

**EXAMINING THE USE OF STYLE TO FOREGROUND THEMATIC
CONCERNS IN RONALD ONTIRI ONCHURU'S POPULAR MUSIC**

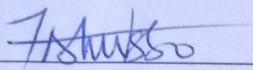
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C51-2790-2019**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND
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THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE OF MACHAKOS
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Declaration

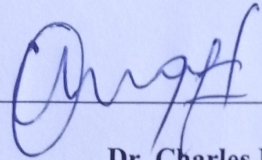
This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for award of a degree in any other University.

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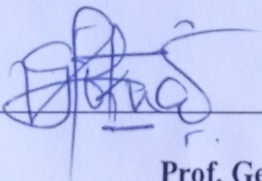
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Dedication

For you, my wife and children, this is a fulfillment of your love for Bikundo

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I thank God, my heavenly father for giving me the opportunity to exploit my potential and to realize my academic dream.

I am heavily indebted to my supervisors Prof. Geoffrey Maroko and Dr. Charles Kebaya whose sincere and critical input has brought me this far. Thanks and may God bless you.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how Ronald Ontiri Onchuru, popularly known as Bikundo, deploys style to foreground particular thematic concerns in his popular music. Bikundo is one of the popular musicians among the Abagusii of western Kenya. The study was premised on the understanding that style is one of the tools available to creative artistes in articulating issues affecting their society. Consequently, it sought to analyse various features of style in Bikundo's popular music and how they are used to bring out diverse thematic concerns in the music. The analysis was guided by the tenets of semiotics and sociological theories and was delimited to the analysis of Bikundo's purposively sampled popular songs. Semiotics theory formed the bedrock of the study and helped in examining how aspects of style in Bikundo's music articulate particular meanings in the songs. Sociological theory helped to show how Bikundo relied on context in foregrounding particular thematic concerns in his songs and how the songs applied to society. The study revealed that Bikundo uses various styles such as metaphor, symbolism, personification and idiomatic expressions to foreground themes such as HIV/AIDS, hardwork, poverty, and love. Through his popular music, Bikundo advocates for society which has a high regard for its morality, social cohesion and socio-economic empowerment.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Context: the social situation within which a work of art is created and consummated, and which helps in the understanding of the work of art.

Popular Art: any genre of art that has a wide appeal amongst the masses in society.

Popular Song: a composition in verse or language exhibiting conscious attention to patterns, mostly performed by singing and has a wide appeal amongst the masses in society.

Lore: a collection of a people's total culture: stories, songs, history, beliefs, and wise sayings and proverbs.

Signification: refers to ways of encoding messages laden with particular meanings. It involves, in most cases, embedding the message in aslected form as an element of indirection.

Gusii: the region originally occupied by the Abagusii people.

Gusiiland: the region occupied by the Abagusii and its boundaries; the nation of Abagusii.

Kisii: refers to both the entire region occupied by the Abagusii as well as well the smaller central region of administration that is Kisii County. Kisii can also refer to Ekegusii.

Ekegusii: the native language spoken by the native occupants of Gusiiland. It is also known as Kisii.

Abagusii: these are the native speakers of Ekegusii.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the context from which the study emanates. It gives the background to the study, statement of the problem, study objectives and the questions that this study seeks to answer. The chapter ends by highlighting the justification and significance of the study as well as the scope and delimitations of the study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Karin Barber in *Readings in African Popular Culture* observes that African popular art appeals to a wide varied of audiences to which they speak to because they are authentic, independently generated forms of entertainment produced and consumed locally. Further, Barber observes that these art forms “are telling us about society” (34) and require that we do not just appreciate “their aesthetic qualities in some vague way, but engaging with them in a specific and detailed attempt to ‘read’ them according to their own conventions” (34). Indeed, this study ‘reads’ Ronald Ontiri Onchuru’s, popularly known as Bikundo, popular music as a response to Barber’s postulations and to unravel how the popular artiste engages features of style to explore various issues affecting the Abagusii society.

While examining how popular art frames public discourses, Charles Kebaya observes that popular artforms such as cartoons, jokes, comics and music “engages in particular

expressive practices” (112) in society today. As Kebaya aptly puts it, these popular art forms express “a people’s fears, misgivings, pains, joys and convictions are depicted with authentic accuracy” (112). Often times, these expressions are audacious, forthright, and are in direction opposition to power and systems of governance as reflected in public discourses in society. Further, Kebaya opines that popular art are susceptible to different interpretations by different people because they “endowed with greater dynamism and vitality, and are at the centre of representing the cultural outputs of a people” (113). Guided by these observations, and the realization that there is an enormous literary output from popular music among the Abagusii today, the study ‘reads’ the diverse ways in which Bikundo deploys features of style to represent various concerns in the Abagusii society.

The study was further anchored on the fact that popular music is a work of art, and like any work of art, it reflects the values of the society from which it stems. Jane Nandwa in “The Oral Artist and his Material” observes that artists draw their material from the immediate environment and societal experiences. This indicates that various issues that occur in the society at a particular time provide the necessary impetus for most of creative works of art. Artists, who are members of the society, observe various social realities, creatively fashion these social realities through language then render them to the society through their works. As Nandwa further observes, the artists choose their material to suit their audience and strives to communicate the message in the most effective and desirable way to the immediate audience. This involves a deliberate use of language to express various issues that affect society. The deliberate but creative use of language

becomes the style the artist uses to not only depict the social issues but also foregrounding these social issues. This formed the basis of this study as it sought to explore thematic and stylistic features in Bikundo's popular music.

Abagusii popular musicians such as John Arisi O' Sababu, Christopher Monyoncho, Abana Sungusia, Nyangau Engetonto and Bikundo among others through their music comment, as aesthetically as possible, on various issues of concern, values and ideologies within the social and cultural purview of the community at various stages in the community's history. These artists quite often use figurative language such as symbols to capture and express their views regarding various issues affecting society. By focusing on themes and styles deployed in Bikundo's popular music, this study unearths ways in which the popular musician understands and interprets both the social and cultural experiences of the Abagusii as well as the various value codes within which their literary representations is interpreted and understood.

Popular music, as a work of art, has the primary purpose of providing entertainment in the society. Besides entertainment, music addresses various issues affecting society. Popular musicians employ language creatively to address various challenges in the society. Popular music provides a platform where issues affecting society are presented, debated and possible solutions to issues affecting society articulated. Society grapples with issues such as low education, political instability, and social ills such as corruption, moral decadence and repugnant cultural practices. These issues are aptly captured and articulated in popular music. Consequently, this study was concerned with how Bikundo,

one of the popular musicians among the Abagusii, deploys various features of style to address various issues affecting his society. The primary focus was how various stylistic features in the selected songs articulate and offer possible solutions to concerns in the Abagusii society. By focusing on the selected popular songs, the study examined various themes that the popular artist portrays and how he uses language creatively to bring out these themes.

In traditional African societies, elders taught children about culture and the truth of life since they were considered custodians of the wisdom and lore of the community. However, the traditional way of imparting knowledge to the younger generation has been overtaken by the changing times. Contemporary society has invented new ways of addressing various issues in the society. One of such ways is the use of popular music. This study sought to elucidate on how popular musicians such as Bikundo have taken up the responsibility of not only educating the young generation on various aspects of their community's culture but also addressing various issues that affect society through their music. In carrying out their roles as teachers, popular musicians like Bikundo discern various issues of concern that affect society and engage their imagination and creativity to express these realities through their music. This involves a creative manipulation of language in such a way that the intended audience does not feel offended or betrayed through the music. Based on this background, this study sought to examine feature of style in Bikundo's popular music and how it addresses various socio-cultural issues affecting the Abagusii society. It also sought to interrogate possible solutions that the musician provides to various issues that affects the Abagusii society.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Music pervades the Abagusii society since time immemorial. Music, particularly popular music, as a tool helps in foregrounding the community's social, cultural and historical issues. However, for any song to fulfill its intended function, it involves style, which is widely viewed as a tool with which popular artists express themselves in their works of art. This formed the focus of this study as it sought to examine features of style in Bikundo's popular music. The study interrogated the uniqueness with which Bikundo deploys features of style to articulate various issues in the Abagusii society, how these features of style to foreground certain thematic concerns and articulate vision for society through popular music.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study sought to address the following objectives; to:

- i. Analyse features of style deployed in Bikundo's popular music.
- ii. Examine how Bikundo deploys certain features of style to foreground particular thematic concerns in his popular music.
- iii. Interrogate the artistic social vision that Bikundo articulates for the Abagusii society through his music.

1.5 Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

- i. What features of style does Bikundo deploy in his popular music?
- ii. In what ways does Bikundo deploy features of style to foreground particular thematic concerns in his popular music?
- iii. Which artistic social vision that Bikundo articulates for the Abagusii society through his music?

1.6 Assumptions of the study

The study is founded on the following assumptions; that:

- i. Bikundo deploys certain features of style in his popular music.
- ii. Various features of style are used to foreground diverse thematic concerns in Bikundo's popular music.
- iii. Bikundo articulates a particular artistic social vision for the Abagusii society through his music

1.7 Justification and Significance of the Study

There is a dearth of knowledge regarding critical engagement with popular artforms among the Abagusii. Even so, the relationship between artistic language and a dynamic social milieu among the Abagusii remains largely unexplored. This study delved into this lacuna in knowledge by focusing on Bikundo's popular music. The study was further

justified by the fact that by examining how Bikundo deploys certain features of style to foreground particular thematic concerns, it ultimately presented a literary appreciation and exploration of popular music among the Abagusii. Hence, an exploration of his style fostered the understanding of Bikundo's vision for the Abagusii society as articulated in his music.

Artists, through their works of art, tend to seek resolutions to the problems affecting society. For instance, oral artists in traditional societies have contributed immensely in the socio-cultural issues in society. They did this by drawing analogies, narrating stories or using proverbs with embedded moral lessons that were tailored towards addressing the issues at hand. However, contemporary society has had to formulate ways of addressing issues afflicting them. Music is one such avenue through which the modern society tends to air issues plaguing it. Indeed, the present study examines how Bikundo articulates societal issues in his music.

A study on Bikundo's popular music is influenced by various factors. First, popular songs have a popular appeal. Hence, the mass audience among the Abagusii should be helped to understand the message embedded in the popular songs, thus the need to undertake this study. Secondly, popular musicians such as Bikundo employ various features of style to convey their intended messages. There is, therefore, a need to analyse the musicians' use of features of style to objectively reveal the intended message. This study, therefore, illustrates that Bikundo's popular music is worth studying because it portrays

perceptions, attitudes, and impressions of the Abagusii people towards various issues in their immediate environment.

1.8 Scope and Delimitation

There are various aspects in Bikundo's music oeuvre that an interested scholar could grapple with. This study, however, delimited itself to how he deploys features of style to foreground particular thematic concerns in the Abagusii society. Further, the study focused on Bikundo's popular songs in the album entitled *Ekayaba*. This is an afro-fusion album which earned him a real break through in the music industry in 2008 though he came into the limelight in 2006 when he featured in the Kenyan Music Event. The album comprises a variety of songs dealing with various issues in society. The period, 2008 to date, further shows Bikundo's progression in his music career as gained wider recognition and increase of his fan base among the Abagusii. The period also records a progression in his creativity and imagination in his music having received formal training at the French Cultural Centre, Nairobi. Hence, the study sampled and analyzed eighteen (18) songs within this period in line with the three (3) objectives, and explored various ways in which Bikundo engages features of style to unravel issues in the Abagusii society.

1.9. Review of Related Literature

1.9.1 Introduction

This section takes cognizance of Polit and Beck (2004) observations that research studies are usually undertaken within the context of an existing knowledge base and that a researcher undertakes a review of related literature to familiarize and gain more insights with this knowledge base. While pointing out particular gaps that this study addressed, the section presents a review of related literature on popular music in Kenya, Abagusii popular music and available critical studies on Bikundo's popular music.

1.9.2 Ronald Ontiri Onchuru's aka Bikundo's Brief Biography

Bikundo was born in 1976 in Nyaribari Chache constituency, Kisii County. His parents passed on before he was 10 years old and he only managed to complete primary education. He was not able to continue with secondary education due lack of school fees. While in primary school, Bikundo participated in music competitions to the national level. This gave him an opportunity to perform for the then President Daniel Toroitich arap Moi at State House during the national music Galla festivals.

Bikundo started his career in music together with the late Dismas Nyangau Onsoti in the 1990s with the famous song *One Day Morning*. The duo sang traditional folk songs while strumming Obokano and traditional drums in community theatre spaces. Bikundo and his former colleague the late Dismas Nyang'au are widely known for rubbing some MPs from the region in a wrong way with their song *Abachumbe Ng'ai Mwachiete* (MPs

where did you go after getting elected), as they hit out at MPs for failing to fulfil their election promises.

After attending intensive music training at the French Cultural Centre in Nairobi, Bikundi has now moved from traditional folksongs to Afro fusion. Due to his style of composition and rendition of his popular songs, Bikundo participated as one of the finalists in the 2006 Spotlight on Kenyan Music project. His captivating stage presence, witty lyrics and interactive delivery endeared him to a broad base of Abagusii fans.

1.9.3 Brief Overview of Critical Studies on Kenyan Popular Music

From rural villages to urban hotspots, popular Kenyan music continues to change with the changing times. Kenya's popular music scene has experienced a steady revolution from the early days of colonialism to the present day. However, scholarly studies on popular music in Kenya take ethnic stance with majority of the studies concentrated on the Agikuyu ethnic community. While examining the music of Joseph Kamaru, Hervé Maupeu in "L'intellectuel populaire et l'imaginaire politique: Le cas de Joseph Kamaru" in *Songs and Politics in Eastern Africa* observes that Kamaru blends well with the audience due to the relevance and aptness of his lyrics in the Kenyan socio-political terrain and his sensitivity to language. Maupeu examines how through music, Kamaru voiced various political concerns among the Agĩkũyũ in post-independence Kenya. The same political inclination is observed by Maina wa Mutonya in "Joseph Kamaru: Contending Narrations of Kenya's Politics through Music" in *Cultural production and Social Change in Kenya* where he focuses on the "ambiguity of the musician throughout

the changing faces of politics in Kenya” (27). Maina examines Kamaru’s music against the backdrop of the political terrain in Kenya since independence from Kenyatta’s days to the Moi regime.

Maupeu and Maina argue that Kamaru pays particular attention to his language and has to operate through double edged meanings and ambiguities to capture the ambivalences of society and to keep the fangs of the state away. They further observe that his music depicts an appropriation of the rich repertoire of Gikuyu customs and traditions that are avenues through which he aptly captures the ambivalences, and contradictions of postcolonial Kenya. Although the two critics point out that Kamaru’s music depicts his sensitivity to language, they pay much attention to the political tomfoolery embedded in his songs. They both observe that his ‘music brings to the fore issues of gender relations, identity, power, and socio-economic tensions in East Africa. Taking a cue from the two critical analyses on Kamaru, this study investigated how Bikundo manipulates his language to articulate the various issues that affect society adequately.

Kuria Githiora in “Mugiithi Music as a Social Discourse in Urban Kenya: Use of Religious Musical Genre in Recreating Agikuyu Cultural Institutions” the music genre should continue to be studied as both an important music form, and a newly emerged sociocultural discourse in urban Kenya. He argues that this should be done through its creative and articulate use of Gĩkũyũ, Swahili, and English languages and to some extent ‘Sheng’, an urban Swahili dialect, along with a “call” and “response” singing pattern often accompanied by the adept incorporation of mainstream religious musical practices

and discourses in recreating Gĩkũyũ cultural institutions. *Mũgithi* can be also be considered an embodiment of a counter-language found in such genres as rap, toast, signifying, narrativizing comedy, drama and song, which are all bound up in one music genre. It's in this light that the current study sought to investigate how Bikundo's popular music engages particular linguistic patterns to highlight certain issues in the Abagusii community.

Mike Kuria in "Mũthũngũci: Dancing through a Cultural Landmine among the Kikuyu" points out that "Gĩkũyũ music is classified into genres and which are age specific and sometimes gender specific" (1). Kuria examines Muthunguci and its role in the identity construction of a Kikuyu as a sexual self operating in a society that was both restrictive and liberal in handling matters of sexuality. In his analysis, he focuses on how form and content are interlinked and pays special attention to the language of Muthunguci and the ways in which the artist borrows from the environment to come up with metaphors that ensured only those well versed in the language and mores of the people could understand and participate in the creation and performance of the genre. In the process the Kikuyu not only chronicled their history and culture but also transmitted the same through well known participatory teaching and learning methodologies such as question and answer; testing, monitoring and evaluation; reward and motivation amongst others. Kuria's insights will greatly inform the analysis of how Bikundo employs various features of style in his music not only to foreground issues affecting his community but also to chronicle its history.

Joyce Nyairo and James Ogude in “Popular Music, Popular Politics: *Unbwogable* and the Idioms of Freedom in Kenyan Popular Music” argue that:

Part of the power of popular music is to be found in the way it congeals into a set of conventions, thereby embodying a tradition. Popular music achieves this in two ways. First, through the themes and concerns of the songs, we hear of the issues and events that constitute a people’s experiences. In other words, popular music documents a people’s history. Secondly, popular music gets woven into the soundtrack of events, moments and experiences; it is mnemonic and therefore certain songs carry the capacity to make one recall a particular place or specific events. The history of a community can, therefore, be told from or through that community’s collection of popular songs (1-2).

The above assertions by Nyairo and Ogude points to the idea that style can be used creatively through song to tell a community’s history, issues affecting society and provide imagined solutions to challenges facing society. In the light of this observation, this study examined how Bikundo, through song, uses features of style to address challenges facing the Abagusii community.

Jenifer Muchiri, in “What Culture and Art are Kenyans celebrating at 50” observes that “music, in various African languages, has proven to be a versatile form of communication; a powerful call to unity and, sometimes, a vehicle for propaganda (*The Standard on Sunday Magazine*, August 4, 2013, 10). With views such as Muchiri’s, this study considers Abagusii popular music as one of the latest additions to the community’s folklore. In the community, the genre has manifestly been enriched by modern technology to meet the taste of an increasingly modernised and diverse audience while at the same time continuing to exploit the rich literary heritage of the community. An

examination of how popular musicians such as Bikundo employs features of language to foreground a number of issues through their music therefore is of value to the rich cultural heritage of the community.

Peter Simatei in “Kalenjin Popular Music and the Contestation of the National Space in Kenya” examines how Kalenjin popular music has been pivotal in consolidating Kalenjin identities. He argues that Kalenjin popular music designates “that particular form of popular music—whether secular dance music or gospel music—that consciously projects, redefines and revalorizes the discourses of “Kalenjinness” (2). He, thus, points out that the music has been used as a tool to promote the ethnic agenda among members of the Kalenjin community. Simatei’s postulations are corroborated by Kiprotich Sang in “Reading Kalenjin Popular Music as a Gem of Ethnic Violence” who points out that popular musician in the Kalenjin community urge their members to jealously guard their ethnic identity even if this involves chasing other ethnic communities from their land. Without desparaging the two scholars, the current study examined how Bikundi employs various features of style to foreground particular thematic concerns such social cohesion in Abagusii society.

1.9.4 Brief Overview of Studies on Abagusii Popular Music

Studies on Abagusii popular music are sparse. The pioneering studies have mainly been undertaken, not within the literary domain, but historical, sociolinguistics and musical canons. Evans Nyamwaka in *Creative Arts and Cultural Dynamism: A Study*

of Music and Dance among the Abagusii of Kenya 1904-2002 examines thematic concerns and dance patterns in both the traditional and the contemporary musical compositions. He observes that the content and dance patterns in traditional and modern musical compositions, respectively, reflect the social realities of their time. Nyamwaka's study, though not linguistic in nature, is important to us because of the way it dwells on the dynamic nature of both the context and the oral compositions and performances of the Abagusii. Equally, Nyamwaka's interest in dance patterns is akin to our interest in the changing performance techniques in the oral art forms among the Abagusii. Further, with his focal point being the historical development of music content, dance, and accompaniment in both traditional and contemporary music among Abagusii, Nyamwaka's study provides the present study with a crucial comparative model for mounting a literary examination of oral art forms among Abagusii. It is nevertheless true that the two studies above, being historical in their conception and outlook, are rightly least concerned with the literariness of the genres, besides not being sufficiently intensive in analysing forms to yield tangible models for studying literary trends in the oral literature of Abagusii. The present study, being purely literary, is well suited to provide tangible models for the study of literary techniques in Abagusii popular music.

In analyzing the place of music and dance in the reconstruction of African Cultural History, Nyamwaka Evans Omosa, Paul C. Ondima, Florence Kemoni, and Eric Maangi concluded that music and dance were integral in the social life of the Abagusii people. They also concluded that the language of music and dance among

the Abagusii were enriched by new conceptions brought about by new policies and practices. This study benefitted from these insights in examining the progression of Bikundo's music to determine if his music has also been enriched by the new happenings within the social context in the Abagusii.

Examining the selected popular music of Tabby Okeng'o and Abana Sungusia from critical discourse analysis perspective, Davins Nyanuga Ombongi focused on how language has been used to portray men and women among the Abagusii. Ombongi revealed that linguistic devices such as parallelism, epiphora and synaesthesia among other are used in showing the similarities and differences between men and women in society. While Ombongi's study analysed the popular musicians from a linguistic perspective, the current study sought to present a literary appreciation of Bikundo's popular music.

While analyzing context and symbolism in African Orature, Makarios Wakoko and Felix Orina examine Henry "Man Pepe" Sagero's song *Omoika bw'omosiki* (The Spirit of Music). Through their analysis, Wakoko and Orina concluded that the musician, on the one hand, appropriates symbols conceived in the traditional context into contemporary situations to convey messages with a contemporary bearing, as well as the old values that may have a contemporary relevance. On the other hand, there are symbols that have been conceived within the contemporary reality and they are therefore totally new and uniquely suited to the modern realities. While examining Bikundo's popular music, the current study was illuminated by Wakoko

and Orina's findings particularly on how musicians deploy symbols to foreground various issues in society through their music.

1.9.5 Critical Studies on Ontiri Bikundo's Popular Music

Available studies on Ontiri Bikundo popular music are anchored on a linguistic perspective. Victor Ntabo, Naom Nyarigoti and Moses Gathigia compare selected popular songs of Christopher Mosiomi and Ontiri Bikundo in interpreting human being metaphors in Ekegusii popular songs using cognitive metaphor approach. The scholars engage the idea of conceptual mapping to understand how the two artists conceptualize human beings in their popular songs. While the said scholars engage a linguistic stance, the current study embarked on a literary appreciation of Bikundo's use of language to portray various issues in the Abagusii society. Worthy noting is the fact that metaphors have been examined in this study from a literary perspective.

Victor Ondara Ntabo in "A Categorization Strategy for Objects Metaphors in Ekegusii Pop Songs" uses the principle of Great Chain of Being metaphor (GCBM) to categorize various objective metaphors and Cognitive Linguistics (CL) as a framework to reveal the meanings of the categorized objects metaphors in Ekegusii pop songs. In his analysis, Ondara focuses on evaluating object metaphors in Bikundo's Obwanchani (Love) and concludes that Bikundo metaphors are embodied and situated in a specific environment, making it possible for the meaning of some of the metaphors used to elude the audience. However, Ondari's study does not examine how the metaphors identified bring out

certain thematic concerns in Bikundi's music. Whereas Ondari examines Bikundi's music from the Great Chain of Being metaphor point of view, the current study presents a literary appreciation of Bikundo's popular music. To do this, it investigated how Bikundi employs various features of style to foreground particular thematic concerns in society through his Music.

1.10 Theoretical framework

Semiotics and Sociological theories guided this study. *The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* defines semiotics as a "study of patterned human communication behaviour including auditory and facial expression, body talk, touch, signs and symbolics. Daniel Chandler, in *Semiotics for Beginners*, traces the term 'Semiosis', to Charles Sanders Peirce, who used it to designate the process by which a culture produces signs and/or attributes meaning to signs "a study of signs generally; their use in language and reasoning, and their relationship to the world, to the agents who use them, and to each other" (11). Simply put, therefore, semiotics deals with the production and processing of meaning within a specific social context. Chandler further captures the significance of semiotics:

Semiotics is important because it can help us not to take 'reality' for granted as something having a purely objective existence which is independent of human interpretation. It teaches us that reality is a system of signs.... It can help us to realize that information or meaning is not 'contained' in the world or in books, computers or audio-visual media. Meaning is not 'transmitted' to us - we actively create it according to a complex interplay of codes or conventions of which we are normally unaware (36).

The above argument and definitions are particularly relevant in verbal arts where meaning is transmitted through action and linguistic portrayals that resonate with the world the artist is depicting. Indeed, the audience's response is, to a larger extent, dependent on their ability to decipher and visualise the world the artist has painted for them.

Semiotics is intricately related to linguist Ferdinand de-Saussure's work in linguistics where he calls it 'a general science of signs' arguing that language is composed of signs that are arbitrary to conventionally assigned meaning that underlies actual speech acts. According to de-Saussure, (quoted in Jonathan Culler *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*) "linguistics, though designed to study the system of rules underlying speech, will be by its very nature compel the analyst to attend to the conventional basis of the phenomena he is studying, hence semiotics.... Signs do not just convey meanings, but constitute a medium in which meanings are constructed" (Culler, 29). The science, according to the Sausserian tradition, that "studies the life of signs within a society is semiotics or semiology" (Mahfouz A. Adedimeji's *Semiotics: The Science of Signs*, 1). Adedimeji further quotes (Saussure, 16-17) where the acclaimed father of modern linguistics considers linguistics a branch of semiology:

Linguistics is only one branch of this general science. The laws which semiology will discover will be applied to linguistics. As far as we are concerned the linguistic problem is first and foremost semiological... if one wishes to discover the real nature of language systems, one must first consider what they have in common with all the other systems of the same

kind... By considering rites, customs, etc. as signs, it will be possible, we believe, to see them in a new perspective (Adedimeji, 1).

With arguments such as above, we could, indeed, be justified to view a work of art as a linguistic/performed text whose full appreciation is dependent on understanding the underlying structure which constitutes the social and cultural context. We could also have a basis to consider ritualistic artefacts as communicating important information that may be understood upon examining the context and circumstances within which the artefacts were expected to make sense and to be adequately aesthetic.

Besides Ferdinand de Saussure, another prominent theorist within modern semiotics was Roland Barthes. In *United Colors of Benetton*, Frosthalm P. and Andersen T. quote (Barthes, 9) as having declared: "Semiology aims to take in any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects and the complex associations of all these... constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification." Barthes and Saussure are said to have agreed on the first order of signification: the signifier (denotation), but Barthes described the relationship between the signifier (denotation) and the signified (connotation) within a sign, as being much more complex than Saussure did. The former argued that meaning was not fixed, hence, that different meanings and understandings can be constructed depending on who the interpreter is (Frosthalm and Anderson, 14). It is the view of this study that this kind of argument gave leeway to the interpreter to consider other meanings that may be emanating from changed contexts, as well as operate from contexts that are not his own. This caters for the notion of transience in both context and meaning. Barthes is, however,

said to have later modified his view on denotation and connotation with his argument that “denotation is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so; under this illusion, it is ultimately no more than the last of the connotations, herein indicating that no matter what the interpreter sees, or hears, first, the last connotation (the meaning) will be the denotation (the form) (Frosthalm and Anderson, 14). With such assertions, the process of interpretation and even re-interpretation is justified. Similarly, interpretation is envisaged not as instant perception, but as an intricate process that is dependent on interlinked systems such as the social and cultural realities.

M.A.K. Halliday is accredited with the notion of socio-semiotics, which he developed after reviewing Barthes’ theories on meaning. In *Introduction to Functional Linguistics*, Halliday argues that meaning is not random but always ensuing from a particular context. As a component of social semiotics, he sees language as always expressing a dual aspect in its semantic system, which is organised around the twin motifs of reflection and action. Hence he argues that language is a means of reflecting on things and language as a means of acting on things (Frosthalm and Anderson, 15). Halliday suggests a particular interpretation of language within a conceptual framework where social reality itself constructs meaning (Frosthalm and Anderson, 15). Hence language is one of the semiotic systems that constitute a culture, which in contrast to Saussure, suggests that language is a social fact. Furthermore, Halliday defines semiotics as interpreting language within a social cultural context, where the culture itself is interpreted in semiotic terms. Further, Halliday says, the interrelation of language and social context ensures that language does not only serve to facilitate and support other modes of social action that form its

environment but also to create own environment. Hence Halliday goes beyond the traditional semiotics and includes the social and cultural aspect of language (Frostholm and Anderson, 16). The way Halliday treats language, meaning and context is incredibly vital to the present study. It means context can be used to decode literary symbols as much as we can use literary symbols to reconstruct, if not recognize, contexts.

From the foregoing, it is clear that Halliday made serious considerations on the impact of the existing reality on both the signs and their meaning. It is probable indeed that changing times could lead to new signs with new meanings. In deed, as Halliday explains, semiotics helps us to realize that “meaning is not passively absorbed but arises only in the active process of interpretation” (9). Consequently, an artist using a traditional symbol may facilitate the appreciation of it by effectively appropriating it to the existing situation. In which case, the traditional meaning becomes irrelevant unless the oral artist has indicated that he/she wants to uphold it. Indeed, it is in order to be more forward-looking so as to keep abreast with equally important emerging tendencies and features of popular music.

The postulations of semiotics are akin to sociological theory. In *Art and Social Theory* Harrington argues that pieces of art can serve as “normative sources of social understanding in their own right” (207). As Harrington observes, there are several methods of regarding art from a sociological perspective, this is because art is inevitably full of references and commentaries on the social issues that affect the present day society. Sociological critics look at exactly how such references and commentaries

function within the work of art, so that codification of their method is possible. However, this study delved into the manipulation of language as one of the methods through which society is presented in Bikundo's songs. While examining the selected songs, this study focused on how Bikundo uses language to educate the Abagusii people on various issues affecting them. The study therefore examines how he manipulates language in his songs in prescribing solutions to the various problems that keep on dogging society, hence disturbing the peaceful co-existence of the members of the society.

1.11 Research Methodology

1.11.1 Introduction

John Creswell in defines methodology as a plan of action that links methods to outcomes. This section, therefore, deals with procedures for collecting and analyzing data for the study. It begins with a detailed description of the research design, proceeds to describe the inclusion and exclusion criteria and the study population. Sample size determination, sampling procedure and data analysis method are also given. Finally, it analyses ethical issues associated with the study and the organization of the study.

11.1.2 Research Design

John Creswell points out that a research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. It is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted. Creswell observes that a research design is the structure of a research that holds all the elements in research together and it is used to structure the research to show

how all major parts of the research work to address the research questions. It constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. A good design is often characterized by adjectives like flexible, appropriate, efficient, economical, and so on. Generally, a research design, which minimizes bias and maximizes the reliability of the data collected and analyzed, is considered a good design.

This study employed a descriptive research design. Creswell opines that the purpose of descriptive survey design is to obtain complete and accurate information about a phenomenon through observation, description, and involves classification, description and interpretation of the phenomenon under study. Olive Mugenda and Abel Mugenda point out that a descriptive design may be used to collect data about people's attitudes, opinions or habits. Mugenda and Mugenda further note that descriptive designs are used to permit researchers to gather, present and interpret information for the purposes of explanation of an issue. The design was therefore chosen because the current study sought to investigate how Bikundo uses various features of style in his popular music to foreground certain thematic concerns in the Abagusii community. In this kind of descriptive design study, popular music was regarded as an important avenue for the expression, convergence and articulation of the community's experiences, challenges, fears, hopes and aspirations. Bikundo's popular music will be treated as a vehicle through which the study seeks to understand the community's world view regarding various issues affecting them. The advantage of using this research design is that data collection from Bikundo's music was spread over eighteen (18) songs in order to gain a wider understanding of the perceptions, experiences and insights into the issues under study.

11.1.3 Target Population

Stuart MacDonald and Nicola Headlam point out that a target population is the total group of subjects that a researcher is interested in and to whom results could be generalized. It is recommended that a researcher should take a large sample as possible and where necessary, for in large samples the researcher is confident that if another sample of the same size were to be selected, findings from the two samples would be similar to a high extent. The target population was Bikundo's popular music as the primary source of data for this study.

11.1.4 Sample Size

Stuart MacDonald and Nicola Headlam point out that sampling is the process of selecting a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining characteristics of the whole population. In Bikundo's music oeuvre, there are a total of sixteen (16) albums to his credit despite the fact that he started his music career in the 1990s to the present. Available audio albums in the form of cassettes and compact disks are twenty (20) containing a total of 180 songs. Using Mugenda and Mugenda's formula which outlines that 10% of the target population is suitable as an accessible population, with eighteen (18) songs selected for analysis. Both the audio visual cassettes and written scripts were accessed, translated and analysed.

11.1.5 Sample Design

The study relied on purposive sampling. John Creswell observes that purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research. He further observes that qualitative researchers are

less often interested in asking about central tendency in a larger group and much interested in a case analysis. In this, researchers focus on experiences, perceptions, attitudes and how these consolidate, converge and get articulated in a people's popular forms of expression. In this study, Ontori Bikundo's popular music is one such avenue where Abagusii people's fears, hopes, aspirations, attitudes and challenges are captured and articulated. Thus, purposive sampling was used in selecting the eighteen (18) songs for analysis from Bikundo's Music oeuvre. Guided by purposive sampling, the songs selection was done in accordance with and fairly distributed across the three objectives.

11.1.6 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The following formed the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study.

a) Inclusion Criteria

- i. All songs in the 16 albums accessible for this study,
- ii. Bikundo's solo music,
- iii. Bikundo's afro fusion music,
- iv. Bikundo's songs from 2006 to date.

b) Exclusion Criteria

- i. Bikundo's music outside the 16 albums that was not accessed for this study,
- ii. Bikundo's songs that were presented during Kenya Music Event in 2006 where he emerged as the event's finalist,

- iii. Bikundo's music prior to 2006 when he received formal training in music,
- iv. Bikundo's music as a result of collaborations with other musicians such as Dismas Nyang'au.

11.1.7 Data Collection

a) Primary Data

The primary data for the current study comprised Bikundo's popular music. Viewing and listening to Ontiri Bikundo's recorded songs was conducted in order to obtain data for analysis. The selected songs were watched and listened to using a checklist to help gather data on aspects of style and the major concerns. Additionally, the selected songs were transcribed and then translated for analysis and interpretation.

b) Secondary Data

Library research involving the reading of secondary texts was undertaken. Texts and scholarly works dealing with popular music were examined. Relevant materials focusing on language, style, and thematic concerns were consulted. Internet research was also conducted to augment information that was gathered from other sources.

11.1.8 Data Analysis

Since the data collection method was qualitative, it follows that the data analysis method was qualitative in nature. Thus, this study used thematic content analysis. Creswell

observes that thematic analysis moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes. This study gave primacy to how Bikundo deploys various features of style to foreground particular thematic concerns in the Abagusii community in his music. Data obtained was organized into thematic strands and subsequently synthesized and analyzed in line with the objectives of this study.

11.1.9 Ethical Considerations

It is vital for researchers to respect democracy, fact and individuals involved in the research process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This ensures that researchers do not involve themselves in any deception and also do not invade on the dignity and privacy of the participants and guarantees respondents the freedom to give solicited information (Mills & Airasian, 2007). Ethical considerations have become a central point of attention in research dealing with human participants. The researcher obtained permits from the following institutions before embarking on the study:

- a) Machakos University Graduate School
- b) National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation
(NACOSTI)

1.12 Organisation of the Study

The study is organised into five chapters. Chapter one, which is the introduction to the study, comprises background to the study, statement of the problem, justification, research objectives, assumptions, scope and limitations, review of related literature, theoretical framework and research methodology. Chapter two focuses on features of style in Bikundo's songs, chapter three analyses thematic concerns in Bikundo's songs while chapter four examines Bikundo's social vision in the Abagusii society. Chapter five provides the summary, conclusion and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

FEATURES OF STYLE IN BIKUNDO'S SONGS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically analyse the use of style in Bikundo's songs and how it contributes to the overall meaning in these songs. It is the contention of this chapter that style plays a critical role in the expression of meaning in any work of art. This implies that for a literary critic to arrive at any meaningful interpretation of any work of art, (s)he must pay attention to the style of such work of art. Therefore, the objective of this chapter is to examine and analyse how style has been utilized in the selected songs. This is guided by the idea that song, while articulating a people's concerns and shared experiences, employs figurative language. Hence, style becomes the artist's communicative tool with which to foreground the societal issues in the songs. Style, the creative fashioning of language (Mugubi 2005), differentiates one artist from another. It is what makes Bikundo stand out as one of the most seasoned musicians in the Abagusii region.

While foregrounding the importance of style in literary interpretations, Jeremy Hawthorn in *Unlocking the Text* argues "Literary works are the only-works which consist largely of language-if one interprets the 'literary work' in such a way as to include such things as oral poetry and some of the performing arts. It is not surprising therefore that the artists have sought to use language in the construction of theories about literature" (51). This observation points to the idea that language, whether in song, poetry or in other forms of art, plays a pivotal role in unraveling the meaning(s) of such work of art. Language is the

prime aspect in any work of art that is subjected to interpretation. Consequently, the language of any work of art is intertwined with style and hence this chapter adopts an interpretive approach while examining various stylistic features in the selected songs. Style addresses the specialized use of language to elicit interesting ways of communication in Bikundo's songs. Further, it offers insights into how he seeks to present the social reality in his songs.

2.2 Manifestations of Style in Literary works

Emmanuel Ngara laments that students of Literature in Africa and elsewhere have concentrated on narration of themes and characters of works of art at the expense of the aesthetic aspects of Literature. He, therefore, urges for a more balanced view towards the analysis of form and content. He argues that a work of art must be analysed and evaluated in terms of aesthetically sound set parameters without disregarding the political, social and moral issues raised in the work. He argues that we put emphasis on the aesthetic and formal dimensions of fiction only to discover how social, ideological and moral issues are discussed and given substance in an 'artistic way' in genuine works of art. Ngara points out that an artist's choice of linguistic and stylistic features gives a work of art a vital aesthetic quality. This quality arms works of art with a compelling power which makes readers to immerse themselves into reading the work from the beginning to end. Thus, style becomes the vehicle through which aesthetic qualities in works of art are manifested.

On his part, Henry Indangasi decries the culture of privileging content over form. Consequently, he talks of a situation where a work of art is “...far too often seen as a bundle of messages or themes” (5). He argues that form and content should be viewed on an equal plane. His argument illuminates the importance of style in the role of communication of a writer’s message. This implies that a writer is able to reach his readers through the choice of his style. Indangasi’s observation on style concurs with Waveney Olembo, who emphasizes the importance of style in poetry. Olembo observes that style plays a critical role in the understanding of poetry. She goes ahead to analyze the utilization of various stylistic features in a poem such as alliteration, rhythm, stress and how they can be manipulated both for aesthetic purposes and for meaning. Her assertion is significant to this study since it not only illuminates the aspects of style but also shapes our understanding on the use of style and its role in works of literature such as poetry.

Leech and Short recognize that linguistic analysis is more important in the study of poetry than prose. They posit:

The poet, more obviously than the prose writer, does interesting things with language. And if one wanted to find a definition of poetry that went deeper than the run-of-the mill dictionary definition, it might be that whereas in poetry, aesthetic effect cannot be separated from the creative manipulation of the linguistic code, in prose it tends to reside more in other factors (2).

Leech and Short demonstrate how poetry is rich in terms of its aesthetic effects due to the language used. Poets manipulate language in order to be able to achieve maximum effects in the process of communication. They also make most use of the available paralinguistic items to attain a heightened form of communication. Consequently, the two critics proceed to argue that in doing so, the poet does “interesting things” with language. It is with this in mind that this chapter examines Bikundo’s use of style in the selected songs. It is the chapter’s contention that the manner in which Bikundo employs language in his songs enables him to pass his message(s) to the audience with simply and easily.

John Mugubi’s work on stylistics is significant to this as it clearly expounds on a number of areas that concern this chapter. It provides an in-depth analysis of the term style as well as the relationship between form and content. It also explicates stylistic techniques based on the broad linguistic branches of semantics, syntax, lexis, morphology and graphology. Mugubi’s study plays a pivotal role in shaping our ideas in the analysis of style in this chapter.

2.2.1 The use of Style in Bikundo’s songs

As observed, stylistic devices are used to capture the audience’s attention and to make the songs interesting to listen to. Bikundo, for example, deploys beguiling titles such as *Nkere Gianchandire* (That Troubling me), *Echirani* (Neighbour) and *Speed Governor* in order to arouse the curiosity of his listeners. In his songs, the artist makes use of various stylistic devices such as metaphor, irony, euphemism, repetition, and alliteration among

others to pass the intended message and to meaning more forceful and emphatic to the listeners. The following is the analysis of some of the features of style:

2.3 Metaphor

Metaphor, which is pervasive in everyday language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), plays a vital role in human thought, reasoning and understanding. Lakoff and Turner (1989) argue that metaphors are crucial ways that human beings employ to conceptualise abstract concepts. According to Barcelona and Valenzuela (2005), a metaphor is a cognitive mechanism in which one experiential domain is partially mapped so that the second domain is partially understood in terms of the first. Aksan (2006) also argues that the structure of a conceptual metaphor consists of mappings between source domain and the target domain. The domain of human being, therefore, also transfers the semantic aspects of human beings in relation to other persons as pointed out in this study. A metaphor, thus, is a creative way of describing one thing by referring to another which has the qualities that one wants to express.

Bikundo makes use of various human metaphors in his popular songs to illuminate human characteristics in society such as impressions, attitudes, conditions, occupations and human conditions such as insanity, foolishness, disability and poverty. Bikundo in the song *Obwanchani* (love) laments that his critics negatively label him *richara* (a fool). This labeling is in reference to the physical qualities of his wife which apparently do not appeal to his critics. Bikundo is, thus, disparaged by his critics who consider him a

foolish person for falling in love with a person who does not conform in terms of physical attributes. Bikundo, however, dismisses those who loathe him by claiming that *eyarare otari koria tegokororera* (the pepper which you do not take should not irritate you). Bikundo's assertion authenticates the proverbial metaphor that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder.

In the song *Obwanchani* (love), Bikundo compares his guitarist, Nyaoga, with a king when he sings "*Nyaoga n' ekingi* (Nyaoga is a king)". Here, Bikundo, praises his guitarist, Nyaoga, for his prowess, competence, experience and highly specialised skills in playing a guitar. Bikundo also notes that his guitarist appeals at all times which is in line with the tenure of a king who reigns until either death. Bikundo also attributes the popularity of his song *Obwanchani* (love) to the guitarist's hilarious skills as he considers him to be the source of stability, admiration, inspiration and a symbol of continuity. Nyaoga, therefore, is a symbol of admiration to Bikundo's fans. Bikundo further notes that his guitarist is unequalled in the region. This is a compliment which appeals to Bikundo's audience who marvels at his highly skilled crew and thus cherishes his song *Obwanchani* (love).

Disability as a human condition is used to conceptualise a human being as depicted in *Omonto n' oborema* ('a human being is disability) in the song *Obwanchani* (love). Bikundo employs the metaphor to beseech his wife, Kwamboka, to be committed in their matrimony and to ignore malicious people who compare him with *oborema* (disability). Disability is an impairment which causes restrictions on a person's ability to take part in

what is considered normal in society (Woodin, 2006). Woodin (2006) further argues that disabled people are demeaned because of their limitations to take part in most activities undertaken by those people who are considered normal. The metaphor is, therefore, appropriately used to illustrate how *ebirema* (disabled people) are marginalised in society. Bikundo sings that malicious people conceptualize him as *ekerema* (disabled) which signifies that Bikundo is stigmatised in his society for lacking the material capacity to care for his wife, Kwamboka, in accordance with societal expectations.

Bikundo uses the metaphor *Omonto n' obotaka* (a human being is poverty) to jide his wife, Kwamboka, to uphold their matrimony despite their current state of poverty. Grusky and Kanbur (2006) posit that in the dominant western definition of poverty, levels of income are used to measure poverty. The poor are defined as those who fall below a given income or consumption level (Lipton & Ravallion, 1993). The poor are, therefore, associated with deficiency in financial and material worth. Socially constructed terms are normally designed to derogate the people equated with *obotaka* (poverty) which include: lazy, parasitic and animalistic. Bikundo rebukes his inability to materially care for his wife. Underwood (2009) observes that falling in love causes a physical attraction that motivates one to go out of their way to provide the needs of the lover. Bikundo, therefore, endeavours to implore his wife not to abandon him despite his inability to materially provide and care for her. He is optimistic that he would be able to meet the material needs of his wife in the future.

2.4 Symbolism

Symbolism has been described as the practice or art of using an object or a word to represent an abstract idea. An action, person, place, word, or object can all have a symbolic meaning based on their usage in a particular work of art. In using symbols, Bikundo not only expands the possibilities in terms of meaning but also heightens interest for his songs from listeners. In the same vein, the artist foregrounds certain moods or emotions through the use of symbolism. In the song *Speed Governor*, Bikundo uses symbols to represent various ideas in society:

Abagaka beka speed governor	Men wear speed governor
Abang'ina mwensi gaki siba emechibi	Women wear safety belts
Abaka mwensi siba chise	All men tame your dogs
Abang'ina mwensi mosieke ebibiita	All women close your gates
Ng'ora ng'ora speed governor	Slowly slowly speed governor
Ng'ora ng'ora gosibete emechibbi	Try your safet belt slowly
Ng'ooro ng'ora ebara nenkora	Slowly Slowly put it on
Ebitongo mbiroo speed governor	There are potholes
Sieka etamosi	Close the thermos
Echae tendeka	To preserve the tea
Enyamoreo gaki yachire	There is HIV/AIDS

Bikundo tells men to wear speed governors, safety belts and to tame their dogs. Similarly, the singer tells women to close their gates and thermos so that the tea inside does not get cold. The items, speed governor, safety belts, and thermos, are used symbolically to implore the general public to engage in safe sex. Bikundo reminds his listeners of the dangers of HIV/AIDS and therefore the need to take care and not to engage in unsafe sexual practices.

In the song *Speed Governor*, Bikundo symbolically warns of vehicles without seat belts and speed governors. They look beautiful from outside but inside there are no seats, just like a ripe fruit that is attractive from outside but inside it has a worm. The singer means that there are people who are infected with HIV/AIDS, who seem alright from outside but inside them is the disease:

Chigari chiachire	There are vehicles
chitabwati emechibi	without safety belts
echinde nchibwati	Others don't have
Speed governor	speed governor.
Isiko nekieni	beautiful from outside,
ime birogo mbiyo	no seats inside
Rotunda ritobu	A ripe fruit
ndire nerikonde	There is a worm
Isiko ribariri	Ripe from Outside
ime rigundo but	Spoilt inside

Items used as symbols are drawn from the ordinary and common environment where both the musicians and listeners freely interact. In this regard, items used as symbols depend on each other and are already known to the listeners because they are often used in the public transport sector. The transference of knowledge of how items are used in everyday life and their symbolism, in human sexuality, underlines the meaning.

In the song *Sweet Sweet Banana*, Bikundo uses the banana as a symbol of family continuity and togetherness. In the song, performers led by their soloist (Bikundo) bid farewell to the beloved couple which has join another stage in life. The symbols are used in the song “Sweet Sweet Banana” to underline the social transformation those who get married undergo as they start a new life and to symbolize aspects such as happiness, togetherness, joy and vitality as indicated in the lines below:

Sweet sweet banana	Sweet sweet banana
egetenga kie ritoke	a bush of bananas
Sweet sweet banana	Sweet sweet banana
egetenga kie ritoke	a bush of bananas
Makori ekero okonywoma	Makori when you'll marry
ondangerie ngokobe	ask me for escort
Makori ekero okonywoma	Makori when you'll marry
ondangerie ngekobe	ask me for escort

The song romanticizes the bride and groom as they move to make a new family and encourages togetherness symbolized by banana bushes. Often, the song is sung during marriage celebrations as people make merry, displaying their feeling and attitude towards marriage. The facial expressions, gestures, body movement, dances and paralinguistic features are all in harmony with the happy mood during this occasion.

2.5 Appropriation of the Dirge

Ruth Finnegan (1970) avers that dirges are melancholic songs sung in honour of a deceased. Dirges are also a means of praising the dead person. He is honoured and mourned as the general links between the past and present, the living and dead are brought out in stock themes in the dirge. Ojaide (2004) observes that a “dirge is a poem that deals with death” (p.69). Songs that are essential to the burial and memorial rites in different communities in Africa form the dirge. Thus, dirge performances become useful avenues to let out pent emotions that could easily be harmful to health of the bereaved.

In the dirge song *Nyang’au*, Bikundo praises and exalts the good deeds of his late friend, Dismas Nyang’au Onsoti, known in music circles as Nyang’au y’ egetonto. Nyangau introduced Bikundo to music. Bikundo sings:

Ayeee aye baba o bee	Ooooh, Ouch
Baba ominto Nyang’au orarire	Nyangua has slept
Baba ominto nyang’au yegetonto	The forest tiger

Baba ominto nere nyakeboko	He is the tough one
Baba ominto PHD man	He had a PhD
Baba ominto orange omoteri	He was a musician
Baba ominto orange kobugia obokano	Playing the lyre
Baba ominto togatera nere	We sung together
Baba ominto tware kobugia obokano nere	Playing the lyre
Baba ominto buna bono orarire	He has now slept
Baba ominto bikundo mbirero inde	Bikundo I am mourning

Bikundo pays tribute to his late friend and benefactor in music. The song shows the pain sustained by the bereavement of an intimate friend. The bereaved feels the loss greatly because of the vacuum occasioned by departed. Bikundo is worried over the death of this companion, which he euphemistically refers to resting. He shows the intimacy that existed between the bereaved and the deceased when he mentions how they used to sing and play lyre together. Bikundo uses the song to console the bereaved. In spite this theme, the bereaved are given hope that all is not lost. This is commonly likened to a cow without a tail. It is believed that God, who drives flies from a tailless cow, will always be there to help the bereaved in times of need.

2.6 Repetition

Bikundo utilizes repetition in his songs. Jones and Eldred (1992) recognize repetition as a basic principle of art that is used as a way of establishing emphasis. Typical in oral verse, repetition entails not only the structure but the words of the stanzas themselves. Repetition involves the recurrence of certain words or phrases in a piece of art as is evident in this song *Obotaka* (Poverty):

Obotaka nabo bokogera bwekore ebarimo

Obotaka nabo bokogera bwekore omotino

Obotaka nabo bokogera bwekore rimama

Obotaka nabo bokogera bwekore omorebi

Obotaka nabo bokogera bwekore omosabereri

Obotaka nabo bokogera bwekore ekerema

Poverty can make you pretend to be a madman

Poverty can make you pretend to be deaf

Poverty can make you pretend to be dumb

Poverty can make you pretend to be drunkard

Poverty can make you pretend to be beggar

Poverty can make you pretend to be cripple

In the above song, the phrase “obotaka nabobokogera/poverty can make you” is repeated throughout the song probably to express the artist’s disdain towards poverty. Bikundo lists survival strategies in the wake of poverty such as pretending to be a madman, dumb, deaf, beggar, cripple and being a drunkard. Poverty has been associated, for example, with inability or unwillingness to work, high rates of disruptive or disorderly behaviour, and improvidence. Bikundo is, therefore, decrying the state of being poor, lack of socially acceptable amount of material, in society.

In the song *Obwachani* (love), Bikundo uses repetition to bring out the indiscriminate characteristic of love. Through the song, Bikundo advances the concept of egalitarianism, which is the belief that all people are equally important and should have the same rights and opportunities in life. True love does not discriminate because it is personal. He, therefore, urges people to respect the law of nature and to keep off personal matters such as love regardless of the physical state of the persons involved.

2.7 Idiomatic Expressions

Bikundo enriches his music through the use of idiomatic expressions and wise sayings. These stylistic devices not only summarize his message so that it can be slotted into a definite tune and length but also bring out the message vividly and in a powerful way. Thus, terse blocks of ideas acquire a notable degree of permanence in the minds of his listeners. In the song *Chichokora* (Street Urchins), Bikundo says “Egetinkinye ekeng’aini/kerigiae oboundi keagache/embura egotia gesoie mwaye” (A clever weaverbird/will look for grass to build his nest during the dry season/ and hides in it

during the rain season). In this, Bikundo utilizes the traditional idiomatic expression to rally the people to prepare for adversities in the future. Like the weaverbird which prepares for the coming of rain by building its nest during the dry season, people should not wait until the time of vulnerability then start running around, instead, they should make effort towards making themselves comfortable before disaster strikes. In other words, the community should not be caught by surprise but be able to predictably work towards averting disaster. Bikundo reminds his listeners that it is not always that things will be rosy in life. In the same song, he warns that people should be prepared for various eventualities in life since there will come a time when the rosy life will encounter unforeseen difficulties.

2.8 Personification

This is a special kind of comparison, closely related to metaphor, which gives life or human characteristics to inanimate objects or abstract ideas (Kebaya et al 2020). The comparison may be explicit or implicit. An inanimate figure may represent an abstraction or idea, or may project as an acting person emotions or concerns that are internal to human experience. The animals, plants and other inanimate objects like stones impersonating a human being can do all that a normal human being can do. They possess all the qualities belonging to a human being.

In the song *Echirani/Neighbor*, Bikundo personifies the neighbour's dog in order to foreground their differences. The dog has the human attribute of knowing to enable listeners connect with the ideas which are described in the song such as knowing the type

of meal the neighbor prepares each day impacts listeners as it showcases a non-human entity endowed with a human attributes. In this regard, Bikundo suggests that it's important for neighbors to iron out their differences amicably and live harmonious.

2.9 Chapter Summary

Bikundu's songs are of fair length. His message is, however, enhanced by his subtle use of various styles such as metaphor, symbolism, appropriation of dirge, personification, idiomatic expressions and wise sayings, which other than their palpable decoration of the structure, condense his message in a more memorable and meaningful way. The images and symbols he uses invite his listeners to think of the underlying message. His intricate use of various features of style gives the music an appealing power and a compelling force in the Abagusii society.

The next chapter analyses themes portrayed in Bikundo's popular music.

CHAPTER THREE

THEMATIC CONCERNS IN BIKUNDO'S SONGS

3.1 Introduction

Chapter two analysed various stylistic features used in Bikundo's popular music in order to make his music appealing and emphatically bring out the intended message. This chapter focuses on various thematic concerns portrayed in Bikundo's music. The chapter interrogates selected songs to reveal various concerns cutting across socio-cultural, economic and moral issues in the Abagusii society. In this way, the chapter shows that Bikundo's songs have pedagogical values in the contemporary Abagusii society. The chapter concurs with Maina wa Mutonya's observation in *The Beat Goes On: Performing Postcolonial Disillusionment in Kenya* that: "Music is one of the cultural forms, like literature and theatre, which artists in Kenya have employed as a force that continually constructs an alternative political and social reality..."(47). Therefore, it argues that Bikundo, through song, articulates various issues affecting society and goes a step further to give solutions to them.

3.2 HIV/AIDS

Literature, as Wilber Scott notes, is not only the work of a person, "but of an author fixed in time, and space, answering to a community of which he is an important" articulate part (Quoted in Tilak, 9). This means that literature is shaped by the needs of the society at a particular time. Writers, being members of the society, cannot simply turn their backs and ignore societal needs. One of such issues is the issue of HIV/AIDS, a crisis that

artists have added their voices in order to educate society of its dangers through their works. The fact that the pandemic continues to ravage members of the society despite the mechanisms that have been put in place to create awareness on infection modes is an indicator that there is still need to educate, create awareness and sensitize the people on the effects of the pandemic. By manipulating a wide range of linguistic and literary choices at their disposal, artists have spoken about cultural practices that enhance the spread of the disease like wife inheritance, polygamy, and unprotected sex, among other risky habits, which continue to be practiced in society today.

The chapter acknowledges existence of creative works by Kenyan writers that have dealt with the theme of HIV/AIDS. Joseph Situma, for example, explores the theme in his novel *The Mysterious Killer*. He portrays a country, which is deep in mourning. People are dying at an alarming rate yet they cannot fathom the cause. The village awakens to the loss when Cecilia, a city dweller, returns to Nkulu suffering from a mysterious disease. Many villagers believe she has been bewitched. Three bulls are offered as a sacrifice to the departed ancestors. The sacrifice fails to restore Cecilia to good health. She sends Rachel her niece, to Wauzi to consult a well-known medicine man. Rachel enters the medicine man's house and is shocked to see a python coiled around a sooty pot. The medicine man invokes the spirits of the ancestral goddess and gives Rachel mixed herbs for Cecilia. The herbs do not work a miracle for Cecilia to get well. She eventually dies.

In Situma's world, the characters are not ready to accept that HIV/AIDS is real. The characters seem to be buried in their traditional beliefs. They neither accept the reality nor are ready for change. Similarly, in Marjorie Oludhe's novel *Chira* characters do not fully accept the reality of HIV/AIDS. They perceive AIDS as a taboo disease, which attacks people who have gone against the norms of the society. At the end of the novel it is not clear whether AIDS is real or not, though people die emaciated from a mysterious disease they do not understand.

In *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, Carolyn Adalla examines how HIV/AIDS has closed doors for Catherine Njeri. Catherine Njeri, a beautiful, young and intelligent woman, learns with shock and utter disbelief that she is HIV positive. This means many things to her. She cannot go ahead with her plans to study for her Masters degree in the USA and she has to start thinking like somebody who is at the end of her life. In a heart-breaking style, she makes the revelation to her long time friend, Marilyn, in the form of a letter. The confessions are frank and provide a lot of factual information about AIDS in Kenya as Njeri's life unfolds. Njeri's future is ruined. She cannot pursue her ambitions.

Meja Mwangi, in his novel *The Last Plague*, reflects on the conflicts that arise from HIV/AIDS. The novel examines the impact of HIV/AIDS on a small village known as crossroads. Immediately we start reading the text, we are presented with a pervading sense of solitariness and desolation. Outside the teahouse, the protagonist is whiling away time and playing what is ordinarily a game of two people on his own. The oldman poses "How do you do it. How do you play droughts all by yourself? Its impossible "He quips"

but I do it...it is quite simple .You see the left hand has no eye to see what the right eye is up to...”(2).This shows that people are trying to cope with the state of desperation.

The analyses of the above creative works show that Bikundo follows a rich tradition in the Kenyan society regarding the representation of HIV/AIDS in creative works. In his song *Speed Governor*, Bikundo warns both men and women about the existence of HIV/AIDS. He advises his audience to take care of themselves. On the one hand, he metaphorically says men should put on “speed governor” and tie their dogs, implying that they should control their sexual desires. On the other hand, he tells women to buckle their belts, meaning they should not give in to unsavory sexual urges. Additionally, he advises women to close their gates and thermos so that the tea inside does not get cold, that is, not to open up their bodies carelessly for they could get infected with HIV/AIDS. This is shown in the following lines:

Abagaka beka speed governor
Abang’ina mwensi gaki siba emechibi
Abaka mwensi siba chise
Abang’ina mwensi mosieke ebbiita

Ng’ora ng’ora speed governor
Ng’ora ng’ora gosibete emechibbi
Ng’oora ng’ora ebara nenkora
Ebitongo mbiroo speed governor

Men wear speed governor
Women also wear belts
All men tie your dogs
All women close your gates

Slowly slowly speed governor
Slowly slowly while tying your belt
Slowly slowly there are pot holes speed governor

Bikundo also warns against matatus that neither have seat belts nor speed governors. He metaphorically uses matatus to refer to people who may be infected with HIV/AIDS. He says they may not be easily identified by looking at them physically, just like a ripe fruit that is attractive from outside but if one takes a bite, he or she will find a worm inside. Through the use of the matatu and the rotten fruit, Bikundo urges the Abagusii society to take caution. This comes in the following lines:

Chigari chiachire chitabwati emechibi
Speed governor echinde nchibwati
Isiko nekieni ime birogo mbiyo
Sieka etamosi echae tendeka
Enyamoreo gaki yachire
Ng'ora ng'ora speed governor
Sieka etamosi echae tendeka

Rotunda ritobu ndire nerikonde

Isiko ribariri ime rigundo

There are matatus/ vehicles without safety belts

Others don't have speed governor.

It looks beautiful from outside, but inside there are no seats

Close the thermos so that the tea will not cool down

Enyamoreo please has come.

Slowly, slowly speed governor

Close the thermos for tea not to get cold.

A ripe fruit has a worm

Outside it is ripe but inside it has gone body

The singer also tells men and women to be satisfied with what they have in their houses, their spouses. Even if they have problems in their relationships, they should persevere instead of living a carefree life, being unfaithful and get infected.

Enyomba yao gaki neba egotwa

Sukia egetanda gaki aye omongwana orare

Erinde mambia bookie ogende ekebarua

Even if your house rains inside

Push your bed and sleep brothers

So that tomorrow you wake up and go to job

Bikundo further advises his audience to use protection while engaging in sex:

Bikundo o baba take care,
Robert Mayioro take care,
Ebitongo mbireo take care,
ng'ora ng'ora
Speed governor
Michuki mbuya mono ase okoyereta

Enyamoreo please has come,
Bikundi take care,
Robert Matoke take care,
There is potholes take care,
Slowly, slowly speed governor.
Thank you Michuki for bringing them

It should not be lost that stigma and discrimination towards HIV/AIDS is rife among the community which has been found to undermine effective implementation of HIV/AIDS interventions in Kisii County (Maroko et al 2020). Bikundo rises above the entrenched stigma in society to educate his listeners about the dangers posed by HIV/AIDS and asks them to take care.

3.3 HARD WORK

Bikundo celebrates hardwork in his popular music. In the song *Seito Gusii* (Our homeland Gusii), he elaborates on the theme of hard work when he sings of how Abagusii work hard in order to improve their standards of living. The singer is proud of his people because of their work ethic:

Gusii yeito yerure gokora egasi
Ensemu ye chinyeni abang'ina namba one
Ensemu ye amatunda abang'ina namba one
Ensemu ye chinyanya abang'ina namba one
Ensemu yokoonia enyama abamura berure
Ensemu yokoonia chijiko abamura berure
Gotagete chisanduku abamura berure
Oyworobundu abamura berure
Chidirisha abamura berure
Chibiba abamura berure
Ensemu yechigari amakanika erure
Ensemu ya malimali ebijana bierure
Gusii yeito taxi abamura berure
Nonye nechipikipiki abamura berure
Nonye nechinyange abamura berure
Nonye nechinyange abamura berure
Nonye mogongoteni abamura berure

Nogosibia chigari abamura berure

Nogwatia ekogoto abamura berure bororo.

The Gusii people are determined to work hard

In the area of vegetable women are number one

In the area of fruits women are number one

In the area of tomatoes women are number one

In the area of selling meat men are determined

In the area of selling jikos men are determined

If you want boxes men are determined

If you want sandals men are determined

If you want doors men are determined

If you want windows men are determined

If you want drums men are determined

In the area of vehicles mechanics are determined

In the area of malimali youth are determined

Our land Gusii taxi youth are determined

Even motorcycles youth are determined

Even bicycles youth are determined

Even car washes youth are determined

Even crushing concrete youth are determined

Bikundo urges people not to discriminate against any job. He observes that white collar jobs are rare and very competitive. Whether learned or not, Bikundo urges the youth to embrace readily available jobs in order to sustain themselves and their families. In the spirit of indiscrimination, Bikundo urges those who are not able to secure white collar jobs to turn to farming as a living. He praises the fertile soil in Gusiiland and posits that those who make a living from farming are much better than compared to those in white collar jobs. Bikundo catalogues a variety of crops planted in the region as a testimony of the fertile soils.

In order to emphasize his message, Bikundo goes on to criticize young men who decline to work in hotels claiming that they are real men. The young men posit that duties and chores in restaurants are not meant for real men but for women. Bikundo catalogues the chores such as putting charcoal in the oven, baking, serving tea and mandazi, washing utensils or even slaughtering a hen, which the persona feels are not meant for a real man. The persona also does not want to be bossed around by his manager. The song shows that men are lazy hence the basis for choosing certain jobs. Besides refusing to work in hotels, such men do not want to work in building and construction sites because they think the job is hard. Bikundo sings that such men cannot engage in mortar mixing, carry cement or building blocks. Put simply, such men calling themselves real men do not want to do anything, thus:

Egasi yoteli
Bikundo tinkonyara
Omosacha bori
Beka amakara riko
Omosacha bori
Reta amache tinkonyara
Reta amandasi tinkonyara
Nyenya engoko tinkonyara,
Sibia chisani tinkonyara,
Egasi yoteli tinkonyara omosaccha bori
Mara ninde roche omosacha bori
Mara renta amache omosacha bori
Mara ninde riko omosacha bori
Nabo enga mocheno tinkonyara

Work in a hotel
I will not be able to do it a real man.
Put charcoal into the oven, a real man
Bring water, I can't be able
Bring Mandazi, I can't be able
Slaughter that hen, I can't be able
Wash the utensils, I can't be able
Work in a hotel I can't be able to do it a real man.
I can't be able to do it, a real man.

Often, going to the river a real man,
Always bring water, a real man,
The manager a buses me, a real man,
It is like masonry I can't be able

In this regard, Bikundo encourages Abugusii youth to work hard and not to choose the type of jobs they can engage in. For society to move forward, the productive workforce must be fully engaged. White collar jobs are scarce which means youth should settle on any job at their disposal in order to make their ends meet.

3.4 POVERTY

Poverty is one of the themes that most African writers explore since most of African countries are worst hit by poverty. In *The Last Plague*, Meja Mwangi explores the impact of corrupt officials on the lives of the masses. *The Cockroach Dance*, by the same writer, shows how tenants of Dacca House slept on their toes. Dusman Gonzaga could not afford to stay in a better apartment than Dacca House. There were so many beggars in the street of Nairobi as Dusman goes to his boss' office in town. These were among the effects of poverty.

In the song *Chichokora* (Street Urchins), Bikundo amplifies effects of poverty. He says that poverty can make one pretend to be insane, deaf and dumb, drunkard, beggar or even disabled. A person can pretend so as to gain pity from people around him who in return will grant him assistance. This comes out in the following lines:

Obotaka nabobokogera bwekore ebarimo

Obotaka nabobokogera bwekore omotino

Obotaka nabobokogera bwekore rimoma

Obotaka nabobokogera bwekore omorebi

Obotaka nabobokogera bwekore omosabereri

Obotaka nabobokogera bwekore ekerema

Poverty can make you pretend to be a madman

Poverty can make you pretend to be dumb man

Poverty can make you pretend to be dumb

Poverty can make you pretend to be drunkard

Poverty can make you pretend to be beggar

Poverty can make you pretend to be blind

Poverty can make you pretend to be cripple

Bikundo's father died leaving behind his children under the care of their mother. She took care of the children with the proceeds she got from manual jobs like working on people's farms. But the singer believes that poverty neither kills nor is it permanent. This shows that he has faith that the future will be bright someday:

Tata omointo ere agasira agatotigera mama
Mama Ominto nigo are arengokogenda chokonda
Obotaka Bikundo baba tiborikomenya
Obotaka Bikundo baba tiborigoita

My father died and left us in the hand of mother's
Our mother looked on contracts in shamba
So that we could get food to eat
Poverty Bikundo dear is to there to stay
Poverty Bikundo does not kill

We learn that the singer's house was falling apart. It used to leak if it rained and as a result Bikundo's family would take shelter in a neighbour's house. However, the neighbour was not kind because he would teasingly send them away:

Nyomba minto enyomba nigoyabochogete
Embura etwe nigo ntwe twarekogenda
Togoika bwechirani erotoseria
Yatotebia genda morare egesa gia sakawa
Aliye juu Bikundo baba mngojee chini

Our house had holes
If it rained we would move out

We went to the neighbour's house

He would tell us to go and sleep at Sakagwa's shanty.

He who is at the top Bikundo dear will come down

Most streets in Kenya and other developing countries are full of street children who may either have abandoned their homes or were left there by irresponsible parents and guardians. This seems to be an unending problem because poverty levels have continued to rise. It is not the choice of most of these urchins to be in the streets. For this reason, we have had a lot of NGOs and churches coming up with children's homes for them. At the beginning of the former President Kibaki's time in power, the streets of Nairobi were empty as all street children had been absorbed into various homes. But currently, beggars and street children are on the rise in every corner of every town and city. It is because of poverty that they choose to live in the street. Bikundo says that they lacked the basic things in life such as clothing and food. In their home they used to drink water for supper instead of food.

Koba echokora Bikundo obaba inche tonsekerera

Tari ogwanchabikundo baba inche inkaba echokora

Nabotaka bwagerete inche inkaba echokora

Being a street boy Bikundo dear don't laugh at me.

Its not my wish to be a street boy/child

It poverty that made me a street child

It will take a lot of effort from citizens to be able to reduce levels of poverty in their countries. This means that Kenyans from different fields need to work together towards the realization of vision 2030.

3.5 LOVE

Love pervades Bikundo's popular music. In the song *Slowly my Dear*, the singer describes feelings, passion, and desire for his wife-to-be and that he is looking forward for them being together as a couple once they get married. He goes ahead to posit that the two will be happy at their new home after marriage:

Omwanchi one,
My sweet heart,
Naki ndakore morore
Slowly my dear
Twabangire rituko,
Slowly my dear,
Rituko rie nyangi,
Slowly my Dear

My love
I have passion for her what will I do to
See her slowly my dear.
That wedding day
What will I do to see it?
I have passion of

Her what will I do to see her

Slowly my dear

Bikundo points out that since they have been in love, its time to crown their love with a marriage. He says that she is the woman he has been dreaming about and that they have loved one another for so long. The singer uses romantic words to refer to his woman such as beloved, dear and sweetheart and praises her beauty.

In the song *Nkere Gianchandire* (That troubling me), Bikundo is in love with a lady called Kerubo but he is unable to confess his feelings to her because of fear. He reveals that he fell in love with her because of her stunning beauty:

Egento gekogera Kerubo nkogwancha

Ekeru ogoseka amaino amandegere

Rigoti obwate buna Nyabarati

Ekieni obwate ngokorora esiorori

Ekong'ira naki bono ingokora

Because he is unable to openly proclaim his love for her, Bikundo opts to send his friend, Onchong'a, to deliver his love message. Unfortunately, Kerubo turns him down and asks him to tell the singer to come and confess to her by himself, which he is still unable to do.

Natomete Onchong'a ache kogotobia Kerubo ningwanchete
Gaki okamoseria erinde nchiche kogotobia
Buna inche ningwanchete
E'Bikundo nche noboire gocha face to face

He goes on to sing about the indiscriminatory nature of love:

Noba ekerema bwanchani mborigochora
Noba omouko bwanchani mborigochora
Noba omotaka bwanchani mborigochora

However, Bikundo warns of deception in love relationships. In the song *Tiga Oborimo* (Stop Lying), he talks about a certain lady whom the singer fell in love with and eventually married. Her name is Gesare. This lady lied to the young man that she was a nurse at Kenyatta Hospital and that the reason why she was not working at that time of their meeting was because she was on leave. The singer, uneducated, felt lucky to have married an educated and workingclass woman. It was not until when he met his friend at Getembe that he got to know the truth that his wife was a charcoal seller. At this point, Bikundo expresses his disappointment at discovering the reality regarding his wife:

Ekeru nkoinyora
Aye ogontobia
Egasi ogokora yobonyagitari

Omoisia ngagoka ngatumatuma
Omoisia nanyuomire omonyagitari
Oyotasomete buna Bikundo nainche
Nanyuomire omonyagitari
Erinde nkaboria
Nkai okorwaria
Agantebia aria Kenyatta

When I remember
You told me you me
You were working as a nurse
As a young lad
I was happy and jumped
As a young lad
I had married a nurse
I asked where you work
You told me Kenyatta

In this regard, Bikundo urges lovers to be honest to each other and that those seeking to marry should do sufficient background checks before getting married to avoid disappointments in marriage. More importantly, he sends a veiled attack to those who marry their spouses because they are employed.

3.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined themes in Bikundo's popular music. During the analysis, it emerged that Bikundo is inspired by socio-cultural and economic contexts in his music. Bikundo, like a doctor, identifies what is ailing society and goes ahead to not only sing about it but also prescribe medicine to it. In this regard, Bikundo sings of crosscutting issues in society such as poverty, hardwork, HIV/AIDS, love and marriage. In all these, he provides possible solutions at the end of each song which is aimed at making society better.

The next chapter focuses on Bikundo's artistic vision for the Abagusii society as embedded in his popular music.

CHAPTER FOUR

BIKUNDO'S ARTISTIC VISION FOR SOCIETY

4.1 Introduction

Guided by objective three, this chapter examines Bikundo's artistic vision for the Abagusii society. It argues that the musician's vision for society is portrayed through his music and that understanding his vision plays a pivotal role in appreciating his music in society. Insofar as the musician understands his context, he carefully composes his music in such a way that he influences his listeners in a certain way. Oladele Caleb Orimoogunje (2011) observes that context "could be regarded as a phenomenon that describes how, when, where, to whom and by whom the verbal arts under question are rendered" (91). Indeed, this weighs on context as a key component in both the composition and delivery of popular music. Suffice to say that the musician's view of the context mediates his artistic vision. The role of context in articulating the musician's artistic vision, therefore, cannot be overemphasised. The relevance and survival of the artist seems to hinge on how he navigates an increasingly dynamic context.

4.1 Moral Decadence

Each society aims to achieve high moral standards and it will pride itself if morality is manifested in society. Morality covers a lot in human behavior and entails acceptable code of conduct in society. As pointed out in chapter three, Bikundo explores various strands of moral decay in the Abagusii society. Such manifestations pertaining to the loss of moral direction in life are evident in sexual perversion and its attendant problems like unwanted pregnancies, abortions, venereal diseases, and HIV/AIDS.

Bikundi shows how sexual perversion has brought untold miseries and irreversible losses to the society both at personal and communal levels. The first loss is the negation of the divine purpose of sex and how this has brought disrespect and disgrace to the society. Bikundo laments the effects of unwanted pregnancies resulting into unwanted babies in the song *Chichokora* (Street Urchins). He points out that some of the street children are as a result of unwanted pregnancies. He views this as both a moral and social tragedy as it erodes the good values of the Abagusii society. He further points out that money comes in to corrupt sexuality by offering easier options of avoiding responsibility. Among these is abortion that Bikundo highlights in the song. He shows how abortion has been used an avenue to hide from sexual perversion. Unfortunately, some of these unsafe abortions are costly to the parties involved as they try to avoid the public shame of raising illegitimate children.

Bikundo points out that apart from abortion, sexual perversion has created the complex problem of single motherhood, particularly among the youth. This is a multi-faceted problem according to Bikundo. In the song *Chichokora* (Street Urchins), Bikundo talks of ladies who are impregnated and abandoned by their lovers. They are left to struggle for their lives as they raise their children. Majority of these ladies who become single mothers are not only vilified but also alienated in the society. Hence, the single mothers often lack food, financial, emotional, social and material support from society at large since they are often considered social outcasts.

Tied to single motherhood and sexual immorality are problems of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and orphanhood (in cases of deaths due to AIDS). In his song *Speed Governor*, Bikundo recounts the effects of HIV/AIDS in society. Bikundo sings of a reckless young man in society who prides himself in infecting others with HIV/AIDS virus. The scourge reduces investments and savings due to higher healthcare expectations while labour productivity declines due to the death of experienced workers in society. Bikundo therefore urges the use of protection and contraceptives if the youth cannot tame their appetites for sex. However, he is quick to point out that the control measures should not be misused or abused. In this regard, he talks of how youth sacrifice their lives at the altar of sexual promiscuity fortified by the use of contraceptives and condoms. He adds that the use of contraceptives abets sexual immorality making sex rather casual and deprives it of its original divine purpose. Youth seem to be beguiled into sexual perversion due to contraceptives and condoms. Bikundo urges wisdom and patience as key aspects towards indulging in sex.

Such moral decay has not spared the institution of marriage that is shown to be plagued with moral irresponsibility in Bikundo's popular music. Bikundo shows how sexual incompatibility and communication failure cause marital instability in families often leading to domestic violence and adultery. Bikundo sings of the pervasive marital infidelity that abrogates patterns within which married people are supposed to live happily and productively showing how the situation exerts detrimental pressure on the mental and physical conditions of spouses. In such situations, male spouses wretch their marriages by their persistent absence from home. From such marital instability, the

afflicted spouses emerge bruised, morale depleted to cause low self-esteem while infirmity of purpose pervades their minds.

Moral decadence is multi-faceted because some of it arises from chronic drugs and substances abuse evident in Bikundo's music. Bikundo presents desperate lives of men destroyed by alcoholism. In the song *Obosisa* (Scabies), Bikundo talks about reckless drinking and its effects. The singer talks about a man called Onchomba who got drunk to point of climbing to the ceiling to sleep, something considered outrageous. His wife was startled by the noise of a choking man when she lit fire.

Onchomba akaimoka akagenda konywa amarwa

Akanywa amarwa tata, akanywa akagoita

Agatang'ana gocha agika nyomba

Agasoa irongo onchomba akarara

Omorugia amachia gocha kare nechinguru

Akairana agasoa riko agachia gouta

Erioki rigasoa irongo bamura imbatebie

Onchomba machia koigwa agasua gokorora

Omorugi agatama baminto ogokura, inkieke

Kiabeire, ebarimo nere irongo

Onchomba went to drink bear,

He came early to the house
Climbed to the ceiling
Onchomba slept
When the wife come with vegetables
She went to the fire place to light fire,
Smoke went to the ceiling
Boys I tell you,
Onchomba started coughing
The wife ran away shouting
There is a a madman at the ceiling

Alcoholism is one of the problems facing society today. The effects of alcoholism are devastating. Young men walk around like zombies because they have been ravaged by alcohol. Worse still, human interactions are sharply reduced while continued alcoholism threatens to destroy the lives of many in society. Bikundo, therefore, delves into alcoholism and provides a way out. He goes ahead to warn Onchomba that if he doesn't stop climbing the ceiling when drunk, he will choke and die:

Onyoni Onyoni tiga mbatebie
Onchomba tiga ngokanie naende tosoa irongo
Aiye tata, baminto mbatebie
Aiye Onchomba, onchomba tiga ngokanie
Tokorina irongo ga chinsa chiarire

Mogoroba yaya Onchomba togochia irongo
Bamura nagokania irongo erioki ndigokong'eta tata
Natigire, abanto batebe ekwang'ententwe
Erioki okongusu rimo igo, gwasumura
Rigosokera korwa chimioro kabere, gatato mama nakure

Onchomba let me tell you
Don't enter the ceiling
Oh dear friends
Let me tell you
Don't climb to the ceiling
When it is late in the evening
Brother I tell you
At the ceiling
Smoke will choke you dear.
I have left,
People will say you
Were strangled
You will inhale smoke,
The Third time you will die.

What emerges from Bikundo's music is his vision towards moral decadence in society due to pervasive false morality manifest in the secularization of life. The various moral issues highlighted here are a clear testimony of the context which Bikundo is creating and

performing for. Society has dropped its moral guard without providing a way out of the untowardness. Society has become nefarious and blind to its follies as many of its members lead deceptive and ruinous lives. Thus, besides providing solutions to the individual members of society, Bikundo reminds society of its collective role to ensure the well-being of its members and to provide reproach to those who have lost the moral compass. As social fabric, society needs to come together to direct, reproach and appraise its members.

4.2 Social Cohesion

Bikundo is perturbed by the deteriorating social cohesion in the Abagusii society. Often times, social cohesion is grounded on existing solidarity and connectedness forged on the strength of relationships among members in society. Abagusii society has a close knit aspect of social cohesion. As an ordering feature of society, social cohesion is considered as the interdependence between members of the society, shared values and commonalities. It spurs connections between families, individuals and groups of people in society.

In the song *Onkendi*, Bikundo laments that his brother Onkendi no longer visits them. Rhetorically, he wonders what is holding his brother back from coming home even when he needs assistance from. Apparently, the brother, Onkendi, does not attend any social functions such as funerals and fundraisings. Thus, Bikundo is calling out his brother to come to his aid in his hour of need:

Nigo nkumetie tori gochi matanga

Nigo nkumetie Onkendi tori gochi mochango

Tocha komboria Bikundo obaba kai kware gaki kai kware ekero nare
nobokong'u

Inche ndoche Bikundo ninde nobokong'u

Inchwo bwango abana baminto inchwo bwango

Inchwo bwango inwe mokwane amang'ana aya

Mokore bwango omento oyo ndoche nkong'ita are yaa

I am wondering why you don't go to funerals

I am wondering why you don't go to fundraisings

Don't come to ask Bikundo of mother

Where you were please where you were when I had a problem.

Me Bikundo I see I have a problem

Come quickly

My brother comes quickly

Do fast I see

There a person who is going to kill me brother.

This is a clarion call for family to stick together when confronted with various adversities. Bikundo is convinced that he will be able to overcome his “eminent death” if

his brother comes to his aid. He, therefore, projects a vision that a cohesive family is able to confront and overcome various challenges.

Bikundo emphasizes the idea that if people from any given community come together for the common good, the results will always be remarkable. In the Song *Seito Gusii* (Our Homeland Gusii), Bikundo rallies the community towards working together. He points out that collective consciousness is critical for their economic progression. Thus, for him, working together in various cottage industries in the Abagusii region will spur growth for the region as a whole. He encourages people to remain resolute and determined in what they do like: women who are involved in fruits and vegetables farming, the young boys who are involved in brick making, butchery, carpentry, metal work, transport services among many other income generating activities. In this song, Bikundo underscores the need for Abagusii to work collectively and relentlessly towards the betterment of the society. If people come together at home and in their places of work, social cohesion will be achieved and this will ultimately better society.

In the song *Esigwechi* (Sewage), Bikundo laments about how people look down upon Bonchari, one of the clans in Kisii County. They think that Abanchari do not know anything and whenever they pass, people point fingers at them:

Omoisi bwa abanchari

Baito gaki nachaiwe

Ba mura ase ngoeta

Abanto nigo bakondama

Oyio nominchari
Noyonde oeta
Abanchari naborubwo nki bamanyete

Son of Abanchari
My people please I have been
Looked down upon
Boys where pass people abuse me,
That one is Omochari
Another one passes
Abanchari what do they know

Bikundo goes ahead to show that Abanchari have acquired formal education and are professionals like those from other clans therefore should not be looked down upon. This exemplifies hindrances to social cohesion when the Abagusii profile their members based on certain mannerisms or physical surrounding. He therefore asks the larger gusii region not to look at Abanchari as waste (sewage). Bonchari is also considered as a place where sewage from all parts of Kisii is directed to and dumped:

Ogosoma osomete bono aye are daktari gose eprofessor,
Buri onye ekebaki onye tar ekegwankwa,
Nkai ogotonya bono ariende omanyeye korema
Okage gwaikire gusii onye tari Suneka,

Egeti gie chindege ekio kere Bonchari

The education you have as a doctor or professor

You are neither an eagle nor a butter fly,

Where will you land?

You be contented that you have

Reached Gusii

Were it not for SunekaAir strip,

Located at Bonchari,

However, Bikundo indicates that the sewage dumped at Bonchari is a source of wealth and employment to many in the area. He, for example, points out that the sewage is a source of fertilizer which will be sold to earn more money to the region. Gusii as a whole will benefit from this fertilizer and its people will work at Bonchari. Bikundo, therefore, urges the Abagusii people not discriminate other clans but to embrace them. They need to co-exist together and work as unit for the growth of the community:

Esigwechi yachete boncharii bwamwabo negasi

Naende nobwoyo bwachichete Bonchari

Ekero giokoone bowoyo moche ne ekebande

Tomanye ase okarwete onye mbogirango (rigori igoro)

Onye Machoge (rigori igoro)

Onye Mbobasi (rigori igoro)

Onye Nyaribari (rigori igoro)

Onye Bogetutu (rigori igoro)

Onye Mbogirango (rigori igoro)

Onye Bonchari (tokoonia duty free)

The sewage that came to Bonchari, brother it

It is a source for jobs and it is fertilizer that

Has come to Bonchari

When we shall be selling fertilizer,

When we shall be selling fertilizer, you come with

Your identity card for us to know where you

Come from.

If it is Bogirango the price is high

If it is Machoge the price is high

If it is Bobasi the price is high

If it is Nyaribari the price is high

If it is Bogitutu the price is high

Eee if it is North Mogirango the price is high

But for Bonchari we sell duty free

In the song, Bikundo shows how the various Abagusii clans will greatly benefit from Bonchari. Therefore, the clans should work together as a unit. In this way, Bikundo urges the community to cultivate social cohesion among its members for the growth of the

community. Members of the community should foster a sense of belonging and good neighborhood.

In the song *Echirani/Neighbor*, Bikundo amplifies virtues of good neighborhood when he juxtaposes neighbors with two different mannerisms. In the song, the Bikundo talks of one neighbor who is always quarrelsome and spiteful and other who is caring and fosters peaceful co-existence. For instance, the singer talks about a neighbor who ate all the eggs which were laid in his house by the singer's hen. When the owner inquired about his eggs, the neighbour threatened him with a cutlass. Ironically, the neighbour's dog lives in Bikundo's home. Whatever he eats, he gives a little to the dog. When he is taking meat, or kales or dagaa, he throws some to it to eat. Consequently, the neighbor is shown as one who always stocks trouble with his neighbours as he picks up quarrels now and again. Thus, Bikundo is asking for the kind of medicine that he will use to heal his neighbour from these qualities. Bikundo shows a number of social ills committed by his neighbour such as insulting and wishing death upon his wife, and blocking the pathway so that Bikundo's family will have no place to pass to the river. It is quite clear that the extent of selfishness of Bikundo's neighbour is profound. However, Bikundo juxtaposes the neighbour's behavior with his own to highlight poor relations and failures of good neighbourhood. In this way, Bikundo urges the Abagusii community to embrace their neighbors and live as brothers and sisters.

4.3 Socio-economic Empowerment

Unemployment is a major concern in Bikundo's popular music. Across the country, there has been a steady increase in unemployment as more and more young people graduate from tertiary colleges and universities yet the current economy is not able to absorb them. The Kenyan economy has shrunk with some industries compelled to take austerity measures including terminating the services of some of their employees. As a way of providing his social vision, Birundu advises members of the community to support each other in the cottage industries in the region such as brickmaking, soapstones and wood curving among others. In the song *Seito Gusii* (Our Homeland Gusii), Birundu catalogues various cottage industries and businesses in the region and asks the youth to embrace them in order to empower themselves economically. He observes that both the young and old are struggling to make ends meet. To him, the solution is to embrace the available jobs regardless of their status in society:

Gusii yeito yerure gokora juakali

Ensemu ye chinyeni abang'ina namba one

Ensemu ye amatunda abang'ina namba one

Ensemu ye chinyanya abang'ina namba one

Ensemu yokoonia enyama abamura berure

Ensemu yokoonia chijiko abamura berure

Gotagete chisanduku abamura berure

Oyworobundu abamura berure

Chidirisha abamura berure

Chibiba abamura berure
Ensemu yechigari amakanika erure
Ensemu ya malimali ebijana bierure
Gusii yeito taxi abamura berure
Nonye nechipikipiki abamura berure
Nonye nechinyange abamura berure
Nonye nechinyange abamura berure
Nonye mogongoteni abamura berure
Nogosibia chigari abamura berure
Nogwatia ekogoto abamura berure bororo

Lets work together even at Juakail
If you go to Sironga you will see bricks
If you go to Tabaka you will see soapstones
If you go to Bosongo you will see Juakali
In the area of vegetable women are number one
In the area of fruits women are number one
In the area of tomatoes women are number one
In the area of selling meat men are determined
In the area of selling jikos men are determined
If you want boxes men are determined
If you want sandals men are determined
If you want doors men are determined

If you want windows men are determined
If you want drums men are determined
In the area of vehicles mechanics are determined
In the area of malimali youths are determined
Our land Gusii taxi youths are determined
Even motorcycles youths are determined
Even bicycles youths are determined
Even car washes youths are determined
Even making grabbles youths are determined dearly

Bikundo indicates that society should always try to make use of readily available resources within their surrounding. For instance, Bikundo points out that the backbone of the Abagusii economy is agriculture and for society to benefit fully from it, everyone should to actively participate in it, especially the youth. In the song, Bikundo salutes various members of the society who have shown their determination in the various sectors that they work in. He urges the rest of the society to follow suit in order to attain economic empowerment.

4.4 Chapter Summary

It has been argued that artists portray their vision of society through their creative works. As such, this chapter interrogated Bikundo's artistic vision for the Abagusii society as articulated in his popular music. Based on the Abagusii society as the context of his

music, Bikundo has expressed his vision to various issues in society such as moral decadence, social cohesion and socio-economic empowerment. Through his music, Bikundo indicts society for its failure for moral instruction. He urges society to collectively work together to direct, reorganize and to appraise its members. In a society faced with various challenges, Bikundo urges the need to foster closer social ties and the need to engage in various readily available socio-economic activities in order to sustain livelihoods.

The next chapter provides the summary of the findings, conclusion and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to examine how stylistic features have been used to foreground various thematic concerns in Bikundo's popular music. This final chapter presents a summary of the key findings, conclusions and recommendations for further research.

5.2 Summary of the Key Findings

This study set out to investigate how features of style are used to bring out various thematic concerns in Bikundo's popular music. The study analyzed eighteen (18) songs in line with the three (3) objectives of this study as well as on the basis of diversity in terms of style and content. The focus in this study was two-fold: stylistic features and thematic concerns, and how these combine to project Bikundo's artistic vision in society as articulated through the selected songs. Both semiotics and sociological theories were used to unravel the embedded stylistic features, meaning(s) and the social contexts within which the songs apply in the society. In this way, the study showed how Bikundo made use of various stylistic features such as symbolism, personification, metaphor, and idiomatic expressions among others in the songs depending on various social contexts. The choice of stylistic features in his songs to foreground issues shows Bikundo's subtle understanding of the society and his dare need to articulate the concerns in society through song. This is in line with the first objective of this study.

The second objective was to show the various thematic concerns articulated Bikundo's songs. The analysis revealed that the popular musician canvasses various issues affecting society such as HIV/AIDS, hardwork, poverty and love among other issues affecting society. The study showed that the various concerns articulated in Bikundo's songs are informed by the changing dynamics in the Abagusii society. Chapter four turned attention to how Bikundo projects his artistic vision through his music. The chapter showed that Bikundo articulates his artistic vision on diverse issues such as moral decadence, social cohesion, failed neighbourhood and socio-economic empowerment activities, which was in line with objective three of this study. The study showed that Bikundo urges for a cohesive and unified society which is conscious of its moral and socio-economic wellbeing.

5.3 Conclusions

The study reveals that Bikundo commits himself to addressing issues affecting society. His popular songs function as a voice which seeks to address various issues affecting Abagusii society such as failed love life, breakdown in social cohesion, and various socio-economic challenges. Thus, it is a voice of urgency that deserves its place in the Abagusii society. This study also established that Bikundo's songs are informed by his personal experiences and historical truths as is evident from his fusion of private and public themes in his songs. Issues such as mistrust and poor relations among neighbours as depicted in his songs either emanates from his own personal experiences or from his interactions with various people in society. Therefore, this study affirms that Bikundo

engages various stylistic features in his songs to foreground his intended message and to ensure that it is clearly articulated.

5.4 Recommendations for further study

This study delimited itself to how features of style have been used to foreground various thematic concerns in Bikundo's popular music. We therefore recommend that further studies be conducted on how other musicians from the region use language and style in their songs and whether their music is tailored towards addressing various issues afflicting society. Further, we recommend a comparative study between Bikundo's songs and those other musicians from the region be conducted in order to show how the artists project their vision for the Abagusii society.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Research Authorisation Letter



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REF. MksU/GS/SS/011/VOL.1 9th September, 2020

The Director,
National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
P.O Box 30623,
NAIROBI


Dear Sir

RE: OSUBO, JOEL ATUTI- C50-2790-2019


The above named is a Master's student in the second year of study and has cleared course work. The University has cleared him to conduct a research entitled: "Examining the use of style to foreground thematic concerns in Ronald Ontiri Onchuru's popular music"

Kindly assist him with a Research Permit in order to undertake the research.

Thank you



DR. RICHARD PETER, PhD
DEAN GRADUATE SCHOOL
KRP/anm

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Appendix II: NACOSTI PERMIT


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Ref No: 261614 Date of Issue: 18/September/2020

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Mr. Joel Atuti Osobo of Machakos University, has been licensed to conduct research in Kisii on the topic: "Examining the use of style to foreground thematic concerns in Ronald Ontiri Onchuru's popular music." for the period ending : 18/September/2021.

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