Construction of Babukusu National Identities in Selected Songs in Kenya

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Abstract
This study is a reading of the construction of Babukusu nationalism as informed by social history through a reading of select Babukusu popular song texts. The study deployed qualitative approach and relied heavily on content and stylistic analysis. The study holds on the fact that every nation has its own music, which is used to express its identity. Both the artists and the music texts for analysis were arrived at through purposive sampling. The study employed play-stop-rewind-play technic to engage in ethnopoetic transcription then translation in order to facilitate self-interpellation and thick description in decoding nationalism as informed by social histories in the songs. The paper argues that metaphors of rebirth and patronage, greed and materialism and historiography are the key unique antecedents as forms of social history that inform the construction of the Babukusu subnation. Whereas Nations are identified by different aspects, such as their culture, folklore, history, ethnicity and religion among other antecedents, with the coming of colonialism and Christianity, some of these aspects have either been modified and or dropped altogether. This calls for historical revionism and further research in order to unravel present day identities not only in popular music but also in other cultural substrates.

Keywords: Identity; nationalism; Babukusu; music.

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Introduction

If we hold on popular music as a platform for encoding Babukusu national identities, then it is because as Folkestad (2002) notes, that music is one of those ubiquitous everyday practices that people use to construe their national identity. In doing this, we pick and unpack elements of nationalism and analyze how they are informed by social histories. The song texts are read both as popular music cultural substrates as well historical constructs that reveal the Babukusu national identities since they

are products of the periods of history that inform their times of composition and production. We analyze, as Bressler (2003) argues, the meaning(s) of the song texts as located within the cultural system composed of the author(composer), social rules and dictates found within a text and the reflection of a work's historical situation evidenced in the text in order to elucidate national identities that are informed by social histories. In fact, we hold on Mukesh's (2003) argument that a text needs to be repositioned in the original discursive reality of the age in which it was produced. The artists, therefore, as noted by Zerubavel (1996), are mnemonic communities who have their other narratives that inform particular identities; they weave their life experiences into coherent stories (music) and it is through these stories that they not only discharge identities of self and other but also those of nationalism. Further, Connell and Gibson (2003) noted that music is often a primary agent in the construction and maintenance of national identity. Our argument is that the Babukusu subnation has unique qualities that are informed by social histories and which are encoded by the select music and it is this uniqueness that goes into the construction of the subnation.

Were and Derek (1968) observed that the sort of country that people live in affects the way they live and develop. Further, they note that artists are therefore shaped by their societies and the music they come up with is in a way a reflection of that society. This study therefore makes an initial attempt at understanding present day Babukusu identities as encoded in the select songs.

Theoretical Framework

This study benefits from a conceptual framework derived from various tenants borrowed from ethnopoetics and nation and narration. Ethnopoetics forms a golden thread in discoursing over identity. Harvilahti's (2001, p.67-68) argument that emphasis be laid on ethnopoetic substrates allowed the study to interpret the selected popular songs as Babukusu (Popular) cultural substrates and therefore culture-specific (Babukusu) mental models in constructing national identities. Further, Alembi's (2002) idea of an intracultural model in folklore analysis aided in reading in national identities as the popular music analyzed was conceived to have meanings and actions that can only be understood within the Babukusu community. Therefore, as Alembi notes, the music is an infra (pop) cultural model that is able to encode

identity. Apart from ethnopoetics, the study too relied on Bhabha's (1994) argument that a nation's identity is narrated and consequently constructed by the same narratives in engaging with the singers in the selected popular music texts as curators of the Babukusu nation hence able to discharge nationalism.

Further, Bhabha's (1994) assertion that nations are constantly changing and are always due for change allowed us to demonstrate how the identity of the Babukusu nation has morphed over time. Bhabha's argument (Roy (2006) that nations are their own particular narratives split into pedagogical and performative nations was a solid ground for engagement with nationalism. This was supported by Evers' (2014) argument that the nation has the 'open-yet-closed' quality that allows it to be both an imagined community and a historical process. The paper therefore sought to read the identity of the Babukusu nation both as an imagined community and a historical engagement.

Literature Review

Identity is a social construct that is relatively understood and evidently, concepts of identity are informed by social histories. In fact, different literatures exist on the concept of social histories with regard to different nations. While discoursing on "Narrated Histories in Selected Kenyan Novels, 1963-2013," (Yenjela, 2017) observed that literary engagements with Kenyan histories have happened not only in the Kenyan novel, but also in other literary genres, such as short stories, drama, poetry, life narratives and oral narratives. Yenjela demonstrates this through reference to literary outputs both in Kiswahili and English that animate the Kenyan literary terrain. This has largely been addressed in written literature and this paper does not privilege one genre over the other but anchors its analyses in popular music with an abiding concern on how the multilayered concept of identity as encoded in Babukusu popular music is constructed as informed by social histories. Furthermore, the cultural canvas that Yenjela exposes is wide enough in dissecting Kenya's histories but it excludes popular music, which is at the center of this paper.

There are attempts by artists to link histories represented in art with formal histories. For example, Battestin (1970) emphasized the fact that 'the writing of history is necessarily a personal and poetic act; the historian is not a slave of time, but its

judge and master, binding the centuries together through 'webs of reference' […] and achieving coherence through the continuous presence of a personalized narrator.' By making reference to 'personal and poetic act (s), Battestin advances the idea that social histories are informed by individual(personal) experiences but which are creatively crafted into a discursive discourse. Popular musicians are gifted at creativity in coming up with their hits. As argued by Regev (2013), musical creativity is a dialogue between different cultures. It is through such 'dialogues' that popular musicians are able to negotiate different social histories. This paper engaged with the 'dialogues' as mechanisms for reimagining the Babukusu subnation.

While relating popular music compositions to Kenyan politics, Ondara (2020) examines and reflects on the pre-election, election and post-election period occurrences, the resilience of the Kenyan populace and the way forward through a reading of the popular music of a Gusii secular popular artist; Henry Sagero. The music recounts the numerous events of the 2007-2008 post-election violence marred by unprecedented loss of life, displacement and destruction of property. The period, as encoded in the music, is chronicled in the minds and works of local artists and historians for posterity and to reflect the country's identity. The song 'Omugusii Omukimbizi' by the artist, Ondara argues, has shocking revelations of the ghastly deeds and callous experiences undergone by the kinsfolk and citizenry in the given period. Ondara's study charts a clear path in the way popular music captures historical realities and how these historical realities affect a nation's identity. It is with this perceived relationality between popular music and history that this paper delved into the popular music of the Babukusu with a scholarly intent of decoding how the Babukusu identities are constructed but as informed by social histories.

Methodology
The study deployed qualitative approach and relied heavily on content and stylistic analysis. Further, to facilitate decoding of nationalism, the study utilized self-interpellation and thick description.

Population and Sampling
Both the artists and the music texts for analysis were arrived at through purposive sampling. Whereas many musicians animate the Bakusu popular music scene, this study focused on the popular music texts by Wasike wa Musungu, Simiyu Makhanu and Steve Kay only. Preliminary interview indicated that the three artists are gifted differently in their understanding of Babukusu national identities as influenced by social histories, hence their selection from the array of twenty-one artists. The study used purposive sampling in the selection of the audio texts for analysis since not all the songs deal with nationalism. Further, enthusiasts of nationalism as a percept within popular songs served as informants for the study.

Analysis of Data
The paper relied heavily on content and stylistic analysis of pre-recorded audio texts to identify emergent discourse patterns and rhetorical devices of the select popular music. We also relied on self-interpellation, which is informed by Nettl (1964), who argues in agreement with Nketia (1974) that the outsider does not have a good chance of bringing out the essentials of a musical culture as a trained native insider. Both the 'play-stop-rewind-play' and 'rewind-stop-play' methods were used to facilitate transcription, then translation which were followed by the researchers engaging in self-interpolative analysis and textual exegesis of the music in order to decode the construction of nationalism.

Ethical Considerations
The study sought permission from both the national and county governments after approval by the Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. Informants gave an informed consent about their participation in the study after their confidentiality was assured.

Analysis and Discussions
Findings of this study are broadly classed into: metaphors of rebirth and political patronage, greed and materialism and historiography. Within these categories, initial efforts are made to demonstrate how specific aspects of Babukusu nationalism are informed by social history.

Metaphors of Rebirth and Political Patronage
In this section, we answer the question: How is Babukusu nationalism ensconced within metaphors of rebirth and political patronage?

The Babukusu believe in rebirth and this is captured both in their knowledge systems and worldviews. The community, for instance takes recourse in renaming those who have passed on; this is for only those who led a life that is emulable. Those, for

example, who commit suicide, died by lightning and are murdered, are hardly renamed as it is believed that such traits may be recast in the renamed individual (Interview with Mzee Joseph Makana and Gallicano Ndongole on 27 Jan 2023). Brubaker (2004) argues that nations have immemorial and perennial characters and it is in line with this understanding that we unpack rebirth and patronage among the Babukusu as antecedents that inform this subnation. In the select music, the concept of rebirth finds expression in the track *Enombela* by Wasike wa Musungu. *Enombela* is a Lubukusu vocabulary that refers to a sprouting sweet potato vine. The concept is initiated by Malakisi Jazz band through riddle play. Wasike wa Musungu the lead singer and head of the band engages James Otung'uli a co-artist in riddle play:

Wasike: James?
Otung'uli: Eeeh
Wasike: Ewe wo omukolongolo?
Otung'uli: Ese wo mukolongolo
Wasike: Wakonakho Musimba?
Otung'uli: Nakonamo Sana!
Wasike: 'Namunaii!
Otung'uli: Kwiche
Wasike: Tondo wafwa Tondo wakobola?
Otung'uli: Tondo wafwa Tondo wakobola, Enombela!

Trans

Wasike: James?
Otung'uli: Eeeh
Wasike: Are you a child of an *Omukologolo?*
Otung'uli: Yes, I am
Wasike: Did you ever sleep in an *esimba?* *(Bachelor's hut)*
Otung'uli: I did, indeed
Wasike: A riddle!
Otung'uli: Let it come!
Wasike: Tondo dies, Tondo comes back?
Otung'uli: Tondo dies; Tondo comes back, a sprouting sweet potato vine

This riddling is in consonance with Bhabha's (1994) concession that a nation is created and that the identity of a nation is narrated and subsequently constructed by those narratives that constitute a people's daily existence, both spectacular and mundane. *Esimba* is the bachelor's hut among the Babukusu; it is an identity mark for the bachelor. Through such riddle play, important aspects of the Babukusu culture, were imbibed into the young members of the subnation; in this case, the concept

of rebirth is passed over. As Sharma (2014) postulates, literary works should be seen as a product of its time, place and circumstances of its composition; the track *Enombela,* in this context, mourns the loss of political leaders that the late Masinde Muliro, a Babukusu political icon, had politically nurtured; starting from the late Dr. Fredrick Masinde; an MP elect for Mathare in 1994 who died on the night of voting but was declared winner posthumously. Dr Fredrick Masinde was envisioned as one of the 'sprouting sweet potato vines' captured in the riddle, hence a product of Masinde Muliro politically. Before encapsulating the concept of rebirth, the band replays political patronage among the Babukusu. The late Wamalwa Kijana, recorded on the track proudly announces that he learnt his politics at the hands of both Oginga Odinga and Masinde Muliro. He avers that he went to Masinde Muliro high school, then Oginga Odinga University for political studies. He claims that such politics was beyond comprehension by the then president Moi. He notes:

> Esese siasa yase yosi nasomela mubikele bia Muliro, nasomela muhigh school ya Muliro, oli ncha University nacha university ya Odinga, nono omusungu abola ali I am in the position of the proverbial man, who enjoyed the best of those worlds: a Muliro education and Oginga degree...sasa siasa kama hii nikimchangia Moi, haoni chochote, anaona Mazingaombwe.

Trans.

> I learnt all my politics at the feet of Muliro, I learnt in Muliro high school, when I went to university, I went to the university of Odinga, so a white man state that I am in the position of the proverbial man, who enjoyed the best of those worlds: a Muliro education and Oginga degree'...if I engage Moi with such kind of politics, he does not comprehend anything, he only sees fireflies.

Whereas Masinde Muliro and Oginga Odinga died, political rebirth is witnessed in the likes of Wamalwa Kijana among other politicians on the Kenyan political terrain. It is true then as argued by Sharma (2014) that literary works are products of their time, place and circumstances of their composition. Wasike wa Musungu confirms this truth in the way not only Wamalwa Kijana articulates his political

standpoints that were learnt at the feet of Oginga Odinga and Masinde Muliro respectively but also hints at the political temperatures of the day; Wamalwa Kijana in the song accounts for Dr. Masinde's death by exposing the inhumane nature of the then ruling government under Moi. Whereas Dr. Masinde died in a road accident, the Babukusu have held on a remote believe that he was assassinated due to his Ford-Kenya standpoint then. The two narratives that account for Dr. Masinde's death are in line with Bhabha's (1994) argument that nations have pedagogical and performative narratives: pedagogical is the correct authorized version of the national narrative; it is static and certain, concealing historical reality in favor of continuity and concrete identity while the performative calls to question what the pedagogical claims stable; therefore, it is equally seen as a balance between anxiety and certainties'.

In this context, the idea that Dr. Masinde Fredrick died in a road accident is the pedagogical narrative while the belief that it was an assassination is the performative narrative. Wamalwa Kijana's political standpoints come out during the multiparty era at the time he was a strong advocate of the opposition as a leader of the FORD-KENYA political outfit then. As Armstrong (2004) argues, lyrics are the vehicle for expressing self-identity and revealing personal truths. We therefore argue that, Malakisi Jazz Band extols the political identity of both their lead composer (Wasike wa Musungu) and the Babukusu sub-nation. As an ethnopoetic substrate (Harvilahti (2001), the song text read within the Babukusu and Kenyan contexts, contains a culture specific meaning which is encoded in personal truths; the fact that patronage in many societies has been in existence from time immemorial: individual, cultural and even political as witnessed in the confession of Wamalwa Kijana in the track. Therefore, political patronage not only among the Babukusu subnation but also within the larger Kenyan nation was a mark of identity; Kijana Wamalwa identifies himself with Oginga Odinga and Masinde Muliro; the brand of politics he engages in was tailored on the political standpoints that the two espoused. When in the track the late Wamalwa Kijana refers to the politics of Oginga Odinga and Masinde Muliro, it can be recalled that the two are in the public domain in the history of Kenyan politics for fighting for the second liberation and being among the first post-independent politicians in the opposition of the then ruling government. But more importantly,

Wamalwa Kijana in the track delves into historiography by revealing that the Babukusu did not begin resisting external aggression recently; it dates back to anti-colonial struggle, and therefore, agreeing with Ozkirimli (2010), who argues that nations have always existed; they are a 'natural' part of human beings:

> Efwe Babukusu khwaloba khunyanyaswa khukhama khale, sekhwanja luno ta……kumukwaka kwa elfu moja na mia nane tisaini na nne, omusungu kecha khukolonaisa sibala sie elumboka, sali simbi ano busa... omubukusu sekaloba...efwe sekhufuchikha ta!

Trans
> We Babukusu have resisted exploitation from long ago, we do not begin today…..in nineteen eight four, white people came to colonize Lumboka, is it not just close here...Babukusu refused…we are unspittable.'

As Edensor (2002) argues, it is difficult to mention a nation without conjuring up a particular rural scape with particular kinds of people carrying out certain actions; therefore, these selective landscapes are shorthand for these nations' synecdoche through which they are recognized globally and even are loaded with symbolic values and stand for national virtues for forging of the nation out of adversity. We argue that the political patronage ensconced in the track identifies and pinpoints a political stand that was synonymous with Luo Nyanza and western Kenya (Bungoma). These two political spaces are therefore iconic publics that receive cognition in representation of the opposition in Kenyan politics, hence vouching for both the Luo and Bukusu subnations against the then ruling party (KANU), an 'adversity' in the words of Edensor.

While analyzing 'Unbwogable,' Isabel Hofmeyr et al. (2003) argue that the song praises a number of Luo politicians in which the likes of Oginga Odinga and Tom Mboya are mentioned; they argue that this gallery is a way to reinvent traditions of resistance among the Luo. This standpoint is in agreement with our position that the Luo and Babukusu communities have been markers of opposition politics within post-independence Kenyan politics. The Babukusu and Luo sub-nations are able to therefore differentiate themselves from other ethnic nations in Kenya in terms of politics and as Nyairo and Ogude (2003) agree: 'individual identity

is in part, created through differentiating oneself from others. In the same way communities-ethnic groups, nations and races- understand themselves in part by stating the differences between them and other communities.'

Greed and Materialism as Anchors of the National Identities for The Babukusu

This section is guided by the question: How do greed and materialism anchor Babukusu nationalism in the songs?

To be greedy within the Lubukusu language can be explained as: *Kumuliungo* but extremes of the same can be called *kumunyasi*. In the song, *Kumuliungo* 'greed', Malakisi jazz band retreats to memory and highlights the origins of differentiation in and or for identity within the Babukusu subnation through reference to biological processes:

Enda ya makana, yasala balosi, alala ne babefwi.

Trans.

The womb is a complex construct; it gave birth to both witches and thieves.

The track opines that the process of differentiation and or individuation begins at conception/birth. It is therefore an ingrained trait within individuals, hence the differences observed even within members of the same family. In this case, therefore, greed and materialism are birthmarks just like witchcraft and thievery indicated in the excerpt above.

The same track goes:

Omundu ne oloma, ne oloma wasio, oli kumuliungu, oli kwamukhaya, nawe nibio olia bitima wa nanu, nawe nibio olia bilola wa nanu, ne obona omundu bali amiliyia, amiliyia khulia, anerera khulia!

Trans

If a person accuses the other of greed, the same person should account for what they feed on themselves, where does all they eat go to, in any case, when you see someone looking healthy, it is the food they eat, if one grows fat, it is the food they eat.

Commenting about nations, Roy (2006) argues that the performative dimension of a nation denotes the construction of the nation as an entity through a conscious act of imagining. With Roy's standpoint in mind, we argue that the artist using a culinary platform is able to consciously construct a nation that is self-centered; one that sees the corrupt/greedy side of others and fails to see its own. We argue that the track may be in reference to the post-colonial corruption fueled by greed and blame games. Lara (2004) would agree with our foregoing assertion in her argument that music functions as a trenchant political site in Africa. We argue that whereas Malakisi Jazz Band did not compose this track with the present not only Kenyan but also African nations in mind, it offers fertile cultural ground for us to expose it to a microphone that allows us to read it as a post-colonial text discoursing on the prevalent corrupt and greedy society.

Corruption and greed are therefore markers of identity; but this identity is inherently ingrained within individual habits-it is more of a birth mark as it is conceived before birth. It is Arnold's (2002), who argues that: 'Songs exist not simply as entire texts but as funds of knowledge in segments, allusions and unframed social expression, in order to communicate and instantiate identities and political positioning.' Our argument, therefore, is that, the track as a fund of knowledge discharges greed and materialism that are marred by blame games as marks of identity for both individuals and the Babukusu subnation, and by extension the Kenyan nation. It is possible for us to argue that issues of greed and materialism could be acquired with time; however, because the artist relates that it is the womb that is a complex construct in the fact that it can nurture both witches and thieves, we argue that, because a nation is made up of individuals, therefore, what is ingrained in an individual eventually becomes a mark of his/her nation. Indeed, greed and materialism are both marks of Babukusu national identity and percepts that espouse social histories. Collin Ward (1982) agrees with our argument by noting that music making is the cement of society; it is entangled in the everyday activities of life; greed and materialism are part and parcel of not only the Babukusu subnation but also those of the larger Kenyan nation- they are both ingrained in people at conception.

Still contending on greed and materialism, artist Steve Kay in his song Kamang'u - greedy wild dogs, encodes the two as markers of identity for people in suits (*Babandu be chisuti*). As Victor and Michele (2017) argue, songs reflect, project and store people's concepts of their national and ethnic identity; therefore, the 'people in suits' are

constructed as corrupt, greedy, materialistic and malicious. These traits are linked to looting and eventual closure of factories, such as Mumias sugar and Panpaper mills. Nzoia Sugar Company is constructed to be on its knees due to the people in suits. Artist Steve Kay therefore uses animal imagery; a metaphor that equates the behavior of wild dogs to that of people in suits to espouse on a negative identity of the Babukusu subnation and by extension that of the Kenyan nation. Such construction agrees with Evers' (2014) opinion that nations have both an 'open-yet-closed' quality that allows it to be read as both an imagined community and a historical process. From this standpoint, it is possible that the artist is making reference to Kenyan politicians:

> Solo: Babandu be chisuti bano, babandu be chisuti bano- Kamang'u, kamang'u!
> Solo: Baluhya mukhoya muchunge enywe, baluhya mukhoya muchunge enywe- Kamang'u, Kamang'u niko kane kabenyoshe kimiandu
> Solo: Be chisuti bano, bakenda ne Masinde, Masinde Mulro wefwe kafwa
> Solo: Be chisuti bano, bakenda ne Wamalwa, Wamalwa Kijana wefwe kafwa

Trans.
> Solo: These People in suits, These People in suits – They are wild dogs, they are wild dogs,
> Solo: Luhyas be careful, luhyas be careful, - Wild dogs, they are wild dogs, be careful they may plunder your wealthy
> Solo: These people in suits, went about with Masinde, Our Masinde Muliro died
> Solo: These people in suits went about with Wamalwa, Our Kijana Wamalwa died.

Within Babukusu knowledge systems, people of the stature and ilk of Masinde Muliro and Wamalwa Kijana do not just die; some powers must be behind such death. The unexplained circumstances under which Masinde Muliro died in august 1992 may be the reason why the artist laments about the possible malice associated with politics, more so perceived elimination of political opponents or rivals by the then government in power. This death offers a public to read it in the light of Bhabha's (1994) argument of nations as both pedagogical and performative. Within the Kenyan public domain, Muliro died of heart failure (pedagogical) but among the Babukusu, it was politically motivated (performative). Masinde Muliro was the leader of FORD (Forum for the Restoration of Democracy) the

then a political outfit that was perceived as a threat to the then ruling party and government KANU. The mystery of his sudden death is the reason we associate the Kamang'u in the song with politicians. Indeed, as Foley (1995) observes, infracultural registers can only be appreciated against a specific cultural background; it is within the Babukusu cultural context that we deduce Kamang'u to be in reference to politicians. The artist's cry is representative of the anguish that the whole Babukusu sub-nation, Muliro's supporters and by extension the Kenyan nation had to content with then. The 'wild dogs' do not just exploit those whom they do not know but start with their own as the artist is wont to warn the luhya community to beware of them as they may plunder their (Babukusu) wealth. Contending on nationess, Edensor (2002) argues that it involves everyday ways of doing and talking, mundane habits, routines and social interactions and their performativity. We therefore reason that the corruption, greed and materialism that surround people in suits (Kamang'u) is an everyday way of doing things among the Kenyan politicians and other greedy people, hence forming an indelible mark of both the Babukusu subnation identity and that of the larger Kenyan nation. In addition, Thompson (2001) notes that nations do not exist above and beyond the agency of individuals, nations and national identities are not given categories which exist out there; they are made real by individuals in the course of their daily social interactions.

On the other hand, Wamalwa Kijana died when he had risen to the position of vice president in Kenya. Whereas he died from a London hospital, members of the Babukusu sub-nation have held remotely on the belief that it had a political dimension. Kamang'u, therefore, represents the malicious Kenyan politician who does not brook political rivalry; malice is a mark of identity for the Kenyan politician. If we hold on the argument that Kamang'u are in reference to the Kenyan politician, then it is because as argued by Jean Howard (1986), in dealing with literary studies, there is need to establish a link between with the political and social world that gave rise to it; the unexplained circumstances surrounding the death of both Masinde Muliro and Wamalwa Kijana are ones that gave cultural capital and fund to the artist to compose the song and assign it that title. Kay, therefore, plays within the ambit of Gera Roy (2006), who conceives of the performative nature of

nation construction as an entity through a conscious cat of imagining. The Kenyan political scene has had in the past, rumors of assassinations, hence Steve Kay's association of people in suits with malicious intent within political circles. Such association is bolstered by Were and Derek (1968), who observed that the sort of country that people live in affects the way they live and develop. Further, they note that artists are therefore shaped by their societies and the music they come up with is in a way a reflection of that society. Due to the insecurity posed by the people in suits, the artist as a political commentator offers advice to not only the current Babukusu politicians but also the whole luhya nation to be wary of such malicious individuals. In offering such advice, the artist resonates with Karin Barber (1997) in noting that music can respond to different issues raised in society. Kay not only raises an issue but offers ardent advice:

Wetagula, kamang'u! Okhoya ochunge, Lusweti we kabuchai, kamang'u! Okhoya ochunge luno, Majimbo wa Okumu, kamang'u! Okhoya ochunge, babandu be chiusti, Wabwoba Mukhamule ebungoma, okhoya ochunge

Trans
Wetangula!..... greedy wild dogs, be careful, Lusweti of Kabuchai!....,greedy wild dogs, be careful, Majimbo wa Okumu!... be careful, people in suits, Wabwoba Mukhamule, be careful!

Concerned about the political future of the Babukusu sub-nation, the artist gives ardent advice on how the politicians should relate within political circles. Wetangula was then the Bungoma county senator, Lusweti was Member of Parliament for Kabuchai constituency then while Majimbo Okumu was a member of the County Assembly in Bungoma County. On the Luhya Community, he warns:

Babandu be chisuti, kamangu, baluhya mukhoya muchunge, kamangu niko, kane bamurushekho kimiandu!

Trans
Those people in suits, greedy wild dogs, luhyas be careful, greedy, wild dogs, they will embezzle your wealth!

The warning is a focus on the greedy nature of the people in suits as it captures them to have a penchant for material wealth. Kay uses the 'people in suits' as a rhetorical strategy (Huddart, 2005) in constructing an identity of the Babukusu subnation:

Babandu be chisuti, be chisuti bano, bekhupa mupanpaper, bakila panaper yefwe yakwa, bekhupa mukitinda, kitinda yefwe yakwa, bekhupa mumalakisi, bekhupa mukahawa...Sisiuma siefwe sia Nzoia siyumba yumba aah, ne ocha mumias, balebe sisiuma siefwe siyumbayumba, khuchila ena! Khuchila ena..... bakwisia bibiuma biefwe!

Trans
Those people in suits, those in suits, went to Panpaper, brought panpaper down, went to kitinda, brought down kitinda, went to Malakisi, went to coffee factories, our industry Nzoia is unstable, then you go Mumias, the industry is unstable, where do we turn to? Where do we turn to? They brought down our industries!

The artist enlists different industries that were brought down by the people in suits: Panpaper mills, Nzoia Sugar Company, Kitinda dairy mills, Malakisi tobacco industry, Mumias Sugar Company and other coffee factories. It is through utter mismanagement and unchecked looting of finances that such industries were brought down. The suit therefore becomes a mark for the corrupt and greedy members of the society out to benefit individuals at the expense of the society. Commenting on corruption in Kenya, Kempe (2014) notes that the culture of corruption has grown roots in the Kenyan society at large and become endemic and therefore as Kebaya and Wanjala (2016) observed, music offers a public to the populace to voice their support or disapproval of leaders. Mukesh (2003) argues for repositioning the text within the original discursive reality of the age in which it was produced. In this paper, both the Babukusu and Kenyan, the artist as a voice of the society disapproves of leaders that are both greedy and corrupt since they wreck the society's economic systems therefore putting the future generation at crossroads in terms of economic empowerment

The artist in fact notes of the looming unemployment for the youth upon graduation since the companies have been run down. Bhabha (1994) concedes that a nation is created narrated and subsequently constructed by those narratives that constitute a people's daily existence, both mundane and spectacular. Therefore, by Kay exposing the rot within the society, he is on one hand condemning such ill behavior and also vouching for a society that

is free of the same, hence teaching more about leadership in particular and politics at large. He advises the leaders to take off the suits (shed the immoral fabric) and serve their subjects as expected and this in agreement with Afolabi (2004), who argues that the role of the oral artist is to teach norms and values of the society.

In fact, the moral rot is not only within the political circles and the industrial terrains but also within medical and educational institutions:

Babalimu nende ba daktari khabelocha, be chisuti bachile mubiama biabwe, balia chisilingi chawa, be chisuti bano, balile chisendi cha CDF, bachilile chawa, chibasari khunyola waebe chisuti bachilile chawa papa Wele okhuyete!

Trans

Teachers and Doctors are crying out, those in suits went to their Saccos, embezzled all their money, those in suits consumed all the CDF money, where does one get bursaries, those in suits have embezzled all, God help us!

Nations as Bhabha (1994) notes are always changing and always due for change. Whereas the artist exposes such moral rottenness, he exudes both hope and confidence that there are some leaders who are upbeat in delivering the right services to the people and therefore the Babukusu subnation will not remain the same. Kay takes note of Wycliffe Wangamati, then a business man, Christopher Khaemba, the then minister for education in Nairobi County, Professor Ngome of Moi University then, Amos Simiyu Makokha, a Bungoma based lawyer and Bonnie Nyongesa Kutore, an aspirant for the senatorial seat then, but also a news anchor with a local radio station in Bungoma. It is on record that Wycliffe Wangamati and Professor Ngome rose to become the governor and deputy governor of Bungoma County, respectively. It is on record that Wycliffe Wangamati and Professor Ngome rose to become the governor and deputy governor of Bungoma County, respectively, therefore falling in step with Fabian (2006), who postulates, within music, substantive issues are being formulated; political and ideological choices are made.

Historiography and Nationalism in the Music

In this section, the study answered the question: How is historiography portrayed as a form of nationalism in the songs?

In the course of discoursing over the nature of historical narratives, Ankersmit (2010) argues that narratives frequently offer representations of events that have occurred, whether real or imagined, and that for a narrative to represent, it must be organized around a central theme, whether in reality or fiction. In addition, Nyairo and Ogude (2005) observe that popular forms have the capacity to forge and clarify the bond between cultural affairs and political existence. In their considered opinion, therefore, through popular music, we hear of issues and events that constitute a peoples' history. The artists have dealt with the historiography of the Babukusu nation using different narratives but with shared themes. In espousing the History of both the Babukusu nation, using different narratives but with shared themes. In espousing the History of both the Babukusu sub-nation and the Kenyan nation, Wasike wa Musungu, through the song *Kumoyo kusiuka-my heart is still unsettled*, narrates how colonialists were able to rule over not only the Babukusu but also the larger Kenyan colony through divide and rule by installing paramount chiefs. He takes us through the executive order given by King George on the internal administrative boundaries to oversee the running of Kenya by outlining the boundaries right from Nakuru through Eldoret to the Kenyan border with Uganda. It is Anderson (1994) who notes that music is a viable site for imagining the nation. Therefore, Wasike wa Musungu uses the music as a cultural fund to re-imagine not only the Babukusu sub-nation but also the Kenyan nation as colonial constructs:

Wekha kumwikha, wola naikuru, wasimikha liema, wekha six four, mueldoret wasimikha liema, wekha kumwikha, wacha murureko wanyola yoo Mumia, wacha ebutere mayi warayo Chilingi,wakaba bubwami, emwalo ebuchaluo, laurenti ndio ngoma, wecha ebukhayo warayo kitwi, wecha ebubukusu, warayo namachanja, wambukha lwe ebunyala, warayo Ndombi, wecha muwebuye, warayo mayeku, wacha ekimlili, mungaki muluteka bana befwe, warayo bana befwe, khambule lubula, naloma tekete, wakobola emwalo, ebutesio baye, warayo Inkisaka, warayo Munjaru, wecha abila, lubeka lwe esirisia omwami Makhaso, omwene omumusomi, Nantoboso

Trans

> He came down to Nakuru, pitched tent there, came to sixty-four in Eldoret, pitched another tent, he rolled down to Lureko, found Mumia, went to Butere and installed Chiling'i, shared power, came down among the Luo, Laurent Ongoma, came to Bakhayo installed Kitwi, came to Bukusu, installed Namachanja, in Webuye, installed Mayeku, went to Kimilili uplands, installed our kin, let me speak it out. I have said it straight, he went back to Teso, installed Inkisaka, installed Munjaru, went to Sirisia, installed Chief Makhaso of the Bamusomi Natoboso clan.

The artist, using music as a palpable site of memory (Nyairo 2004) delves deeply into how the Britons installed paramount chiefs in order to cement and have control of their subjects, in this context the whole of western Kenya among them the Babukusu. From Wasike wa Musungu's narration, it is true as Van Dijck (2007) notes that people sharpen their own remembered experiences and the testimonies of others against available public documents. Placed within the Kenyan history and the Babukusu historiography, the music encodes a historical fact with regard to how colonialism held itself in place through the use of subjects who were collaborative to stem possible resistance and revolution. Indeed, as espoused by Mukesh (2003), History is not just an account of events that took place in the place but rather an intricate description of human activity which is regarded as a tenet by the society in question. Paramount chiefs were of great help in enforcing colonial orders, hence forming part of the formal history of both the Babukusu sub-nation and the larger Kenyan nation.

To bring on board the whole Kenyan colonial experience, Wasike wa Musungu, through the same song, (Kumoyo kusika-my heart is still unsettled), relates about the imprisonment of Jomo Kenyatta at Kapenguria during the anti-colonial struggle. Wa Musungu shows Kenyatta's determination and patriotic spirit as he vows that though they (colonialists) would kill him, he was dying because of the power of 'blacks.' In this case, Kenyans, among them the Babukusu. Wa Musungu, therefore, constructs the Babukusu subnation as Evers (2014) argues a historical process rather than an imagined community. Further, the text brings out Jomo Kenyatta's resolve that power sharing after independence should be left to Kenyans themselves as external influence could possibly have led to installation of colonial sympathizers who would have gone ahead to propagate colonial policies, hence negating the essence of independence. Jomo Kenyatta's determination and patriotic nature is paralled with the role played by Elijah Masinde wa Nameme, a Babukusu prophet, who fought colonialism through a religious sect- *Dini ya Musambwa.* As argued by Bressler (2003), people can hardly be extrapolated from the activities of the political or cultural system of which they are part of but rather it is the mundane activities and conditions of life that can tell us about the belief systems of a time period. The efforts by Jomo Kenyatta and Elijah Masinde wa Nameme to liberate the Kenyan populace are confessions of their believe that freedom was paramount for the black, Kenyans, among them the Babukusu. Wasike wa Musungu therefore appropriates the metaphor of colonialism as something that affected all communities in Kenya through evoking the role played by both Elijah wa Nameme and Jomo Kenyatta. Kesero (2017) while reading Oginga's memoir agrees with us in arguing that Wasike appropriates the metaphor of colonialism uniformly when he (Tunai) argues that Odinga imposes a metaphor of colonialism as uniformly oppressive throughout Kenya and therefore Odinga articulates the ideology of political unity of the various communities and regions of Kenya in the anticolonial struggle espoused by the text. What stands out is the artist as a historian is able to borrow from history and recreate/ (re) imagines his sub-nation; history reconstructed through popular music therefore becomes a platform on which the Babukusu sub-nation is recreated. It is Hayden white who argues that history is a literary device that incorporates subjective and ideological elements and James Olney, who on his part observes that writers of history impose their own metaphors on the human past (Popkin, 2010).

As Anderson (1994) notes, music is viable for imagining the nation. Wasike wa Musungu, in addition, captures the happiness that came with the attainment of independence and the thereafter sharing of power among the independent Kenyans. To capture the happy mood, the artist draws on hyperbole to show physically how the colonialist withdrew:

Omusungu kebaya! Kakhulekhela mayi!

Trans

The white took a wide berth, left it to us mother!

Within the same song (Kumoyo kusiuka), Wasike wa Musungu is observant to note the fact that there was need to remain steadfast (*khwesa kumukoye*-tighten the rope) in order to attain fully independence, hence his reference to Jomo Kenyatta's advice then to shun divisive politics derived from egocentrism. In essence, therefore, Wa Musungu uses his text as Fabian (1997) argues to not only express but generate and form a community's world view; the need for shunning divise politics at the time of attainment of independence:

Kenyatta waloma, ali khukhwikhale asi, khukabane esang'i, esang'i bakira asi wase, omusungu kebaya wakhulekhela mayi, khubabamo libuba, khukhabomo libuba, khukhabamo khulomana, khulomana khwa sina wase...khwesa kumukoye!

Trans
Kenyatta said, we sit down and share the animal, the animal was put down, the white stood aside and left it to us, let us not be jealousy, let us not entertain fall outs, why should fall outs be there? Tighten the rope!

As an intracultural model (Alembi, 2002), read within the cultural space among both the Babukusu and the Kenyan nation, the song takes stock of the pact signed between the colonialist and the first black government led by Jomo Kenyatta in handing over power. The song text, therefore, explores the rigorous process for handing over power from the colonialist and Kenyatta's political stand point in delivering Kenya's independence. Jomo Kenyatta, as encoded in the song, is on record for having facilitated the Babukusu independence from colonialism. Wa Musungu as one who witnessed the anticolonial struggle, therefore, serves, as Zerubavel (1996) postulates, a mnemonic community in weaving together his life experiences into a coherent story and therefore able to discharge an aspect of historiography as part of the identities of the Babukusu subnation. Further, Battestin (1970) notes that social histories are informed by individual experiences. It is not uncommon to find members of the Babukusu community who were named after Jomo Kenyatta possibly in memory of his patriotic role in the anti-colonial struggle.

While contending on the percept nation, Bhabha (1994) agrees that a nation is created and sees the identity of a nation as narrated and subsequently constructed by those narratives that constitute a people's daily existence, both spectacular and mundane. With Bhabha's idea in mind, we read artist Simiyu Makhanu's song *Basawa Misiko* in which he espouses a hook in memory of colonial human porterage as a means of transport then. To capture this memory, the artist makes reference to the Babukusu circumcision age set known as *Basawa Misiko- Basawa* the luggage carriers. This text delves into the historiography of the Babukusu and by extension that of the Kenyan nation to encode how the colonialist used African human labor causing some effects and disruption on the African way of life:

Babukusu nga benyokha, bakendelesha, Namunyu naye auma,oli bama mumaeni, basoreri bakonela ekisawayi, mumukhuyu, mumwene omwo wa baba namunyu naye auma, benyokha ne kimisiko bacha bacha ye esaboti, bakonela mundebe mundebesi, mundebesi babukusu nga bakona Namunyu naye auma, bama mundebe namunyu naye auma, bakendelesha bakonela emueberi,na tietie nakho khaloma omusawa na misiko, benyokha ne kimisiko, bakonela emaliki, bama emaliki, bakonela emukhwa, oli bama mumukhwa omusawa na misiko, bakonela ekaboto, ekaboto mumuyekhe, sisiakamo sie omubukusu, nga bola mukaboto!

Trans
When the Babukusu woke up, they walked faster, the Hyena was howling, when they left Maeni they slept at Kisawayi, among (mumukhuyu),the Hyena was howling, woke with the luggage, went towards Saboti, they slept at Mundebe, Endebess where the Bukusu slept, the Hyena was howling, from Mundebe and walked to Muberi,and Tietie was talking, Omusawa the luggage carrier, they woke up with the luggage and slept at Maliki, from Maliki, they slept at Mukhwa, Basawa the luggage carrier, they slept at the sandy Kaboto, the end of the Babukusu trek as they arrived in Kaboto.

Within this context, the artist accounts why the Babukusu gave that circumcision age, set the praise tag of *Basawa Misiko* (Mizigo being Kiswahili for luggage); this is in consonance with Bressler (2003), who argues that people can hardly be extrapolated from the activities of the political or cultural system of which they are part of. As the song notes, before

the age set was given this tag, the community was ready to circumcise its boys but the colonialist took them hostage and forced them to carry the luggage from Mumias (*Erureko*) to *Kaboto.* The artist records all the stopovers stations that the porters had to rest enroute to Kaboto: Kabula, Nalondo, Bokoli, Maeni, Maliki, Mukhwa, Kisawayi, Mundebe (Endebess) and then eventually Kaboto marking the end of the Babukusu great trek, and therefore handing over the luggage to the next tribe around, the Karamajong as the music encodes. These are iconic sites within Babukusu historiography as they are subtle reminders of the community's experience with the colonial enterprise.

As Edensor (2002) notes about iconic sites, the places mentioned in the song are 'synecdochal features, which are held to embody specific kinds of characteristics; they are spatial symbols that connote historical events, are either evidence of past cultures, providing evidence of a 'glorious' past of 'golden age' and antecedence, or they are monumets erected often within larger memory scapes to commemorate significant episode in an often retrospectively reconstructed national history. This song text, therefore, is a historiographical ensemble in detailing the history of the Babukusu as part of the colonial enterprise in Kenya; it narrates the life story of both the Babukusu sub-nation and the entire Kenyan nation as colonialism was a uniform metaphor. It is Evers (2014) who opines, nations have what she calls an 'open-yet-closed' quality. To her, this quality allows the nation to be both an imagined community and a historical process. This argument falls in step scholarly with the way Simiyu Makhanu articulates the great trek by the Babukusu; the subnation can be envisioned both as an imagined community through popular music and still be able to placed within both the Kenyan pedagogical historical narrative and the Babukusu historiography.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, nationalism is dramatized in selected popular songs. Rebirth and political patronage is evidenced as part of the Babukusu nation through riddle play. It is through such platforms that rebirth is metaphorically reconstructed within political circles, hence the patronage. Further, greed and materialism are engendered as anchors of Babukusu nationalism presently. They are individual birth marks just like witchcraft and theft. Finally, nationalism is couched within the community's historiography that is discreetly divided into the colonial and post-colonial experiences. The different aspects of nationalism identified reveal that the nation's identity has been evolving over time, hence the need for further research in the other cultural substrates to demonstrate present day identities.

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