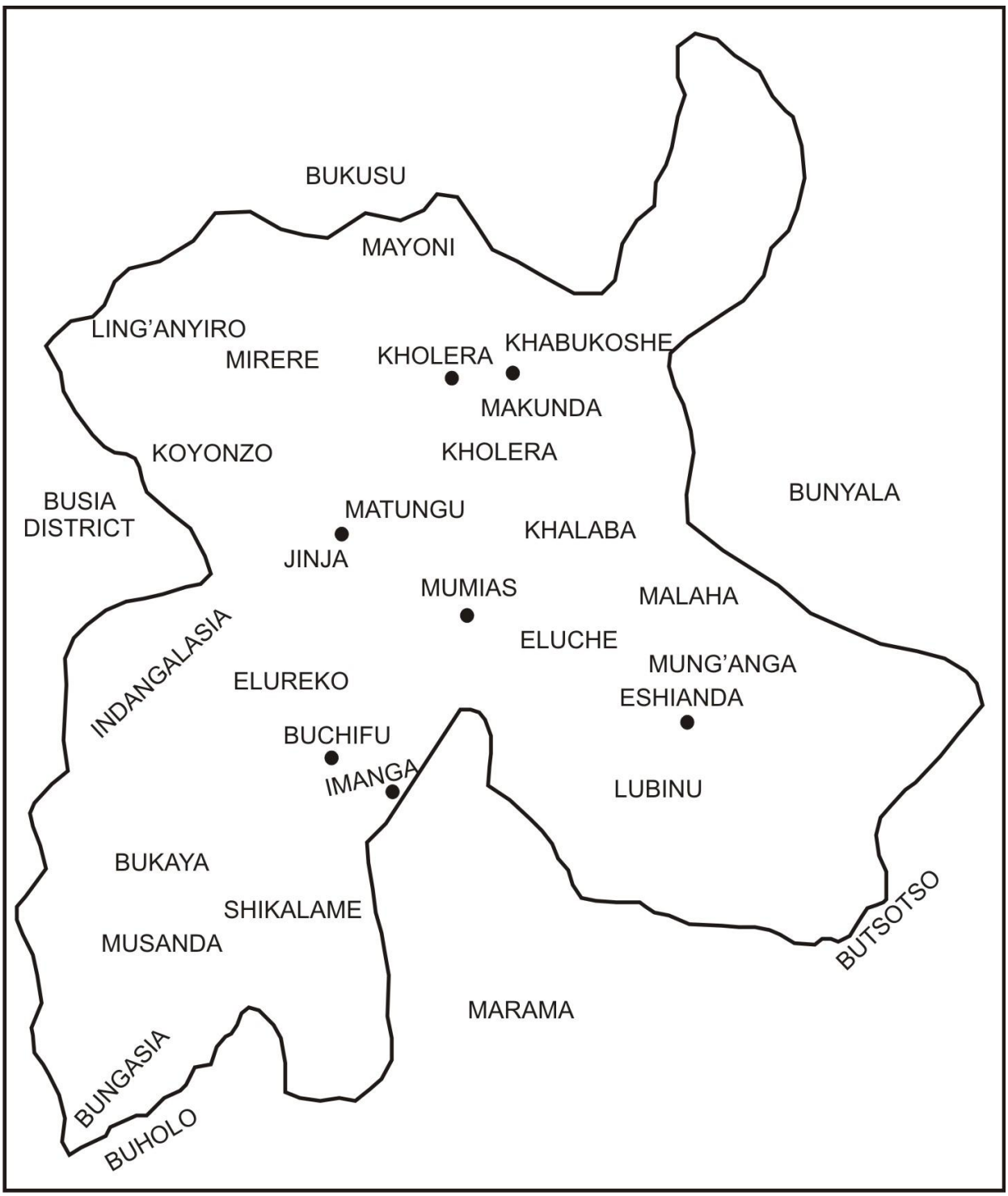
APPENDIX 5: MAPS

Map 1

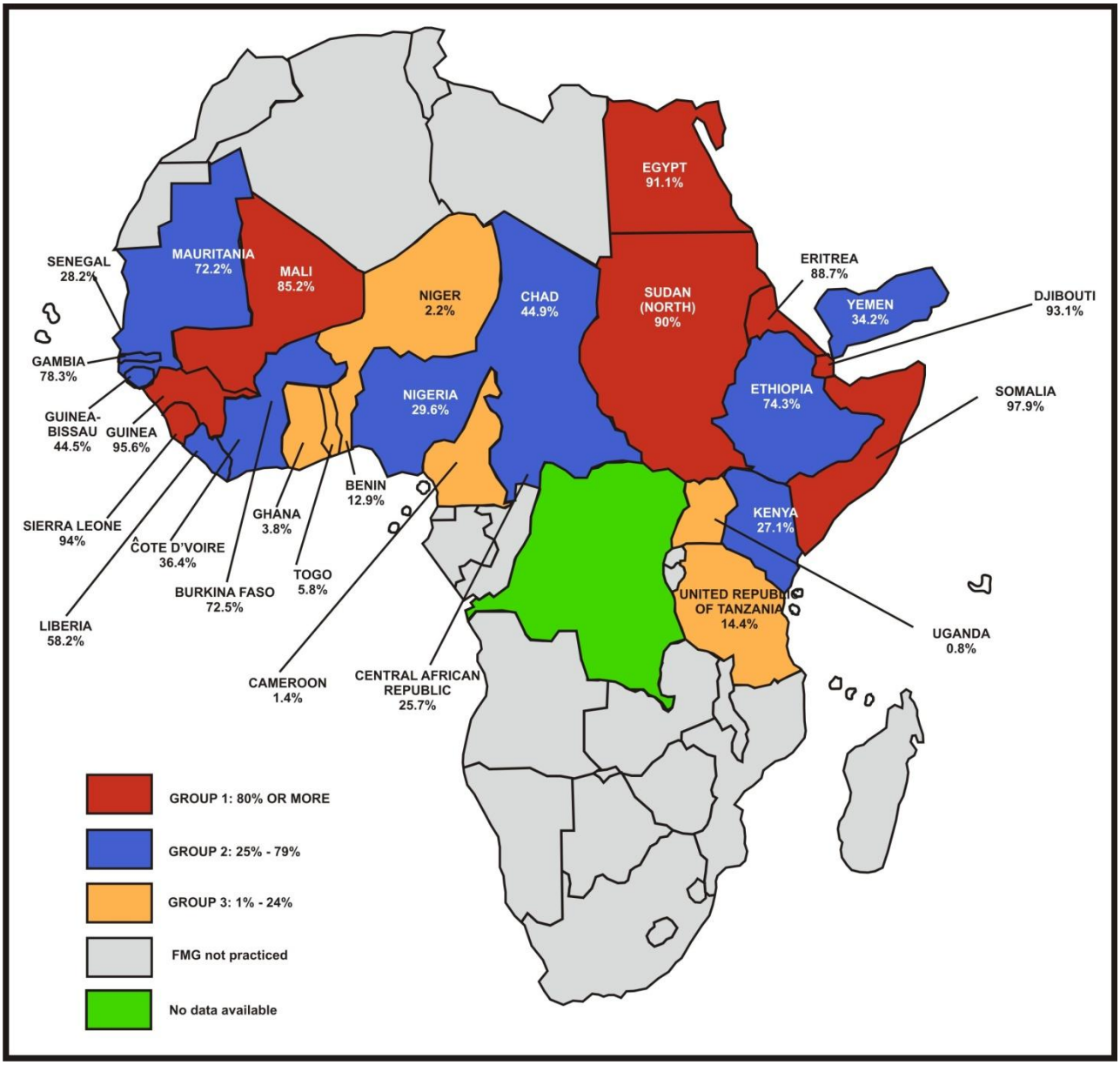
Map of Kenya showing the 47 Counties. Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org

Map 2



Map of South Wanga location/ward showing Mumias. Source: http://abawanga.wordpress.com/

Map 3



Prevalence of FGM in Africa; source: IOM. 2008. Source: http://data.unicef.org/child-protection/fgmc