

# **EAST AFRICAN JOURNAL OF MUSIC**

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*International Journal of Musical Arts (Research, Performance, Education)*

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# EAST AFRICAN JOURNAL OF MUSIC

*International Journal of Musical Arts (Research, Performance, Education)*

## AIMS AND SCOPE

The East African Journal of Music (EAJM) is a product of the First East African Symposium on Music Education at Kenyatta University in 2005. The Journal is peer reviewed and published by the Department of Music and Performing Arts, The Technical University of Kenya, Nairobi.

Each volume of the journal includes practical issues and discourse and research-based interrogation. The journal aims to include reports that enhance knowledge regarding teaching, learning, composing and performing music, as well as those dealing with the nature, concept and practice of music in diverse contexts. The relationship between music and other performing and cultural arts, music and science, music and human behavior and music and society provide a rich background for reports that find a home in EAJM.

The journal welcomes full papers and reviews of music and books. It is an English medium publication,

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## **Editor's Message**

Music and musical arts scholarship continues to occupy a central place in the act of teaching and learning in music. With myriad challenges impacting social, economic and cultural relations and activities, the place of the musical arts in human existence is now more crucial than ever. This place demands a new understanding of the nature of music, an understanding that calls for greater emphasis on teaching and learning.

The East African Journal of Music continues to desire to fill the knowledge gap by providing a platform for knowledge exchange and exposure. Aimed at an international readership, this journal carries information on the theory and practice of music with a view to informing research, documentation and practice.

The articles in Volume 3 reflect the growing strides made in connecting African musical arts scholars, hereby presenting knowledge from Kenya, Zimbabwe and Nigeria. It is with joy that I present this volume to readers, with understanding that this avenue will support music scholarship on the continent.

I wish to thank the authors for continuing faith in the journal, and the editorial team for critical input without which the journal would not be.

Thank you

Emily Achieng' Akuno

Nairobi, May 2015

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# Music of the Samia: Principles and Practices

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Gabriel J. Musungu – and Sylvester Otieno Ogama<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

*This study discusses the music of the Samia by articulating its principles and practices. It highlights Samia views on music making, concept of music, dance, choice of performance and song texts in the community. The discussion is based on the analysis of field data in the form of recorded songs. Data was collected during field research and analysed. Pertinent song texts are presented in the original language (Olusamia) translated literally into English and their usage analysed. The discussion hinge is on the theory of formalism, in which a society is viewed as a whole system that contains other sub-systems that contribute to the overall functions of the society. These sections or sub-systems are set up by some principles of the society that inform their function in given contexts. The theory is applied to the music making practices and functions of the Samia. The study also discusses some of the trends that affect traditional music of the Samia.*

**Key Words:** Samia music, music making, music makers, music specialists, traditional music, song and textual analysis

## Background Information

The Samia are found in Samia District of Busia County in Western Kenya. They border the Bakhayo and Marachi in the Northeast, the Luo in Siaya County in the East, the Samia Bagwe in the West in Uganda and the Banyala in the South.

Like most ethnic communities in Kenya, the Samia do not have a word equivalent to the English words ‘music’ and ‘musicians’. According to the Samia music specialists, performers are identified with the specific area of performance; and that music consists of *okhwemba* (singing), *okhukhina* (dancing) and *okhuba* or *obubeni* (playing of musical instruments). Since in a performance the three activities go hand in hand, the music of the Samia cannot be defined in one word. Other neighboring communities such as the Luo similarly have no definite word for ‘music’ and ‘musicians’. In his study of four composers from the Luo community Nyakiti (1988) concurs with this; and adds that music is identified by musical instruments and the occasion for which it is performed; while musicians are identified by musical instruments that they play.

In an oral interview Anjelina (personal interview, 2011) observed that songs performed by the Samia are identified by the occasions of performance. For example, traditional beer songs are *enyembo chia ‘malwa*, working songs are *enyembo chie ‘mirimo* and war songs are *enyembo chie ‘ye*. Instrumental music is identified by the instruments producing the music. Hence, *olwika* is the music of *olwika* - a horn, *okungulo* is the music produced by *okungulo* - a fiddle, *arutu* is the music produced by *arutu* drums and *engabe* is the music produced by the long drum *engabe*.

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Types of vocal music are identified by the way they are delivered; so that *olwembo* - song (*enyembo* - plural) refers to vocal styles in which lyrics are sung in strict rhythm - this is rhythm that maintains the beat of the song in time. *Okhugweya* - recitation refers to a vocal style in which words are recited in free rhythm. Therefore, *olwembo* includes all tunes that are sung or played on instruments and performed to regular meter. The temporal aspect of traditional songs is synonymous with the beats created by accompanying music instruments in a performance, which give rhythmic textures to the songs. Nketia (1992:119) observes that some instrumental pieces originate as songs with words though variations of the materials of the basic tune may be introduced during a performance. In most cases, tunes played on instruments are same that are sung.

Mujumbe (personal interview, 2011) stated that traditional musicians (the producers of music) are identified with the instruments and the type of music they produce. For example *omukhubi wa 'rutu* - the player of *arutu* drums, literary means the one who beats the *arutu* drums. Nyakiti (1988) contended that the Luo consider their musical instruments as 'things' or objects that are played 'beaten' to produce sound; the Samia do also share this sentiment. For example, the playing of any musical instrument of the Samia is referred to as *okhuba*. The player is *omubi* or *omubeni*, while the musical instruments are *emiimo*.

In context, music making in the Samia community;

- is a collage of song, dance and music instruments
- involves performer/audience in reciprocal roles that rarely distinguish between musician and listener (active/passive performers respectively).
- involves venues for performance, for example homes hosting the functions for which music is made or sites for bull fights or wrestling.
- provides avenues for creativity, each performance is new even though the repertoire may be old or already existing (Omondi, 1980).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The functionalist perspective, also called functionalism, is one of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology. It has its origins in the works of Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) who was especially interested in how social order is possible or how society remains relatively stable. Functionalism interprets each part of society in terms of how it contributes to the stability of the whole society; each part of society is functional for the stability of the whole society. The different parts are primarily the institutions of society, each of which is organised to fill different needs and each of which has particular consequences for the form and shape of society. The parts all depend on each other.

This study is based on functionalism theory in which various parts fulfill the needs and shape the society in this case the Samia community. Functionalism interprets each part of society in terms of how it contributes to the stability of the whole society. Music makers in the Samia society have different experiences performing different music which when put together forms the musical culture of the Samia. Each part of the performance entity is functional for the stability of the Samia society; this includes instrumentalists, singers, dancers and the audience. The different parts are primarily institutions of the society, each of which is organised to fill different needs and each of which has particular consequences for the form and shape of society. In the Samia community different sections are dependent on each other for the society to run its functions.

Societies are held together by shared values, common symbols and social bonds; these are synonymous with the way a community looks at each and every member as part and parcel of the whole. In music making, the specialists need the audience to appreciate their created music. The specialists also need each other as singers, dancers and instrumentalists to sustain a whole performance; and in so doing keep the community entertained.

The Samia community relates to the functionalism theory in that it has different aspects of music involving performance, participation and collaboration;

- performance involves singers, dancers and instrumentalists as music makers in the categories listed by the Samia as *abembi*, *abakhini* and *ababeni* respectively.
- participation involves musicians and listeners/audience as a passive group partaking of the performances
- all these groups come together and collaborate to spearhead the Samia community expectations in music making. Music is therefore taken as a function of society playing both social and ritualistic roles. These make up the whole entity of music making in the Samia society. Music as a joint activity involves both traditional musicians and non-musicians, and therefore is a communal venture. Nobody is left out in music making; be they traditional music specialists or the audience.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study adapts the three mode view of understanding music as a concept, an object and an event (Akuno 1997); in relation to the way the Samia perceive music.

- Music as concept is seen as an idea or a thought and therefore occupies the mind. The following are features that characterise the concept of music;
  - Temporal – it involves time and rhythm, giving musical sound duration
  - Tonal – giving pitch and creating intervals
  - Qualitative – timbre – identity of sounds in relation to a medium of production
    - Form – definition of structures that are used
    - Texture – tells the substance of its structure
  - Expressive – dynamics – intensity and animation
- Music as an object has the following elements;
  - Work of art, that uses materials which are basically sound and movement. The media involved are instruments, voice and dance.
- Music making is an activity or an event that serves specific needs focusing on cultural aspects. It is a medium of transferring knowledge and building talent especially to the youth in most communities. Music is taken to be the ‘driver’ of many important things happening in societies. In most cases the Samia traditional music incorporates songs, dances and local music instruments performed simultaneously but lacking a word that describes them. There are traditional experts/artists involved, each with their area of specialty. Music as an activity contains events as actions from individual experiences.

Therefore, as thought music is present in our midst because we conceive a performance in our minds; as an object it has continuance in performances both vocal and instrumental; as an activity or event it occurs during the various functions found in societies.



The framework brings to light the perception of music making among the Samia. The music creators conceive the idea in tandem with the performance criteria in the community. The created music has to relate to existing Samia folk songs in character; thereafter the music is accepted and owned by the community. The performances use music instruments to enhance rhythm and also to enable the players show their prowess on them. This elicits movement and so dancing accompanies singing and playing of instruments. There are a number of cultural functions in the Samia community in which music making is essential. These easily accommodate singing, dancing and playing of instruments to hearten the celebrations.

Paynter (1997) observes that music as a thought has presence because it engages the mind; as an object it has continuance because it exists; as an event it has occurrence because it can occur and also cease. The Samia have music as a traditional activity in which music specialists engage themselves with creating music for local consumption in context. Therefore, music is an event that occurs in the lives of the Samia people.

## **Principles and Practices**

### *Concept of Music among the Samia*

Music in the Samia community is a participatory event in which all members are involved. It is performed “the way it is”. Achieno (personal interview, 2011) observed that the Samia refer to the performance of their music simply as “the way we do it.” Thus *nga khwembanga* - the way we sing, *nga khubanga* - the way we play, *nga khukhinanga* - the way we dance. All these fall into acceptable structures of rendition by the community. They are taken as results of *okhwemba*, *okhuba* and *okhukhina* that are entities of music making in the community. On the other hand, music is socially and aesthetically functional as a whole; the community has a say in musical matters because they know the traditional Samia musicians who sing, play or dance. The society feels satisfaction of a well performed Samia song or dance, through expressive inner feelings and not by face value beauty of the same.

According to Anjelina (personal interview, 2011) the word *olwembo* (song) in Samia covers both the texts and their melodies. Depending on the social event, texts may take more weight than the melody, though both may enhance each other. Samia songs are composed on complex or simple themes; some are humorous, sentimental and philosophical. The mood of the occasions is reflected in the choice of themes.

Blacking (1967) argues that the Venda people are fully conscious of mistakes in their performances; similarly, the Samia share the same sentiment about their music. They may not state precisely what is wrong, but they will sincerely explain that something does not sound right. When they dance to the singing they will tell where the steps do not match with the rhythmic patterns. Where one is not flexible in movement, the Samia will explain how rigid their bodies are, and how one is not musical. Nzewi (2003) observes that in indigenous musical arts, every enculturated member of the society is a capable participant, critic and evaluator of a performance; therefore it is possible for them to identify errors that occur in a performance. In most cases according to Nzewi (ibid) the community members are concerned with the recreation and entertainment aspect of the performances such that errors committed are secondary.

## Music Making and Music Makers in the Samia Community

The organization and structures of music in the Samia community is synonymous to functionalism theory because music contributes to the stability of the community. The music is also structured in various parts for orderliness in performance.

According to Auma (personal interview, 2011), music making among the Samia is organised as a social event, in which a performance is closely related to some specific occasions. These are organised into two groups; the first group has the music which serves ritual functions in which music making is obligatory. For example, *amakhwana* - celebration of the birth of twins and *esidialo* - marriage ceremony.

The second group has music making being incidental. For example *okhube 'ndabwa* or *okhubakirisie 'swa* - singing and playing of tins near the white ants nests which will dupe them that it is raining and therefore come out. This is incidental, that is, the main purpose being to trap white ants- *eswa*.

There is also another aspect of music making, this is music which is not related to any function at all and is performed for its own sake. For example, a member of the society whistling - *okhubo 'mulosi* or humming a tune while walking. Some may play musical instruments as they rest to pass time, for recreation purposes.

Bwire (personal interview, 2011) stated that music makers in the Samia community participate in specific functions in which music has to be performed as a part of the event. For example, some medicine men use *enyengo* - a shaken gourd and song to expel evil spirits from their patients.

Anjelina (personal interview, 2011) added that some music making opportunities are controlled by gender or kinship. For example, only girls related to the bride would go to collect her from her new home for *esidialo* ceremony, (official handing over for marriage) after her abduction. It was common for a boy to send his peers to abduct a girl he intended to marry to his home therefore declaring a marriage unofficially. Only chosen girls would make music on their way to collect the bride- *obweya*.

Music makers do also meet and perform without prior arrangements. For example, spectators of a wrestling match or in recent times spectators of a football match sing and cheer the competitors. In this group, may also fall the funeral dirges - *okhucherera* as mourners move around the homestead singing praises of the deceased.

Auma (personal interview, 2011) observed that another group of music makers in Samia may be the specialists in various musical fields. They are organised, have leaders and their performances are regulated. To this group belong the *endeke* players - ankle bell players, *abakhini* - dancers, *pekee* players - bottle top shakers, and the *arutu* players. Women dancers wear *owaro* (sisal skirts) and hold *engeso* (a kind of sickle that is slightly bigger) in their hands. There are also music makers who, as individuals, make their own music; they do this by humming and whistling tunes as they tend the animals, rest in a shade or work on their *shambas*.

Darkwa (1996: 39) observes that despite recent forces of acculturation having had some impact on the practices of traditional music in Kenya, many performing arts traditions have survived the impact. Most Kenyan communities still continue to be identified with traditional institutions, ceremonies and rituals. The Samia fall in group of communities whose traditional ceremonies and rituals are still performed. Therefore music in the community plays both ritual and social functions.

Each of these music making structures contributes to the musical performance strategies of the whole Samia society as an entity. The community members expect music rendition ventures from the traditional musicians to run the societal functions; and this needs to be fulfilled with ease and to the satisfaction of all. The music plays a role in the lives of the Samia people in general.

### *Dance*

Samia music is integrated with dance, just like most ethnic groups of the world. This is a physical behaviour that supplements the verbal qualities of their music; therefore music and dance are inseparable. Omera (personal interview, 2011) explained that the names of dances are given according to the traditional context. For example, *amakhwana* is a dance performed at the celebration of the birth of twins - *amakhwana*. The dance is performed by married men and women in the village of the concerned couple. *Emisebe* is a dance performed by those possessed by evil spirits - *emisebe*.

A dance may also take on the name of the costumes worn. For example, *owaro* is a dance for those women with sisal skirts. *Joho* is a dance for those with *johos*, (*gown*) specially worn when a son-in-law is to go for *olung'anyo* (*makumbusho*) a commemoration ceremony of the late father-in-law or mother-in-law.

The medium of production may also provide a dance name. For example, *arutu* the dance of *arutu* music, *engabe* the dance of *engabe* music, and *okungulo* the dance of *okungulo* music. This association denotes that dance music is not in isolation but related to a musical activity.

### *Choice of Music for Performance*

According to Mujumbe (personal interview, 2011), the choice of music for performance is dependent on the social event and leaders involved. The type of music is chosen as the occasion dictates. For example, *esidialo* a marriage ceremony needs *enyembo chio 'bweya* - marriage ceremony songs; *omweya* is a bride. The songs are also referred to as *enyembo chie 'sidialo*. Beer party *amalwa ko 'lukhungu* needs *enyembo chia 'malwa* or *enyembo chio 'lukhungu* - beer party songs.

In the Samia community musical types are named after the functions in which they are performed. For example, *enyembo chia 'makhwana* - songs for the celebration of the birth of twins, are performed during the *amakhwana* ceremony. *Enyembo chio 'bweya* or *esidialo* are performed during a marriage ceremony, - *esidialo*.

Mujumbe (ibid) added that the musical types may also be named after the principal instruments used. For example, *okungulo* music for the string fiddle *okungulo*, *engabe* music for a Samia long drum *engabe*. They may be named after a specific name of a dance for which the music is performed. For example, *ekworo* a dance for men using goat skins (*amasero ke 'mbusi*) as costumes; while *ebodi* is a dance for girls using *owaro* as costumes. Lastly, the musical types may be called by the costumes used by the performers. For example *owaro*- sisal skirts worn by female dancers.

In most cases the Samia traditional music incorporates songs, dances and local music instruments performed simultaneously but lacking a word that describes them. There are traditional experts/artists involved, each with their area of specialty. Music as an activity contains events as actions from individual experiences. These sentiments are also supported by Paynter (1997).

## **Methodology**

The study used descriptive design which explored qualitative data. Ogula (1998: 15) observes that qualitative research can assist one in collecting data for analysis from their natural settings by direct observation. A total of ten folk songs were collected and recorded for analysis to get their features. The songs chosen were those that had metaphors and hidden meanings. The songs were also used in identifying and confirming elements that characterize the Samia traditional music. The texts were analysed for meaning and message therein.

### *Identification of material*

The population for this study consisted of traditional Samia musicians from whom the folk songs were collected. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used to get the folk songs. In purposive sampling method, the researchers relied on their emic experience to contact the traditional musicians. In snowball sampling method, the researchers identified one performer who in turn led to the next.

One musician identified the next potential respondent interviewed; they also sang the songs for recording. Blacking (1971:2) advises that a researcher needs to work with someone who has a detailed cultural knowledge of an area so as to obtain accurate data. The researchers being members of the community worked with local musicians to get firsthand information on the Samia music.

### *Analytical Methods*

Extensional analysis was used to categorise the folk songs in context, while intensional analysis was used to identify qualities that make up the Samia music. These included features like melodic and rhythmic patterns of the Samia folk songs. The analyses assisted in identifying common music features in the folk songs and hidden meanings that could characterize traditional music of the Samia.

## **Findings**

### *Song Texts*

Merriam (1964: 207) advances that song texts are a reflection of a culture of which they are part of, they are a device for relieving tension and correcting erring members of a society. In this case texts present a potential for understanding deep lying value and sanctions as well as problems of a given group of people. The Samia share the same sentiments which are reflected in the texts of the songs analyzed below.

The following are some of the song texts performed in the Samia community.

**Key: S = Solo, C= Chorus**

**Simbi ya ola**

**Original text**

**Literal translation**

S.	<i>Ee iola</i>	....	Eh it is roaring
C.	<i>Simbi yaola</i>	....	<i>Simbi</i> is roaring
S.	<i>Ee iola</i>	....	Eh it is roaring
C.	<i>Simbi yaola</i>	....	<i>Simbi</i> is roaring
	<i>yarachari</i>		a white one
	<i>ekhongo ee</i>		a big one eh
	<i>simbi yaola</i>		<i>Simbi</i> is roaring

♩ (95 - 100)

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a tempo of 95-100. It features two parts: Soloist and Chorus. The Soloist part consists of two lines of music. The first line has the lyrics 'Ee ya ola' and the second line has 'Ee ya ola'. The Chorus part consists of two lines of music. The first line has the lyrics 'Si mbi ya ola' and the second line has 'Si'. Below this, there is a section starting with a measure number '6'. It consists of two staves. The top staff has four measures of rests. The bottom staff has a continuous melodic line with the lyrics 'mbi ya ola yarachari ekhongo ee simbi ya ola'.

*Textual Analysis*

This song is performed by girls going to collect the bride after abduction. The bride has to be taken back to her home for the official send off - *esidialo*. The singers refer to the bride as *Simbi*, because she is putting on a head gear made from shells, *Simbi*. That *Simbi yaola* i.e. the bride is great that is why she is roaring. They refer to her as *yarachari* - *Simbi* the white one, as the shells are white. This means that the bride is pure, spotless, without blemish; *ikhongo* - the big one. In all, the girls are praising and exalting the bride so that she may be received with joy and respect back at home.

# Omwoyo kwalira

## Original text

## Literal translation

S.	<i>Omwoyo eee</i>	....	The heart eh
	<i>kwalira</i>		it cried
	<i>omwoyo ee</i>		the heart eh
	<i>kwalira</i>		it cried
	<i>omwoyo ee</i>		the heart
	<i>kwaliro 'mwoyo</i>		it cried the heart
	<i>Njie 'wefwe</i>		Going home
C.	<i>Kwalira</i>		it cried
S.	<i>Khumaido</i>	....	on groundnuts
C.	<i>Kwaliro 'mwoyo</i>		it cried the heart
S.	<i>Njie 'wefwe</i>	....	Going home
C.	<i>Kwalira</i>		it cried
S.	<i>Khununi</i>	....	on simsim
C.	<i>Kwaliro 'mwoyo</i>		it cried the heart

♩ = (95-100)

Solo

O mwo yo ee \_\_\_\_\_ kwa li ra, o mwo yo ee \_\_\_ kwa li ra, o mwo yo ee

Chorus

5

\_\_\_ kwa li ro 'mwo \_\_\_ yo. Njie 'we fwe \_\_\_ khu mai do \_\_\_

Kwa li ra kwa

9

nje 'we fwe khu nu ni.

li ro 'mwo yo \_\_\_\_\_ kwa li ra kwa li ro 'mwo \_\_\_ yo.

### Textual Analysis

This song is sung by the bride and her maids while standing in her mother-in-law’s house. She sung while waiting for the groom to give her presents to welcome her to the new home. The presents would be in form of money, a goat or a calf. She had to be given the gifts so that she may clean herself off the remnants of simsim and groundnuts that were thrown at her.

If the groom was not able to give any present, the bride and her maids would remain standing and singing until dawn. They would then leave for their home in disgust; denoting that the marriage is broken. In this case the groom would be embarrassed by his peers. Therefore he had to struggle to ensure that there was something to give to prove that he was man enough and ready for marriage.

The bride sings that her heart cried- *omwoyo kwalira*, she means that her heart is heavy with grief because the groom is not in sight. She continues that *njie ‘wefwe* - going home, *kwalira* - it cried. She needs to be rescued from the ordeal of standing in her mother-in-law’s house.

### Mbalikha

#### Original text

#### Literal translation

S.	<i>Mbalikha</i>	....	Jealousy
C.	<i>Funaka ‘makumba</i>		breaks bones
S.	<i>Mbalikha</i>	....	Jealousy
C.	<i>Funaka’ makumba</i>		breaks bones
S.	<i>Emoni</i>	....	Eyes
C.	<i>Funaka</i>		break
S.	<i>Makulu</i>	....	Legs
C.	<i>Funaka ‘makumba</i>		breaks bones

♩ = (90-99)

Soloist

Mba li kha\_\_\_ mba li kha\_\_\_ e mo ni\_\_\_

Chorus

Fu na\_\_\_ ka ma ku mba fu na\_\_\_ ka





## Performance

Anjelina (personal interview, 2011) stated that performers of the Samia music may be instrumental players, singers or dancers. The performances are determined by occasions to match the music. The performances are referred to by the name of the musical activity. For example, *abembi* - singers produce the melodies, *abakhini* - dancers produce the physical body movements, while *ababeni* or *abakhubi* - players give the instrumental accompaniment to the songs. Nyakiti 1988:2; Akuno, 2000: 8) observe that during the performances, the audience joins in with ululations, shouts choral responses and dance. This changes and re-structures the form of the music, which results in continuous variations, improvisations and extemporization in the performance. Therefore in most traditional communities including the Samia, a performance is partaken by all those present.

### *Occasions*

According to the Samia specialist musicians, there are many occasions in which traditional music performances take place. These include, *amalwako 'lukhungu* - beer party; an occasion in which a group of people come together to take beer, It may be after tilling land, harvesting, mudding or thatching a house, and at times it may just be a get together. During such gatherings, songs are sung in praise of their leaders, brewers, drinkers and the community at large. They also ridicule careless drinkers and misfits in society. These songs are mostly sung by women as the men join as a supporting chorus.

*Esidialo* is a general word for marriage ceremony. The ceremony is twofold; when the bridal girls go to the groom's home after the bride had been abducted also known as *obweya*. The girls then return with the bride back home for an official send off known as *esidialo*. In this ceremony songs in praise of the bride, groom and their parents are sung. There are also songs to ridicule them and their homes; while in some instances there are educative songs about the new life that the couple has to lead.

*Amalengo* are wrestling competitions. These are held normally between villages, and or administrative areas; for example between Samia and the Banyala. The singing comprises of songs bringing in the wrestlers to the venue; those praising the winners and consoling the losers. They also ridicule the weak wrestlers at the same time. The singing is done by women supported by the male fans. At times the contestants start their own songs which are taken up by the singers and fans.

*Enyembo chie 'mirimo* are working songs. These are songs performed while tilling the land, harvesting, collecting firewood, grinding, collecting water or during communal work. They are performed to boost the morale for work and to make it easier. *Enyembo chia 'bana* are children's songs. These are created from storytelling and performed when children are playing. The songs also include lullabies which are sung to lull children.

*Okhucherera* is singing dirges. These are normally performed at funerals or to ridicule certain subjects and their behaviours. The songs are sung in praise of the dead, and scorn death, murder, diseases or suicide. They are also performed to ridicule girls that elope or married women who involve themselves in extra - marital affairs. The songs therefore castigate such unacceptable behaviours.

*Ebodi* is a ceremony in which only girls are allowed to perform. They use strong boys as leaders for protection. They sing songs about their age-mates in the community. The songs are either songs of praise or those that ridicule certain behaviours that are not acceptable. *Ebodi* is also used for competitive purposes between villages.

*Ekworo* is a ceremony in which only boys perform although girls are allowed to attend. The songs sung in the ceremony in praise of good dancers, well behaved boys; they ridicule some girls while praising others. It is held as a way of reducing female dominance in musical performance. It is also performed for competitive purposes between villages and for socialisation.

*Enyembo chie 'ye* or *okhulasana* are war songs. These are songs performed by warriors or people welcoming them after a successful battle. The songs are also in praise of warriors to boost their morale. These type of songs are no longer performed in their actual context as the Samia live peacefully with their neighbours. The songs have been reworked to fit other social contexts.

*Amakhwana* are twins, and the ceremony performed at the birth of twins is also known as *amakhwana*. The delivery of twins in a family is taken as a bad omen in the Samia community. In the ceremony, obscene songs and dances are performed to help cleanse the family; that a repeat of the same may not be tolerated. The songs are performed by members of the village who visit the homestead concerned. Only married couples are permitted to perform.

There are also private performers in homes. The villagers and neighbours may gather to be entertained, they can participate by dancing - *okhuyiora*. They may give gifts to the musicians, or promise to give presents in form of money and any other items available. The musicians then sing praises of their heroes and their generosity. Those who never keep to their promises are ridiculed. Wealthy people and community elders invite such musicians to perform in their homes.

African traditional music is not abstracted from its cultural context, (Merriam, 1964:265; Nketia, 1992:21). The Samia being part of this large African community is not an exception; and therefore its music cannot be a thing in itself without an association with the people and their activities.

#### *Invitation and preparation for performance*

*Omubeni* is invited by a patron who requires the use of *esiumo* - a performance at an occasion. This may be after a funeral *olung'anyo (makumbusho)* or *esidialo*. If the player is free, then part payment is made for the invitation and transport. The player has then to prepare the songs and ensure that the musical instruments to be used are in good order. Some even use charms for protection and success on the material day. The performing troupe has to arrive normally in the evening and be shown the performance area by a guide.

#### *The performance area (esibanja)*

This is an enclosure in which the performance takes place. In the *esibanja*, the musician and his troupe have a section where they sit to perform; while the audience sits on both sides leaving the central area for dancing. When all is ready, players tune their musical instruments and play introductory numbers depending on the occasion. The patron will then announce the time for the performance to start, and so are the breaks for refreshments.

During the performance, there is a master of ceremony - *omwemeresi*, a member of the village who is respected, known to be physically strong, to use his physique when need arises. He organises the performance to suit the dancers, who take part on village or gender basis. In all, he keeps order in the whole performance. There are also instrumental interludes, for example, between *arutu* and *okungulo* or *engabe* and *okungulo*, depending on what is on offer.

#### *Dance teams*

*Omwemeresi* organises dancing to take place in the best way possible. He does this according to villages; thus the host village and neighbouring villages, then lastly the guests. There may be a request for boys or girls alone to dance, short couples, tall couples, and so on. The rules have to be followed strictly, if not, one may be made to sit throughout without dancing as a punishment. At times this may lead to fights among the audience. Those who want to praise themselves or praise the musicians - *okhulaya/okhwelaya*, are allowed to do so by *omwemeresi*; they have to pay a token amount to be allowed to do so.

#### *Speeches between performances*

*Okhulaya/okhwelaya* involves reciting praise names and descriptive titles. One can extend to friends and relatives referring to their status and achievements. Some may describe individual appearances and physical states or qualities of individuals. They may also infer names of wild animals like *emboko* - buffalo, *engwe* - leopard, *edalangi* - lion, and so on. While still others may introduce their own type of names different from the above, for example, *olupanga* - a *panga* (a kind of machete) or *embako* - a hoe.

*Okhulaya/okhwelaya* was used as a reflection of experiences to act as a lesson to members of the community at large. At the end of each recital there is *okhufuya*, to give some gift to *omubeni* - player, who may at the end of the session play a number for all those that recited. In certain instances, one may offer a gift to stop the dance completely just to show off; or to irritate other participants who may in return offer a greater gift to the musician to have music play on.

#### **Specialist musicians and composers**

According to Nyakiti (2000: 51) in most Kenyan communities there are several socio-cultural activities in which songs composed by specialist musicians are performed. Mujumbe (personal interview, 2011) observed that the process of becoming a specialist musician *omwembi* - singer, *omubeni* - an instrumental player or *omukhini* - a dancer, begins with exposure. A child who intends to be a musician has first to observe the specialist in action; then learn to perform on the medium desired, either by singing, playing or dancing. The playing on the musical instrument may be with or without permission of the owner of the instrument.

There are also inheritance tendencies in the learners which are cultivated by the specialist musicians to help the young musicians master certain skills. But in most cases learning to play is through apprenticeship. As explained by Akhenda (personal interview, 2011), "I used to sit next to Mujumbe to observe how he manipulated his fingers on the *okungulo* strings. Thereafter, I would also imitate the finger movements and in no time I was able to play short melodies."

Anjelina (personal interview, 2011) stated that composers of songs too have to stay with specialist soloists - *enyembi* to learn the art of being solo singers. They sing in pairs or threes to learn the melodic patterns, the fall and rise of the melodies to match with the speech patterns. Thereafter they are left to perform the specialists' songs and those of other composers. Later they may start composing their own and introduce them to the dancers to perform.

A composer - *omufumbuli* has also to create melodies for instruments like *okungulo* - a fiddle, *arutu* and *engabe* drums and *erere* - a flute. The famous Samia soloist Anjelina Ochenjo sings alongside Mario who is also an accomplished *ekhombi* - smaller type of *olwika* - horn. The songs are accompanied with *pekee* - bottle top shakers and *endeke* - leg jingles.

Traditional dancing too has to be mastered for effective performance. Good dancers are identified during *ebodi* ceremony and elevated to the main dance troupe. Traditional dance steps depend on the songs and their texts. There is no issue of creating new steps as they will have to be observed and performed alongside the old traditional ones. When new compositions are performed, traditional dance movements have to be synchronized with the singing.

There are vocal compositions - *echiafumbulwa* that accompany dance at various occasions. Some of these songs are accompanied by *arutu* or *engabe*. There are also instrumental compositions of *okungulo* tunes that are sung. Most of these compositions evolve around social events, the society, leaders and many other issues affecting the Samia community.

### **New trends in the Samia traditional music performance**

Anjelina (personal interview, 2011) observed that due to changing times, Samia music has also changed. For instance, occasions when traditional music was performed have reduced. This is because most occasions have been taken over by the church in which hymns and other gospel songs are performed. It is common to see boys who are due for the rite of passage being taken to camps run by the church for preparation and not traditionally at the village. This has therefore intruded into the usual traditional music making avenues in the Samia community. In marriage the couple go to church for counseling instead of the traditional settings where talks are punctuated with songs and dance.

According to Achieno (personal interview, 2011), the adaptation and arrangement of Samia folk music and harmonization of the melodies has Westernized the performance of the traditional Samia music. The melodies now use some polyphony which is not consistent with the traditional Samia music performance of the original tunes. Achieno (ibid) added that Western musical instruments that are used for accompaniment for example keyboard, electric guitars, piano and so on, have created new textures and feelings. For example, a popular art group Kayamba Africa have arranged and performed Samia folk tunes with the said instruments. Their music is performed during weddings and other gatherings requiring entertainment, it is danced to in a mixture of popular and traditional styles.

Musungu (2010) observes that there are instances in which some transcriptions of Samia traditional tunes are inaccurate. This is due to the fact that art musicians concerned are not conversant with music features that are inherent in the Samia folk songs that they use. This scenario has rendered the resultant arrangements to be more Western oriented in treatment. Arrangers have also mixed tunes from other neighboring Luhya communities such as Maragoli, Tiriki, Isukha and Bukusu; thus interfering with the Samia idiom. It is important that the arranged pieces reflect characteristic features of Samia music which will ensure that these new songs are communicative to the community.

Anjelina (ibid) contented further that in traditional Samia music performance, a soloist has the freedom to compose text in the course of singing. This has been controlled by the use of pre recorded music during a performance, which means that the soloist has no free will and or is rendered obsolete. The Kenya Music Festival performers do not compose texts spontaneously while on stage. Therefore creativity by the soli is curtailed.

Mumbua (2014) observes that some traditional musicians presently perform in hotels and other entertainment spots and get remunerated in return. These performances are done outside the main stream societal contexts and may change the general meaning of the songs. It is common to find some Kenyan hotels in Nairobi and Mombasa owning these performance troupes. Some of the Samia musicians are amongst such performers and their music is no longer functional as expected.

## Conclusion

As in other Kenyan communities, music making among the Samia follows the same trend; that music is functional and performed in all community activities. This enables music makers to earn a decent living through art. The language of the song texts is that which promotes education at all levels of life and also entertains in the function concerned. The song texts use metaphors and other aspects of language to communicate. Akuno (2005) advances that traditional music making activities enhance collective responsibility, where everyone takes responsibility for actions and decisions affecting the community. This results in a harmonious existence within the community and therefore stability of the whole society.

Music making in the Samia community follows a criteria that is practiced by music makers and specialist musicians. It assists to bring order in the society in so far as music making is concerned. This enables music making to be undertaken in context or whenever music is required for a function. The text used contains metaphors that only those from the community can explain their meanings. There is music for every traditional function and it is performed to ensure that these ceremonial activities run appropriately.

The contemporary society has not been left behind in the community. Samia folk songs are being performed by art musicians and danced to in popular style; while some of the songs have been successfully arranged in parts for festival use. On the other hand inter cultural marriages; urban movements and technology have also played a big part in influencing changes in the performance of Samia music. This has resulted in new approaches to performance as is seen in the community today. Music instruments are also taking new shape as wires instead of tendons are being used on *okungulo* - string fiddle.

Masasabi (2014) discusses *litungu* music and cites Merriam (1964) that .....’No culture escapes the dynamics of change over time. But culture is stable, that is no cultures change whole sale and overnight, the threads of continuity run through every culture; and thus change must always be considered against a background of stability.’ Therefore Samia music is expected to undergo the process of change gradually over time; in so doing the process of selection and elimination will take place. Samia music should not be overhauled in the name of change but, that only those aspects that require change should be considered; the rest should remain in local idiom for continuity.

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## Interviewees

1. Anjelina Ochenjo – Singer and dancer, personal interview December 2011
2. Auma Nbiang'u – Singer and dancer, personal interview December 2011
3. Gombe Mujumbe – Player of *arutu/okungulo*, personal interview December,2011
4. Akhenda Mugola – Player of *okungulo*, personal interview December 2011
5. Cyril Bwire – Former group leader, personal interview December 2011
6. Mario Odipo – player of *ekhombi*, personal interview December 2011
7. Ouma Kadimo – player of *engabe*, personal interview December 2011
8. Albert Achieno – Group leader, personal interview December 2011
9. Cornel Okuku Omera – Group leader, personal interview December 2011