

**MUSICKING AND DANCING IMBALU CIRCUMCISION RITUALS
(*KHUSHINA IMBALU*): PERFORMING GENDER AMONG THE
BAGISU OF EASTERN UGANDA**

by

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(2007/HD03/11066U)

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Music, Dance and Drama in the
Faculty of Arts in Partial Fulfilment for the Requirements of the Award of the
Degree of Master of Arts in Music of
Makerere University

November, 2010

DECLARATION

I, Dominic D.B Makwa do hereby declare this as my original work. It has never been submitted to any other University or institution for any academic award.

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DEDICATION

To my father, the late Difasi Wereka who did not have the chance to see this book

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation has been a result of many people's effort and although I cannot mention all of them, I highly appreciate their contribution. First and foremost, my appreciation goes to the NORAD Arts and Cultural Education (ACE) Programme for the scholarship that enabled me to study, not only at Makerere University but also at the University of Bergen (Norway). In a special note, I convey my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza, the NORAD ACE co-ordinator, my principal lecturer and supervisor for her tireless effort to shape me into an ethnomusicologist. I specifically owe Dr. Nannyonga-Tamusuza gratitude for her constant, positive and constructive criticisms, which enabled me to complete this work. Her continued advice on reading "aloud", reflecting on as well as questioning and relating issues to the topic of this research have shaped me into a critical thinker. Further, Dr. Nannyonga-Tamusuza has also been a mother and counselor, especially during the time I was sick. I cannot find the right words to express my gratitude, I can only pray for God's blessings upon her.

My special tribute also goes to the NORAD and NUFU team of lecturers for the preparatory courses they offered me before I went to the University of Bergen. I specifically thank Professor Justinian Tamusuza, Dr. Susan Kiguli, Dr. Abasi Kiyimba, Dr. Jessicah Kaahwa, Dr. Patrick Mangeni and Dr. Khamalwa Wotsuna for their criticisms, encouragements and advice. I acknowledge Dr. Khamalwa Wotsuna for exposing me to the works of J.S La Fontaine, Victor Turner and Suzette Heald who have offered important knowledge about the culture of the Bagisu. Moreover, Dr. Khamalwa's research on *imbalu* circumcision rituals offered a significant point of departure for my research. I also thank Dr. Okello Obura from the East African School of Library and Information Science for the lectures on archiving which contributed skills of collecting archival materials that will be archived in the Makerere University Klaus Wachsmann Archive.

My special thanks also go to the ethnomusicology team of professors at the Grieg Academy, University of Bergen (Norway). I thank Dr. Thomas Solomon, Dr. Erik Steinskog, Dr. Sigborn Apeland, Professor Annemette Kirkegaard and Professor Paul Berliner for their contribution in shaping me into a scholar. I am also grateful to Karythrn Bousman, the NORAD ACE Project Administrator at the Grieg Academy (University of Bergen), for enhancing a comfortable and good study environment while in Bergen. I particularly thank her for the concern she showed when I was sick. I also thank Sigrid Blindheim for taking me to the hospital and making sure that I got treatment. Kjellifird Kritte, my writing tutor at the

University of Bergen, thank you very much for your lessons on writing skills. To Professor Patter Blom from the Department of Social Anthropology (University of Bergen), thank you for the keen interest you showed in my research topic. My thanks also go to Professor Steinar Saetre, also from the Grieg Academy (University of Bergen), his wife Jorunn and the children for the kindness and the warm welcome they accorded me and my colleagues when we arrived in Bergen. To all my friends at Fantoft International Students Hostel, thanks for the good company. My sister Betty Nangira, I thank you so much for making me feel at home while in Bergen.

Special thanks also go to my colleagues in the academic struggle. Most specifically, I thank Anita Asaasira, Jenitha Kameli Abela, Pamela Mbabazi and Stella Wadiru for the support and co-operation they showed. For Anita Asaasira, I owe you thanks for assisting me transcribe the music excerpts I have included in this dissertation. Jenitha Kameli, thanks a lot for constantly checking on me whenever I was sick. My classmates at the Grieg Academy, University of Bergen (Norway) also deserve special mentioning in this dissertation. Jon Lomeland, Hannah Hansen, David Basoga and Nicholas Ssempijja were all very supportive during the course of my stay in Norway. To my other colleagues, Aloysius Ssekimpi, Daniel Ssempereza and Richard Kaabunga from the music composition class at Makerere University, thank you for your co-operation.

I also extend my special thanks to my great friends Patricia and Larry Kelly from Kellowna, Canada. Thanks a lot for urging me to “keep the nose in books” and for the concern towards my health. God bless you so much. My uncles Eric Nakasala, David Tsolobi, Julius Kutosi, Ernest Wayenjera, Rev. Benayo Mukhwana and Sam Namara, thanks for what you have done for me since childhood. In a special way, I thank my uncle Enosi Khafu for the assistance in digitalisation of my field interviews and music recordings. Thank you for teaching me how to use the equipment I had brought to the field. Thank you also for introducing me to Peter Ssonko Sembatya Musumba whose computer expertise was very significant in compiling the data for this dissertation. My aunties Judith Namakhonje, Joyce Namakhonje, Lornah Namakhonje and Aidah Namwano, thank you for your support. To my brother-in-law Fred Napaya and my sister Jenipher Namono, thanks for your continued support.

I also thank my parents Difasi Wereka (RIP) and Fayrose Mayobo Wereka for the care, love and encouragement. Although he did not have enough money and had not reached my level, my father spared the little money he had to educate me. May his soul rest in eternal peace. My mother deserves special thanks because after the death of my father, she single-

handedly took over the mantle and supported me to this level. To my brothers and only sister, thanks for your continued support.

Further, I thank my informants for allowing me conduct a study on their culture. Indeed, if they had declined to share their experiences about *imbalu* circumcision rituals, this dissertation would not have seen the light of the day. Most especially, my thanks go to Robert Kuloba, Wilson Kuloba, George Wekoye, Aidah Namwano, Betty Nabulwala Kitongo, Phares Masanga Masata, David Walela, Phillip Wamayosi, Andrew Mukhwana, Juliet Muduwa, Vincent Matanda, Stephen Nakhokho, Johnson Kanyanya, Stephen Wanyera, Rev. George William Weanga, Rev. Canon Joram Webisa and Rev Benayo Mukhwana. I also thank Mr. Wilson Fungo, my research assistant, for being readily available whenever I had a study trip. His effort in connecting me to the informants I did not know cannot be underestimated. To the organizing committee of *inemba* dance in Bulucheke Sub-county (Bududa District), thanks for allowing me take photos, make recordings and interact with *inemba* drummers and share their views on the symbolisms embedded in *inemba* drums.

Lastly, I thank the almighty God for giving me the gift of life, his mercy and unconditional love. May Your Mighty name be Glorified.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
ABSTRACT	xii
CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction to the Study	1
1.2 Background to the Study	2
1.3 Statement of Problem	5
1.4 Objectives of the Study	5
1.4.1 General Objective	5
1.4.2 Specific Objectives of the Study	6
1.5 Scope of the Study	6
1.5.1 Geographical Scope	6
1.5.2 Content Scope	9
1.6 Definition of Terms	9
1.7 Hypothesis	11
1.8 Significance of the Study	11
1.9 Dissertation Layout	12
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 Gender in Uganda	13
2.3 Rituals, Music and Dance	18

2.4 <i>Imbalu</i> Rituals, Music and Dance.....	22
2.5 Music and Dance, and Gender.....	27
2.6 Theoretical Framework.....	32
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	35
3.1 Introduction	35
3.2 Research Design.....	35
3.3 Sampling.....	36
3.4 Research Tools	37
3.4.1 Participant Observation	37
3.4.2 Interviews	39
3.4.3 Library Research	40
3.4.4 Photography, Audio and Visual- Recording	40
3.4.5 Personal Experience	41
3.5 Data Analysis.....	42
3.6 Ethical Considerations	42
3.7 Limitations to the Study	43
CHAPTER FOUR: CONTEXTS OF MUSICKING AND DANCING.....	46
IMBALU.....	46
4.1 Introduction	46
4.2 Origin of the Bagisu and <i>Imbalu</i>	47
4.3 Bugisu Environment and <i>Imbalu</i> Rituals.....	53
4.4 <i>Imbalu</i> as a Religious Ritual.....	57
4.5 Conceptualisation of Gender among the Bagisu	63
4.5.1 Gendering from Birth through Puberty	64
4.5.2 Gendering after <i>Imbalu</i> Circumcision Rituals	70

CHAPTER FIVE: GENDERING IMBALU RITUALS, MUSIC AND DANCE	77
5.1 Introduction	77
5.2 Rituals, Music and Dance: An Integrative <i>Imbalu</i>	77
5.3 Imbalu Preparatory Stage	80
5.3.1 <i>Khushebusa imbalu</i> : Reminder about Manhood	81
5.3.2 <i>Isonja</i> Dance: A Site for Testing Manhood	85
5.3.3 <i>Khuwenza Busani</i> : Boy “Searching” for Manhood.....	92
5.4 The Pen-Surgery Stage	96
5.4.1 <i>Khukoya Busera</i> : Boys Sharing Men’s Space?	101
5.4.2 <i>Khuakha Kamamela</i> : Enforcing Man Traits?.....	105
5.4.3 <i>Khubeka Litsune</i> : Female- Father “Making” the Man	112
5.4.4 Ancestral Groove: “Fellowship” with Forefathers.....	117
5.4.5 Visiting the Maternal Clan: Affirming “Male- Mother” Ties?	118
5.4.6 Sacred Swamp: Final Blessings to Manhood.....	121
5.4.7 <i>Khukhwinjila imbalu</i> : “Entering” Manhood	124
5.5 Cultural Reintegration	129
5.5.1 Purification Ritual: “Defining” Manhood	129
5.5.2 <i>Khujenda tsinzila</i> : Site for Knowing Short Cuts.....	134
5.5.3 <i>Khukhuyalula</i> : “Man” Hatching from Seclusion	136
5.5.4 <i>Inemba</i> Dance: “Cloth” of Manhood	138
5.5. 5 <i>Indonyi</i> and <i>Inemba</i> : Woman and Man Drums	143
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	149
6.1 Summary.....	149
6.2 Conclusions	152
6.3 Recommendations	153
REFERENCES	155
APPENDICES	161
APPENDIX 1: Glossary	161
APPENDIX 2: Research Interview Guide.....	163

a) Initiates who were circumcised in 2008	163
b) Circumcisers (<i>Bashebi</i>).....	163
c) Song leaders.....	164
d) Custodians of <i>inemba</i> drums and dance	165
e) Other imbalu ritual executors (yeast man and Clan leader)	165
f) Church leaders, Politicians, teachers and community educators.....	166
APPENDIX 3: Events Attended.....	167
APPENDIX 4: List of Informants	169
APPENDIX 5: Letter of Introduction from Makerere University.....	174
APPENDIX 6: A Sample of Informant Consent Form	175

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Study Area.....	8
Figure 2: <i>Khukana Bushebe</i> (We Want Circumcision).....	83
Figure 3: <i>Ingoma ye Khushebusa</i> (Reminding Drum) Rhythms	84
Figure 4: <i>Namyenya</i> Leading Candidates in <i>Isonja</i> Dance	86
Figure 5: <i>Yolele Yolele</i> (<i>Imbalu</i> Has Come)	87
Figure 6: <i>Imbalu</i> Candidates Performing <i>Isonja</i> Dance	89
Figure 7: <i>Masaba Akana Imbalu</i> (Masaba Wants <i>Imbalu</i>)	94
Figure 8: <i>Imbalu Muliro</i> (<i>Imbalu</i> is Fire)	96
Figure 9: Bugisu Local Council V Chairpersons Officiating at <i>Imbalu</i> Ceremonies	98
Figure 10: <i>Imbalu</i> Candidates Performing <i>Tsinyimba</i> Dance.....	99
Figure 11: <i>Nambakha Shalelo Bamamba</i> (The Stubborn One, Today Iam Caught)	103
Figure 12: Admonitions of the Yeast Man while Smearing <i>Imbalu</i>	106
Figure 13: <i>Sheeta Umwana Afane Papa We</i> (Cut the Boy to Resemble His Father)	107
Figure 14: <i>Nakholola Imbalu</i> (I am “Coughing” <i>Imbalu</i>)	109
Figure 15: <i>Kalibala Umusani Utsya Khubwoki</i> (Kalibala the Man, You Will Go for the Knife)	111
Figure 16: Paternal Aunt’s Evocations During the Shaving Ritual	112
Figure 17: <i>Umusani womweene Ukana</i> (You Demanded for Manhood Yourself)	113
Figure 18: <i>Mushikuka Shali Wakooli</i> (In Wakooli’s Clan)	115
Figure 19: <i>Ise Naama Busoto Isolo Yimambe</i> (I am Coming from Busoto the Animal will Catch Me	120
Figure 20: <i>Imbalu Muliro</i> (<i>Imbalu</i> is Fire)	122
Figure 21: <i>Imbalu</i> “Surgery-Theatre”	125
Figure 22: Circumciser’s Knife Ready for the Job	126
Figure 23: <i>Khanyunyi Khamusuru Khalule</i> (The Wild Bird Has Hatched).....	127
Figure 24: Circumciser’s Admonitions.....	130
Figure 25: <i>Yaya Burawuni</i> (My Brown Sister)	135
Figure 26: <i>Businde Khwawoona</i> (We Have Chased Boy hood)	137
Figure 27: Elder’ Recitation During the Ritual of Tightening Skins.....	139
Figure 28: <i>Umusinde Umukonela</i> Song	141
Figure 29: <i>Inemba</i> , Man Drum Accompanying <i>Inemba</i> Dance.....	145
Figure 30: <i>Indonyi</i> , Woman Drum Accompanying <i>Inemba</i> Dance	146

ABSTRACT

In this study, I examine how musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals participate in performing gender among the Bagisu of eastern Uganda. *Imbalu* denotes the rituals, musics and dances performed to initiate adolescent boys into manhood among the Bagisu. Informed by the view that music is more than the sound structure (Seeger, 1987), I use the concept of musicking to stress that *imbalu* is a process of creation, performance and consumption of music and dance. I articulate how music and dance are integrated in *imbalu* circumcision rituals. I argue that gender categories are a product of cultural and social correlates (Herndon 1990; Magrini (2003); Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2005) and examine how *imbalu* music and dance form a platform to perform gender roles, identities and relations among the Bagisu.

This study was inspired by the role *imbalu* circumcision rituals play in the construction of the gender identity, defining the gender roles and shaping the gender relations among the Bagisu. In addition, despite the fact that *imbalu* rituals are highly integrated with music and dance, there is inadequate research on *imbalu* musicking and dancing. Most scholars have preoccupied themselves with the historical background of *imbalu* and its symbolism. As such, my main objective was to examine how musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals perform the Bagisu gender ideology. This study necessitated the use of a qualitative research methodology, which involves sharing people's views and experiences through interviews, participant observation and library research.

This research has revealed that musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals are a platform for performing gender roles, identities and relations among the Bagisu. Further, informed by Nannyonga-Tamusuza's (2005) reciprocal relationship theory, it was revealed that while *imbalu* music and dance define and create the Bagisu gender ideology, the created gender categories inform the musics and dances performed in *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Besides this study, *imbalu* circumcision rituals still present many avenues for future research. I recommend that future scholars should conduct a comparative study on musicking and dancing circumcision rituals of other ethnic groups within and outside Uganda to examine how initiation rituals construct the identity of a people. Lastly, since HIV/AIDS activists argue that cultural circumcision like that of the Bagisu accelerates the spread of HIV/AIDS,

there is need to study the whole ritual process of *imbalu* beyond the surgery of the penis to include the impact of the musicking and dancing in the spreading of HIV/AIDS.

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Study

In this study, I examine how musicking and dancing *imbalu*, the rituals, musics and dances performed to initiate the boy into manhood participate in performing gender among the Bagisu of eastern Uganda. I articulate how music and dance are integrated in *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Informed by Anthony Seeger's (1987) view that music is more than the sounds captured on the tape recorder, I stress that *imbalu* circumcision music is a process (see also Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2005). I use the concept of musicking to demonstrate that *imbalu* music is not merely the music heard in these rituals, but also a process of creation, performance and consumption of this music. Further, I use the concept of dancing to stress that the aspect of dancing in *imbalu* rituals includes the display of the basic dance motifs, formations, costuming and the themes depicted through the performance of various *imbalu* circumcision dances.

Informed by the view that gender categories are constructions of society (see for instance J.S La Fontaine, 1981; Marcia Herndon, 1990; Sherry Ortner, 1996 and Tullia Magrini, 2003), I examine how *imbalu* circumcision rituals, their interactive music and dance participate in performing the Bagisu gender ideology. I examine the *imbalu* circumcision ritual process as well as the integrated music and dance in terms of song texts, musical forms and symbolisms in the instruments. Further, I investigate the Bagisu gender ideology as performed through dance motifs, formations, costumes as well as the themes depicted in the *imbalu* circumcision dances.

I demonstrate that there is a reciprocal relationship between the Bagisu gender ideology, *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance. I stress that song texts, symbolisms embedded in instruments, dance motifs, themes in *imbalu* dances, formations as well as costumes participate in the construction and concretization of the Bagisu gender ideology. I also illustrate that the constructed gender categories also shape the nature of music and dances performed in *imbalu* circumcision rituals.

1.2 Background to the Study

The Bagisu (singular Mugisu) are people of the Bantu family who live along the slopes of Mount Elgon (also called Mount Masaba) in eastern Uganda. They speak *Lugisu*, sometimes called *Lumasaba*. Like other Bantu languages, *Lugisu* has multiple dialects, however, only four of these dialects will be mentioned. While *Ludadiri* is a *Lugisu* dialect spoken by the Bagisu from the north, *Lubuuya* is the *Lugisu* dialect spoken in south Bugisu. Further, the Bagisu who live near the Babukusu of western Kenya have the influence of *Lubukusu*, the language of Babukusu¹. And yet, the Bagisu who live in Central Bugisu speak a *Lugisu* dialect influenced by languages including *Luganda*, *Lusoga*, *Lusamia* and *Lunyoli*.

The term *Kigisu* is used to denote that which belongs to the Bagisu people. As such, one can talk of *Kigisu* music, *Kigisu* dances or *kigisu* culture. Further, the generic term Gisu (Gishu) has been used by scholars like Victor Turner (1969, 1973) and Suzette Heald (1982) to refer to the Bagisu people, their region, language, or culture. As such, one can talk of the Gisu while referring to the Bagisu people or something that belongs to them. However, the Bagisu do not refer to themselves or what belongs to them as the Gisu (Gishu).

The Bagisu circumcise their males aged between sixteen and twenty-two years in an elaborate ritual known as *imbalu*. *Imbalu* does not only denote the cutting of the foreskin of the penis, which I have called pen-surgery, but also other rituals, music and dance (see also Dominic Makwa, 2005). The *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance undergo a process which begins with the boy's announcement of his candidature and goes on through the reminding rituals, *isonja* dance and pen-surgery. There are also rituals, musics and dances performed after pen-surgery including purification, "walking" the village paths, hatching ritual and *inemba* dance. In fact, to be considered a "real" man among the Bagisu, the boy must pass through the above stages of *imbalu* as will be discussed in Chapter Five. As such, the success of *imbalu* rituals primarily depends on the success of the music and dances performed. Because of the integrative nature of *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance, the Bagisu literally refer to the performance of these rituals as *khushina imbalu* which denotes "dancing" the *imbalu* circumcision rituals. To emphasise the significance of music and dance in *imbalu*, some of the rituals and dances performed share names with instruments played to accompany *imbalu* rituals. *Inemba* for example, is not only a ritual performed to

¹ The Babukusu are also Bantu people whose customs are similar to those of the Bagisu. John Baptist Naleera (2003) notes that Babukusu were merely separated from the Bagisu by the colonialists at the turn of the nineteenth century.

“commission” *imbalu* initiates into manhood, but is also a dance and music genre which derives its name from a long drum called *inemba*.

The *imbalu* ritual is performed to initiate boys into manhood and is a prelude to marriage. Since *imbalu* qualifies the initiate to get married, only “physically mature” boys are circumcised. *Imbalu* circumcision rituals are performed only in even years because the Bagisu associate these years with high food yields and reproduction of children. Food is very important in *imbalu* circumcision rituals since it is used to feed and decorate candidates as well as used in offering sacrifices.

Imbalu rituals function as a platform through which initiates become “full” or “complete” men of the Bagisu society. Further, these rituals qualify males to transcend to independence since it is only after being circumcised that sons receive their share of the family property from their fathers. The newly circumcised man is expected to get married and welcome other clansmen into his household and therefore needs land to carry out farming as well as build a house. However, failure to get married after circumcision leads to the automatic loss of one’s man identity among the Bagisu as will be discussed later in this dissertation.

Due to the value and cohesive hold of the people on *imbalu* circumcision rituals, society does not only see these rituals as a gateway for defining man’s roles but also as a platform through which traits defining manhood are imparted. As Suzette Heald (1982) stresses, it is through *imbalu* rituals that the Bagisu enunciate traits like aggressiveness, kindness and strength in the boy. Through the music, dances and ritual admonitions, the boy is told that a “real” man among the Bagisu is expected to be “strong”, “kind”, “tough” and hardworking as will be discussed in Chapter Five.

While men are expected to be strong, women among the Bagisu are considered weak, subjective and emotional people, whose protection and defence is vested in the hands of men. A “real” woman among the Bagisu is one who produces children and is expected to be submissive to her husband. Further, since sex is a tool of procreation, the Bagisu set it aside for only “men” and “women”, those females and males who are ready to produce children. The Bagisu stress the fact that procreation enhances the continuity of the society and as such any man or woman who does not produce children becomes a social misfit. Since society expects boys to get married after *imbalu* rituals, themes on sex and family life are embedded in *imbalu* songs and dances. Some of the *imbalu* songs aim at enabling candidates to identify prospective marriage partners.

Like in other African societies, gender is a constructed phenomenon among the Bagisu (see also Nannyonga- Tamusuza, 2005). To become a “man” or “woman” is a process which begins at birth and goes on through naming, adolescence, manhood, elderhood until one becomes an ancestor after death. At every stage of this process, gender is defined by an initiation ceremony. As this study demonstrates, the life cycle of any Mugisu is punctuated with initiation rituals including naming at birth, circumcision at adolescence and last funeral rites at death. Throughout one’s life, these rituals participate in the gender construction of the Mugisu and *imbalu* circumcision rituals are among the activities on the gendering trajectory of the Bagisu.

Despite the fact that *imbalu* rituals pervade the lives of the Bagisu, the influence of western education and religion have led to many changes in the performance of these rituals. For example some Bagisu, have opted for hospital circumcision arguing that cultural circumcision is primitive and also unhealthy with many hygiene problems. The church also equates these rituals to a cult whose aim is to distract peoples’ minds from the “true” God. And yet, the Bagisu who have persisted to perform cultural circumcision have introduced changes in the music and dances that are performed in these rituals. More so, *imbalu* musics and dances have transcended their original contexts. Apart from *imbalu* circumcision rituals, these musics and dances are performed in inter schools’ Music, Dance and Drama festivals, political rallies and discos, an area which needs further research.

Despite the changes however, music and dances continue to be significant in *imbalu* circumcision rituals. As such, to stop the Bagisu from performing music and dance in *imbalu* rituals tantamounts to stopping the whole process of “creating” men in their society. Indeed, those who get circumcised in hospitals are never respected in society because they missed significant transformation agents in the form of music and dance. This study examines the musicking and dancing processes in *imbalu* circumcision rituals to demonstrate how they participate in performing gender roles, identities and relations among the Bagisu. A more detailed discussion on the background to the Bagisu people is given in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

1.3 Statement of Problem

Imbalu circumcision rituals among the Bagisu aim at strengthening cultural continuity by enhancing the passing over of cultural responsibilities and ideologies from older generations to young ones. As Khamalwa (2004) has also stressed, *imbalu* circumcision rituals construct the Bagisu identity by making them stand out as a race of “men” (*basani*) as opposed to other un-circumcising tribes whom the Bagisu consider as boys (*basinde*) (see also Heald, 1982). Indeed, one graduates into a “man” and become considered responsible and indeed a “real” Mugisu through circumcision. The women’s “true” identity is also defined by marrying a “real” man, one who is circumcised. And yet, music and dance are part and parcel of *imbalu* rituals; the rituals are not complete without the music and dance and vice versa.

Despite the *imbalu* circumcision rituals’ role in constructing cultural and social identities and relations, which are indeed human rights for the Bagisu, there is inadequate research on musicking and dancing *imbalu* rituals among the Bagisu. And yet, the limited attention given to this subject has focused mainly on the rituals and only mentioned music and dance in passing. Further, there has been inadequate examination of how circumcision rituals, music, and dance participate in enhancing the gender ideology among the Bagisu. Indeed, the study of how musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals and how they participate in performing gender was necessary to enhance the understanding of why the Bagisu circumcise and the centrality of this ritual in the construction of their cultural and social identities and relations.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective

To examine how musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals participate in performing gender roles, identities, and relations among the Bagisu of eastern Uganda

1.4.2 Specific Objectives of the Study

1. To study the musicking and dancing processes in *imbalu* circumcision rituals
2. To examine the definition of gender roles, identities and relations among the Bagisu
3. To examine how musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals participate in performing gender roles, identities, and relations among the Bagisu

1.5 Scope of the Study

1.5.1 Geographical Scope

This study was conducted in Bududa and Mbale Districts, eastern Uganda. Because I had contacts in the above districts especially due to the fact that I had carried out research on *imbalu* rituals in 2004 for my undergraduate study, I had easy access to informants. Khamalwa (2004) also notes that *imbalu* rituals in southern Bugisu, where Bududa is located, have not been as much affected by change as in other parts of Bugisu. As such, I expected to witness some of the *imbalu* dances like *isonja* and *inemba* which are significant to this study and yet are rarely performed in other parts of Bugisu.

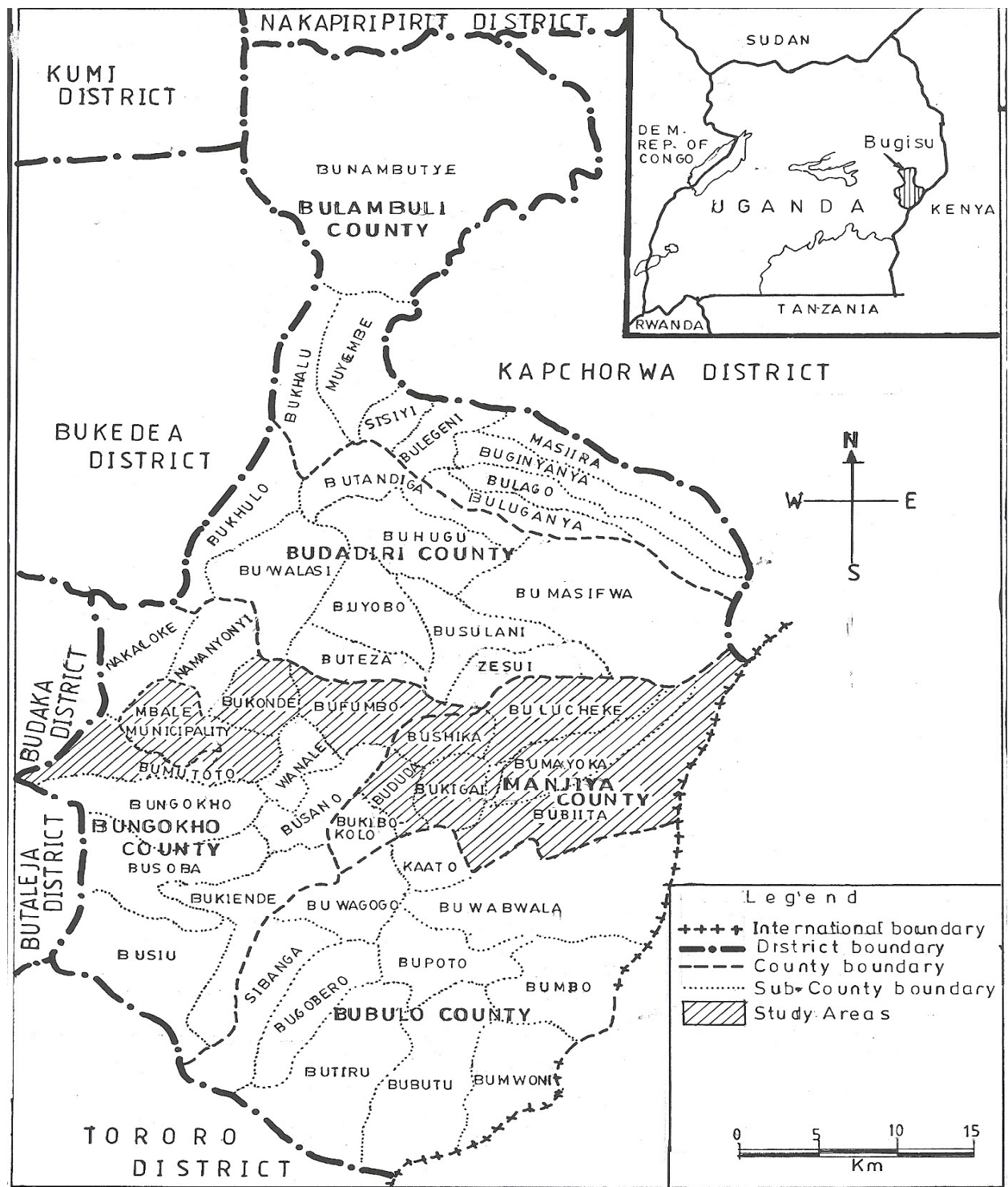
Further, in Bududa District, there are numerous cultural sites where candidates, led by ritual elders, go to perform *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Such sites include Namasho, Nalufutu and Iyerakha in Bulucheke, Bukigai and Bushika sub-counties, respectively. Among the rituals performed in cultural sites include smearing candidates with mud from the sacred swamp and washing candidates' penises before taking them for the pen-surgery ritual. In addition, cultural sites are characterized with various musics and dances. Many song leaders (*banamyenya*, singular *namyenya*), *imbalu* candidates as well as *kadodi* bands compete with one another in singing and playing music which is integrated in *imbalu* circumcision rituals. And since the above activities are relevant to this study, I found it pertinent to conduct research in Bududa District.

Bududa District is where I was born, raised and circumcised which offered an advantage of knowledge of the language as well as important informants for this study. Indeed, I had witnessed a lot of *imbalu* rituals, music and dances in Bududa. I had also visited

cultural sites, witnessed the sounding of the reminding drum as well as the performance of *isonja*, *kadodi* and *inemba* dances as performed in Bududa. And since there are varieties in *imbalu* rituals, music and dances in the different parts of Bugisu, I found it pertinent to conduct this study in Bududa.

Furthermore, since language is important for any successful interviews, I chose Bududa District due to the fact that I understand *Lubuya*, the language dialect spoken in this part of Bugisu. Further, there were easily accessible informants in Bududa District including elders charged with smearing candidates, custodians of ritual drums, song leaders, clan leaders and *imbalu* candidates. All these informants were ready to share their experiences with me. Mbale District was chosen because I wanted to interview people at Bumutoto, the place where *imbalu* circumcision rituals are officially launched. Bufumbo and Bukonde sub-counties in Mbale District are places known to have many circumcisers. Since circumcisers are among the stakeholders in *imbalu* circumcision rituals, I chose Mbale District in order to have easy access to the above sub counties for interaction with circumcisers.

Figure 1: Study Area



Source: By the cartographer of the Faculty of Arts, Makerere University

1.5.2 Content Scope

There are several ways researchers can approach *imbalu* circumcision rituals among the Bagisu. For example, a scholar can carry out a comparative study between *imbalu* circumcision rituals among the Bagisu with circumcision rituals among the Sabinys or Babukusu. Another study on *imbalu* circumcision rituals can emanate from the political perspective. Under this scope, scholars can investigate reasons as to why people seeking political offices among the Bagisu associate themselves with *imbalu*. The list is endless. However, in this study, I examined the interaction of *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance and how these rituals, music and dance participate in performing gender roles, identities, and relations among the Bagisu. As such, this study approaches *imbalu* rituals, music and dance as a space or platform for performing social discourses on gender.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Candidate	the boy who is undergoing <i>imbalu</i> rituals
Church circumcision	cutting the foreskin from the boy's penis following the tenets of Christian churches (Pentacostals, the Anglican Church among others)
Cultural circumcision	cutting of the foreskin from the penis of adolescent boys following set ritual procedures of the Bagisu
Cultural debt	an activity that one must fulfil in order to be considered a full member of a particular society
Culturalists	people who advocate for the preservation of cultural values of their society
Cultural re-integration	the period after the cutting ritual
Female-father	paternal aunt among the Bagisu with

fatherly roles

Hospital Circumcision

The cutting of the foreskin from the penis following hospital procedures and is done in the hospital

Imbalu Preparatory stage

the period in the *imbalu* circumcision cycle when candidates, their parents and other relatives prepare for *imbalu* rituals by gathering costumes, composing songs and performing *isonja* dance

Initiation

the act of admitting someone into membership to a group with specific qualifications

Intoxicating music

songs that “induce” people into behaving in a manner that seems rowdy

Male- mother

maternal uncle among the Bagisu with motherly roles

Musicking

conceptualising music as not merely sound, but a process which includes creation, composition and consumption

Performing gender

taking on roles and identities which society assigns to “men” and “women”

Ritual elders

men charged with the responsibility of the administration of rituals

1.7 Hypothesis

Musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals are a platform for performing gender roles, identities, and relations among the Bagisu.

1.8 Significance of the Study

Research on *imbalu* circumcision rituals among the Bagisu is hoped to be beneficial to ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, cultural studies scholars, feminists, human rights and HIV/ AIDS activists, the church, Uganda's ministry of health, educational institutions, journalists as well as general readers who may be interested in reading about the culture of the Bagisu. Since ethnomusicologists strive to study the relationship between music and other cultural components (see for example Alan Merriam 1964), this study is hoped to enable ethnomusicologists understand how *imbalu* circumcision rituals interact with music and dance, an area of study which may stimulate research in other cultures. Anthropologists and other cultural studies scholars may be interested in the relationship between the components of culture such as music, dance and gender which this study serves to portray.

Further, this study is hoped to enable the church, activists and culturalists understand why the Bagisu circumcise, sing and dance while performing *imbalu* circumcision rituals. As discussed earlier in this dissertation, the different stakeholders in *imbalu* have been "locked up" in debates as to whether *imbalu* should be abolished or not. Their advocacy is hoped to be well informed after reading this dissertation.

Music and dance are part and parcel of the schools' curriculum in Uganda. Since there is limited material for use in higher institutions of learning on "traditional musics", this study may be a reference for use in universities and colleges for both graduate and undergraduate students. Furthermore, journalists and other general readers may be interested in reading about the Bagisu people and their culture so as to supplement their reporting. Since this study documents how *imbalu* rituals are performed as well as the significance of these rituals to the Bagisu, journalists will have informed writing while reporting about the Bagisu.

Furthermore, it is hoped that the transcriptions included in this study will enhance an understanding of the structure of Gisu *imbalu* music. Interested music scholars will be able to study these transcriptions and relate their ambiguities with music from other African cultures.

By relating *imbalu* music with music of other African cultures, scholars may be motivated to design transcription techniques for “African” music.

Lastly, some Bagisu may not understand why they should perform *imbalu* rituals. They may not also understand why music and dance are integrated in these rituals. And since this study investigates *imbalu* rituals as one of the forms of the identity of the Bagisu, it is hoped that the Bagisu will understand that *imbalu* is part and parcel of the life of the Bagisu. As such, to abolish *imbalu* circumcision rituals may not be possible.

1.9 Dissertation Layout

I present my findings in six chapters. Chapter One articulates the problem of the study, objectives and scope of the study. Since knowledge is cumulative, I reviewed related literature in Chapter Two under the following themes: 1) Gender in Uganda; 2) Music, Dance and Rituals; 3) *Imbalu* Rituals, Music and Dance; 4) Music, Dance and Gender.

In order to collect relevant data, I employed a qualitative research methodology whose details are discussed in Chapter Three. I used interviews, participant observation, photography, recording, personal experience and data analysis to gather data. Chapter Four discusses the contextual background to musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals to demonstrate the contexts under which musicking and dancing *imbalu* has thrived. In order to enhance an understanding on how the Bagisu gender ideology is performed through *imbalu* music and dance, I also discuss the Bagisu gendering process in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Five, I examine the musicking and dancing processes and how *imbalu* rituals, music, and dances perform the Bagisu gender ideologies. I examine the processes through which *imbalu* rituals, music, dance and gender are performed. I discuss the Bagisu gender ideology as performed in *imbalu* rituals by examining song texts, drum symbolisms, dance motifs and costumes.

I summarise, conclude and offer recommendations to future scholars who may wish to conduct a similar study in Chapter Six. This research revealed that musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals are a platform for performing gender roles, identities and relations among the Bagisu. Further, there is a reciprocal relationship between music, dance and gender. Whereas *imbalu* music and dance define the gender ideology of the Bagisu, the created gender categories inform the music and dances performed in *imbalu* circumcision rituals.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

There is inadequate research on the relationship between *imbalu* circumcision rituals, the integrated music and dance and gender. Available scholarly writings on *imbalu* rituals have been presented by anthropologists who have preoccupied themselves with the origin of *imbalu* circumcision rituals, reasons as to why the Bagisu circumcise, change and continuity in the rituals as well as the description of the *imbalu* ritual process (see for example Khamalwa, 2004). In this chapter, I review literature related to the current topic of study in order to establish a point of departure for my discussions. I review literature in relation to the nature, methodologies, content, contexts and trends in the scholarship of rituals, music, dance and gender. In order to have a systematic discussion, I have formulated the following themes to guide this review 1) Gender in Uganda; 2) Rituals, Music and Dance; 3) *imbalu* rituals, music and dance; and 4) the relationship between music, dance and gender.

2.2 Gender in Uganda

There are inadequate scholarly writings specific to gender among the Bagisu. Most writings are general surveys about gender in Uganda; discussing the gender “factor” in relation to politics (Miria Matembe, 2002), religion (Alice P. Tuyizere, 2007), economics and health (see for example, Friedrich Mare, 2004). Further, studies that focus on gendering among a specific ethnic group have emphasized Buganda (see for example Nakanyike B. Musisi, 1991; Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2001; 2009). As such, this section deals with gender in Uganda in general, in order to establish a point of departure for the discussion on gender among the Bagisu.

By projecting themselves as gender activists, writers on gender in Uganda have stressed that there are gender inequalities in Uganda. These inequalities have

been noted in the areas of political participation, economic empowerment and the social injustices against particular genders, mainly women. Using the case of women in Rutoma (Mbarara, western Uganda), Miria Matembe (2002) writes that the “woman” gender in Uganda is defined in terms of brideprice and production of children. Furthermore, Matembe presents the social, cultural and economic environment Ugandan women have lived in and notes that women have been undervalued as opposed to men when societies assign women domestic roles and not allowing them to participate in decision-making.

Similarly, Sylvia Tamale (1999) writes about the relationship between women and politics in Uganda by positioning her discussion on the Affirmative Action Policy which was introduced by the National Resistance Movement Government in 1989. According to Tamale, this policy advocated for the inclusion of women in the decision-making process by pioneering the election of a minimum of thirty-nine District women members of parliament to counter-balance the domination of men in the decision-making process in Uganda. By positioning her argument on the view that women in African settings were not supposed to speak in public, Tamale suggests that the participation of Ugandan women in politics tantamounts to “hens beginning to crow.” Further, Tamale advises African gender scholars to deconstruct the western notion of gender if they are to understand gender from the African perspective. She also stresses that “the dialectical relationship between gender, class, ethnicity, religion, imperialism and neo-colonialism is ... pertinent for an analysis of gender relations in the African context” (1999:3). Tamale also examines the profile of some women politicians in Uganda and discusses how they negotiate their identities in a society that is predominantly men-driven.

Indeed, the works of Matembe and Tamale inform the present study in a number of ways: Firstly, like in other African societies, the Bagisu construct women as “second class citizens” who should occupy an inferior position in society. The Gisu society expects women to cook, fetch water, respond to what men say and above all, be producers and reproducers. Even in *imbalu* rituals, music and dance, women are pushed to the periphery and given what I would call “low value” roles: cooking for candidates as well as responding to the songs sang in these rituals. Secondly, the present study resonates with Tamale’s view of avoiding to impose the notion of gender from one culture onto another. In this

study, I argue that gender is culture and time specific and should be understood in terms of its own cultural conditions. Societies perform the gender categories which resonate with their demands. However, since Matembe and Tamale did not focus on how music and dance perform gender, the present study fills their gaps by examining the definition of gender roles, identities and relations and how they are performed through *imbalu* rituals, music and dance. In addition, the present study is specific to the Bagisu people, discussing how the Bagisu define the gender roles, identities and relations and how these are performed through *imbalu* rituals, music and dance.

Discussing what she calls the gendering process among the Baganda of Central Uganda, Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2009) stresses that gender among the Baganda is a construction. As such, gender categories are not stable but keep changing in relation to the social, political and economic contexts. Nannyonga-Tamusuza also notes that among the Baganda, there are two domains under which gender can be understood: the palace and outside the palace. While in the palace the “man”, “female-men”, “male- women” and “female-women” genders abound, the following gender categories are constructed outside the palace: the “man”, “woman”, “manly-female” and “womanly-male”. According to Nannyonga-Tamusuza, we should not take it for granted that all males are “men.” She also argues that not all females are “women”. Rather, gender definitions depend on where someone is socialized. As such, women activists have a challenge of establishing which women are mistreated since women certainly do not have similar identities.

Finally, Nannyonga-Tamusuza notes that due to the fact that gender categories are constructions of society, we need to be cultural and time specific in order to understand gender. Indeed, Nannyonga-Tamusuza adds a cultural dimension to the study of gender in Uganda. Since gender forms the core of the present study, I have borrowed insights from Nannyonga-Tamusuza in order to critically examine the conceptualization of gender among the Bagisu. Like Nannyonga-Tamusuza, I argue that gender among the Bagisu is a construction of society. I also stress that the Bagisu gendering process starts when the sex of the child is established and goes on until someone becomes an ancestor, after death. I demonstrate that “men” and “women” who do not perform the roles expected of them among the Bagisu lose their gender. Indeed, the roles of men and women in

imbalu circumcision rituals demonstrate how the Bagisu society views these men and women.

Scholars have also noted that religion plays a significant role in the construction of gender categories of a number of societies. More specifically, scholars stress that religious practices are responsible for the acceleration of gender inequality and violence. For instance, Alice P. Tuyizere, a Ugandan gender scholar writes that “religion has been the engine for gender violence and inequality” (2007: 4). According to Tuyizere, religion emanates from myths and yet these myths are taken as reality. Furthermore, Tuyizere traces the history of the church and discusses how the church is responsible for the submissive nature of women and the dominant position of men. By drawing on the example of the Sabinys (eastern Uganda), Tuyizere also demonstrates how cultural tenets like male and female circumcision participate in defining roles and identities of different gender categories. She stresses that it is only after circumcision that Sabiny youths are introduced to adulthood and transformed into respected members of society (2007: 60). Tuyizere’s views inform the present study in terms of how gender roles, identities and relations are defined among the Bagisu. In consonance with Tuyizere, some of the myths used to construct gender categories among the Bagisu are embedded in *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance. Since Tuyezire’s discussion emanates from general surveys, this study fills her gaps by limiting itself to the study of the Bagisu gender ideology and how it is performed through *imbalu* music and dance.

Furthermore, Dereje Wordofa (2007) argues that there is a relationship between gender and poverty in Uganda. Wordofa discusses how the lack of consideration to gender and diversity has restricted the success of implementing poverty reduction policies in Uganda. He traces the background to the efforts of various governments in Uganda in attempting to reduce poverty since the mid-twentieth century up to the late 1980s. More specifically, Wordofa examines the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process (UPPAP) and notes that the exclusion of women and youths, whom he calls the “marginalized”, has perpetuated the high poverty levels in Uganda. According to Wordofa, poverty is about powerlessness and exclusion from decision-making and not merely the low incomes of the people. As a matter of fact, Wordofa deals with how relations about gender categories can lead to acceleration or reduction in poverty levels in

Uganda. However, when examining gender, scholars should not only focus on the relationships between gender categories but also consider the roles and identities of gender categories. In the examination of the relationship between gender and *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance, the present study has examined gender in terms of the roles, identities and relations between men and women. I argue that the roles and identities between gender categories among the Bagisu determine how these genders relate with one another (see also Tamale, 1999).

In an article, Margaret Rugadya, Esther Obaikol and Herbert Kamusiime (2004) write about gender in relation to the land reform process in Uganda. Among other issues, Rugadya, Obaikol and Kamusiime discuss the 1995 Uganda Constitution and how it has dealt with gender and the land question in Uganda. Further, these scholars write about women's access to land, the co-ownership of land by spouses and how land can be handled in the event that there is divorce or death of one of the spouses. Finally, the above scholars discuss the challenges for gender land rights and note that the lack of the prescribed penalty for non-compliance with the law is one of the major challenges facing gender land rights. With regard to the present study, I established that the definition of gender categories among the Bagisu also relates to the ownership and defense of property especially land. Because land is the primary resource, the Bagisu do not entrust it in the hands of women. Further, the ability to defend one's land also defines his identity as a "man" in society. I also demonstrate how *imbalu* rituals and their interactive music and dance articulate that a "man" should always defend his land among the Bagisu.

Scholars have discussed that gender roles, identities and relations are not fixed but fluid. In an article for example, Marc Fiedrich (2004) discusses how adult education programmes have deconstructed the masculine and feminine identities. Fiedrich's conclusions emanate from the ethnographic study he carried out in Madudu village (Masaka District in Central Uganda) during an adult education programme. Fiedrich stresses that despite the fact that Ugandan men are self-assured patriarchs, these men look at their male authority as being on the wane. Fiedrich argues that because of HIV/AIDS, "public debate ... tends to condemn ... men's sexual prowess" and yet, men could not be ridiculed publically in the African patriarchal settings (2004:18). As a matter of fact, the Bagisu have not escaped the question of change in their society and as such, Fiedrich's views

inform the present study. In relation to the present study, I argue that even in *imbalu* music and dances, some aspects have changed while others continue to be performed.

Robina Mirembe and Lynn Davies (2007) discuss how schooling contributes to risks in sexual health. These scholars argue that schooling gives and denies power to boys and girls, respectively and this power imbalance is translated into the sexual behaviour of pupils. Mirembe and Davies stress that boys are already empowered by culture and when schools view girls as victims, they accelerate harassment of girls sexually. Mirembe and Davies present schools as a “mirror” through which the gender ideology of the wider society can be reflected. In other words, what is done in the society outside the school settings is merely superimposed in the school context. In the discussion on the Bagisu gender ideology and *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance, I argue that these rituals, musics and dances do not merely reflect gender. Instead, *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance perform gender and gender informs *imbalu* rituals, music and dance.

2.3 Rituals, Music and Dance

The relationship between rituals and their associated music and dances has received less scholarly attention. Where there is a discussion on rituals, emphasis has been placed on describing the ritual process and the interpretation of symbols used in the performance of rituals (see for example, Turner, 1969 and 1973).

In a journal article, Victor Turner (1969) investigates symbolism as an integral part of the ritual process. Turner’s views accrue from the ethnographic studies he conducted on the Bagisu (Uganda) and Ndembu (Zambia) in 1966 and 1964 respectively. Turner investigates the symbolism embedded in items like yeast, animal chyme and the trees under which circumcision candidates are initiated or kept before initiation. By emphasising the above items as embodying meaning in rituals, Turner depicts meaning as something which is constructed and performed by society. He however, underplays the symbolic nature of music and dance in ritual performance and how it participates in performing meanings in society (see also Cheu Hock Tong, 1996). Ethnomusicologists such as Kwabena

Nketia (1957) and Alan Merriam (1960) have demonstrated that music and dance play a symbolic role in ritual performance. In fact, music and dance in rituals participate in performing the meaning of other societal components including gender ideologies. With regard to the present study, I stress that music and dance play a symbolic role in *imbalu* circumcision rituals. In this regard, I discuss the symbolism embedded in drums, costumes, song texts and dances and how they perform gender ideologies among the Bagisu.

By presenting rituals as a form of communication which is enhanced through singing and dancing, Maurice Bloch (1989) argues that music and dance are part and parcel of ritual performance. Although Bloch's viewpoints inform the present study, he uses a linguistic approach to investigate how music and dance are communication agents in rituals. However, the linguistic approach may not be appropriate for this study as linguists are interested in investigating the arrangement of phrases and sentences in the study of languages. Further, Jens Kreinath (2005) advises us to avoid using linguistic approaches in the study of ritual. According to Kreinath, to interpret rituals from the point of view of linguistics does not allow scholars to go beyond the dichotomies of form and meaning as well as thought and action. The present study employs an ethnographic approach to examine how *imbalu* rituals, music and dance are integrated. Beyond his life experience as a Mugisu, I spent at least three months in the field with the Bagisu people sharing their experiences, participating in *imbalu* rituals, music and dances as well as making recordings of the music and dances.

Further, scholars have argued that rituals are activities which undergo a process, which includes learning songs, assembling the items which enhance the performance of the ritual as well as the actual performance of the ritual (see also Timothy Wangusa, 1987). This view is illustrated by Thomas Johnson (1974) through his study on the *murhundzu* circumcision ritual of Shangana- Tsonga people of the border between Mozambique and South Africa. Among other issues, Johnson discusses the significance of songs in rituals as well as the process of learning these songs. Similarly, John E Kaemmer discusses rituals as activities which undergo a process and notes that the ritual process is highly integrated with music and dance. Kaemmer writes that "music [, dance] and ritual are ... so intertwined that it is difficult to determine with any certainty which one is affecting the other [in the ritual process]" (1993: 69). The above views resonate

with the present study. In this study, I demonstrate that *imbalu* rituals are a process and yet, there is no distinction between *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance. Further, music and dance “mediate” the meaning of the various stages of the *imbalu* ritual cycle.

Further, by projecting songs as a platform through which societal meanings are reflected, Kaemmer demonstrates that music acts as a mirror for reflecting societal norms. In other words, Kaemmer demonstrates that whatever may be seen in music in terms of costumes, song texts, performance practice as well as instrumentation reflects society. However, as Nannyonga-Tamusuza articulates, there is a reciprocal relation between music and gender (2005:xvii). Similarly, the present study resonates with the reciprocal relationship theory since there is a link between *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music, dance and gender. I argue that *imbalu* music and dance do not merely reflect the meanings of gender roles, identities and relations. Instead, the meaning of gender ideologies among the Bagisu influences the nature of music and dance performed in *imbalu* circumcision rituals.

In a presentation on the circumcision rituals among the Babira and Bapere people of the North Ituri forest in Belgian Congo, Rose Brandel (1954) examines how music is part and parcel of *gandja*, the circumcision ritual of the Babira and Bapere people. Brandel dedicates a significant part of her work to the transcription and analysis of the music to show the nature and structure of circumcision music. Though she argues that circumcision raises the status of men who undergo it, her approach involves general surveys and therefore does not provide indepth data about the significance of circumcision rituals and the integrated music and dance. Further, by over emphasizing music, Brandel ignores dance as an integral part of circumcision rituals. By using the concepts of musicking and dancing, I demonstrate that one can not understand *imbalu* circumcision rituals among the Bagisu independent of music and dance. Further, my indepth study through interviews, participant observation, as well as personal experience as a circumcised Mugisu provides indepth information *imbalu* rituals, music and dance.

In a book chapter, Claire R. Farrer (1980) discusses “feast”, a girls’ initiation ritual among the Native Indians in the USA. Farrer discusses how the “feast” ritual is organized, people charged with the responsibility of performing

this ritual and the role of music in the “feast” ritual. Farrer argues that through songs sang in rituals, societies dramatise their past experiences and bring them to the fore. As such, candidates seeking initiation are expected to know their society’s past life and perform it through music. Farrer’s discussion resonates with the present research in terms of the qualities expected of song leaders as well as the custodians charged with ritual drums and dances. In *imbalu* circumcision rituals, song leaders (*banamyenya*, singular *namyenya*) are expected to be knowledgeable about the history of their clans in order to instruct *imbalu* candidates effectively.

One of the areas of investigation in ethnomusicology has been the idea that music and dance form a stage where performers socialise and play out their identities (see for example Woodford, 2002; Barbara Bradly, 2003). However, music and dance in rituals as a stage for re-enacting, developing new identities or contesting old ones has received inadequate attention in the field of ethnomusicology. Writing about the Gikuyu people of Kenya, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (1965) presents male and female circumcision rituals as a stage for socialization. In addition, he describes the scenes of musical and dance performances, messages embedded in circumcision music and dance as well as scenes when the actual operation takes place (see 1965: 41-42). Wa Thiong’o shows that songs texts embody messages which perform female and male sexuality among the Gikuyu people. Despite the fact that the Bagisu do not share geographical boundaries and do not speak the same language dialect with the Gikuyu, I find homogeneity in the performance contexts of circumcision rituals among the Gikuyu and the Bagisu. Homogeneity is found in the use of vulgar language while performing music and dance as well as circumcision music and dances acting as avenues of socialisation. However, being a novel, Wa Thiong’o did not employ scientific methods to gather data. In addition, his presentation can not answer the ethnomusicological question as to how and why music and dance form a stage for performing such social discourses like gender. The present study bridges Wa Thiong’o’s gaps by analysing *imbalu* music and dance as an embodiment of gender ideologies among the Bagisu through conducting scientific research in terms of interviews, participant observation and personal experience.

2.4 *Imbalu* Rituals, Music and Dance

There is inadequate research on *imbalu* rituals and the associated music and dance among the Bagisu. Most writings on *imbalu* rituals, music and dance are in form of articles published in Ugandan news papers such as The New Vision, Daily Monitor and Weekly Obsever. Newspaper articles are journalistic in nature and as such only report on *imbalu* inauguration ceremonies, myths about the historical background of *imbalu*, incidents when some Bagisu men are forcefully circumcised and the impact of HIV/AIDS on *imbalu* rituals.

Among the scientific studies done on *imbalu* rituals among the Bagisu is a presentation by Suzette Heald (1982) who offers a psychological interpretation of *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Heald discusses the phases in the *imbalu* ritual process, themes of *imbalu*, costumes used and the symbolisms embedded in the items smeared on *imbalu* candidates. She argues that the items smeared on candidates, the way candidates are urged to dance and sing are intended to arouse anger (*lirima*). According to Heald, a boy whose anger is not aroused may not undergo the *imbalu* ordeal successfully because the power to withstand the *imbalu* rituals is embedded in anger (*lirima*). Heald also argues that after undergoing *imbalu* circumcision rituals, the Bagisu expect “real” men to put their anger under control. Heald’s interpretation of *imbalu* and the definition “man” as constructed by the Bagisu does not provide proper data on *imbalu* circumcision rituals and the definition of the concept “man” among the Bagisu. As the data for this research reveals, *imbalu* is not the only tenet which defines “man” among the Bagisu. However, it provides room for the Bagisu to “spell out” other qualities of manhood: getting married, the ability to construct one’s house as well as being able to “produce”. Furthermore, *imbalu* music and dances are not primarily performed to arouse anger (*lirima*) in *imbalu* candidates. Instead, music and dance educate, empower and play the role of transforming boys into men by telling them what society expects of them when they become “men”. As such, the present study fills the gaps left by Heald since it examines the *imbalu* process and how *imbalu* defines and performs the roles, identities and relations between men and women among the Bagisu.

The concepts of continuity and change have preoccupied scholars in various fields including ethnomusicology, anthropology, linguistics and history (see for, example Merriam, 1964). Scholars have argued that western civilization, through education, religion and technology have influenced peoples' attitudes towards African cultural performances such as *imbalu* among the Bagisu. In a book, Musamali Nangoli (1987) discusses how western civilization has affected the "beauty" of cultural forms like *imbalu*. Nangoli also defines *imbalu* and presents it as a platform for defining the *Kigisu* identity. However, since Nangoli's book is a result of extensive surveys conducted in various parts of Africa, he does not discuss how, what and why certain aspects *imbalu* circumcision rituals have changed. Further, Nangoli does discuss change in *imbalu* rituals against continuity. Indeed, as Alan Merriam (1964) has argued, cultures do not change overnight and whole: certain aspects change while others remain. Unlike Nangoli's work, I conducted an intensive study and examine the nature of music and dances and some of the aspects of the *imbalu* ritual which have changed. I also examine the continuities in the *imbalu* rituals and demonstrate how the Bagisu gender ideology is performed through *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance.

Further, by defining *imbalu* in terms of the pain experienced by the boy, Nangoli ignores the fact *imbalu* circumcision rituals undergo a process. This study reveals that *imbalu* circumcision rituals include the music, dances, rituals as well as pen-surgery, the ritual which involves the removal of the foreskin from the boy's penis. To emphasise that *imbalu* is more than the pen-surgery ritual, Heald's description of *imbalu* as "festivities" (1982: 15) is significant. To fill the gaps left by Nangoli, therefore, I examine the reminding ceremonies (*khushebusa*), smearing, the pen-surgery ritual as well as the performance of *inemba* dance as part of the *imbalu* cycle.

Similarly, due to changes caused by education, religion, technological advancement and urbanization, many scholars have wondered as to whether or not the future of *imbalu* circumcision rituals is guaranteed. Among these scholars is Henry Murton Namanda (1999), who in a dissertation, writes about *imbalu* circumcision rituals in light of the effects of western education, religion and the urbanization of the twenty-first century. Namanda examines the aspects of *imbalu* rituals like dancing, music, nature of participants and the rituals and how they are

affected by the above elements of change. Indeed, as Namanda observes, some phases of *imbalu* especially the performance of *isonja* dance and searching for *imbalu* have significantly diminished from the *imbalu* scene. Further, education, the influence of politics, technology and religion has led to *imbalu* music and dances transcend their original contexts to schools, political rallies and discos. Such questions as the roles of men and women and performance practice of music and dances in *imbalu* are some of the areas of investigation by the present study.

Many scholars portray the Bagisu as a “race” or “nation” of “men” (*basani*) as opposed to their neighbors who are depicted as “boys” (*basinde*) (see for example J.B Purvis 1909 ; Heald, 1982). Although these scholars stress that *imbalu* circumcision rituals are a platform for concretizing this identity, they have downplayed the place of music and dance as a platform for performing the traits which define men among the Bagisu. John Baptist Naleera (2003), for example, mentions riddles, proverbs, exposure to hard work and *imbalu* as the avenues through which the Bagisu inculcate courage in young men. As demonstrated by this study, however, one of the reasons of performing music and dance in *imbalu* circumcision rituals is to enhance the transformation process of boys into “men”. In addition, through *imbalu* songs and dances, the Bagisu teach boys to become courageous men in society. In order to bridge the gaps left by Naleera, therefore, I examine *imbalu* music and dances as a platform for performing aggressiveness and strength, the traits which define men among the Bagisu.

The ethnographic presentation of Wotsuna Khamalwa (2004) examines the structure of *imbalu* rituals from the period *isonja* dance is performed to the concluding dance, *inemba*. Khamalwa also mentions the major actors in *imbalu* rituals, discusses symbolization of the rituals as well as the nature and factors of change in *imbalu* ritual performance. Khamalwa’s work offers a lot of points of departure to the present study. For example, he advises scholars to examine a full canopy of the *imbalu* rituals. Indeed, scholars should examine *imbalu* as a process. To examine *imbalu* as a process therefore, the present study examines the preparatory, pen-surgery and incorporation stages in the *imbalu* circumcision ritual cycle. Furthermore, *imbalu* rituals cannot be divorced from music and dance. As such, approaching *imbalu* circumcision rituals as interactive with music and dance enhances the understanding of the above ritual process of *imbalu* as well as the reasons as to why the Bagisu circumcise. Further, Khamalwa discusses

that *imbalu* is a stage for gender construct (2004: 13). However, he does not give details about gender roles, identities and relations as performed through *imbalu* music and dance, which the present study examines.

There are also other writings by undergraduate students at Makerere University about *imbalu* circumcision rituals through their descriptive presentations in dissertations (see, for example Sandra Watera, 2002). The ethnographic study conducted by Dominic Makwa (2005) was one of the ethnomusicological attempts to study the relationship between *imbalu* rituals and the integrated music and dance. In his work, Makwa described *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music, and dance as well as the role of music and dance in these rituals. Makwa's study revealed that music and dance are part and parcel of *imbalu* rituals and the success of *imbalu* rituals depends on the nature of music and dances performed (2005: 39). This view gives a springboard to the present study especially when I examine the musicking and dancing processes in *imbalu* circumcision rituals to examine how these processes participate in performing the Bagisu gender ideology. However, due to its descriptive nature, Makwa's thesis does not reveal much about the relation of music, dance and gender. The present study examines and analyses dance motifs, formations, costumes, the nature of *imbalu* songs, their texts and instrumentation to establish how gender roles, identities and relations are defined and performed through them.

Among the non scientific writings about *imbalu* circumcision rituals is in Timothy Wangusa's (1987) novel. Apart from "narrating" the process of becoming a man among the Bagisu, Wangusa stresses that *imbalu* is a site for enacting manhood among the Bagisu. In chapter nine of his novel, Wangusa describes the process through which music and dances are performed in *imbalu* circumcision rituals, the role of music and dance in these rituals, costumes used while performing the rituals and the pen-surgery ritual. Though Wangusa's writing informs the present study, it is narrative in nature. Wangusa also downplays the role of the stage after the pen-surgery ritual and how it enhances the transformation of boys into men as this study demonstrates. Furthermore, although Wangusa enlists three categories of men, that is to say, "real", "half" and "womanly" men, he does not illustrate how these men are performed through *imbalu* music and dance. The present study approaches *imbalu* music and dance as a site for power struggle between men and women among the Bagisu and stresses

that they participate in performing the various categories of men as constructed by the Bagisu.

News paper articles present some writings about *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance. Among the journalists who have written about *imbalu* rituals is Kakaire A. Kirunda (2004) whose article describes *imbalu* inauguration activities, myths about the origin of *imbalu* and reasons why Bumutoto has become a place to host *imbalu* inauguration ceremonies. Further, Daniel Edyegu (2008) presents *imbalu* inauguration ceremonies as a stage for socialisation as well as a period when the time table for *imbalu* activities for other parts of Bugisu is launched. Since these articles are journalistic in nature, they produce only descriptive facts. Moreover, the music and dances performed on the inauguration day only depict the preparatory and the pen-surgery moods. To understand *imbalu* rituals, scholars need to examine the whole ritual process from reminding activities (*khushebusa*) to the period when *inemba* dance is performed. Through this ethnographic approach, I investigate how the musicking and dancing processes during the preparatory, pen-surgery and incorporation stages enhance an understanding of *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance.

Another newspaper article is written by Ronnie Kijjambu (2008) who presents *imbalu* as a form of cultural identity which the Bagisu have upheld. Using the example of Stephen Mujoroto, a sixty- five year old man who was circumcised forcefully along the streets of Kampala City, Kijjambu shows that the Bagisu can never tolerate an uncircumcised person (see also Makwa, 2005). Kijjambu's article informs the present study in terms of the value attached to *imbalu* circumcision rituals. As this study reveals, *imbalu* circumcision rituals are significant in defining the gender ideology of the Bagisu. However since musicking and dancing pervade the whole ritual process, I demonstrate that a person who does not perform music and dance during *imbalu* circumcision rituals is not considered a "man" among the Bagisu. Such a person is believed to have missed significant transformation agents in terms of music and dance. As such, even those Bagisu who are "highjacked" on the streets and forcefully circumcised do not have the same status as those who "danced" *imbalu*.

In his newspaper article, David Mafabi (2008) discusses that elders have an obligation to lead *imbalu* candidates in song and dance. In addition, he discusses that *imbalu* is highly valued by the Bagisu. As this study reveals,

however, the Bagisu do not entrust their boys to any elder but only those with specific features: the kind, humble, wealthy as well as elders who are married and have produced male children. *Imbalu* initiates are exposed to elders with the above features because they are expected to emulate these elders in character and behaviour. Further, by emphasising that *imbalu* is highly valued by the Bagisu, Mafabi underplays the fact that culture is dynamic. As such, what is of high value in 2009 may not be highly valued in 2019. Indeed, this study notes that technology, urbanization, religion and education have affected peoples' views about cultural circumcision. Many Bagisu opt to take their children to the hospital.

Similarly, by emphasizing the “evils” associated with *imbalu* rituals, writers have depicted *imbalu* as an outdated ritual. Among such writers is Joseph Wanzusi (2008), a journalist, who discusses the view that the ministry of health needs to regulate *imbalu* rituals in order to curb the HIV/ AIDS scourge. Further, Fortunate Ahimbisibwe (2008) argues that cultural vices such as *imbalu* go against peoples' rights especially when someone is circumcised by force. As such, Ahimbisibwe stresses that such rituals need regulation by government. However, views against or in favour of cultural practices like *imbalu* circumcision rituals among the Bagisu should accrue from scientific studies. This study is among the scientific presentations about *imbalu* circumcision rituals since it employed participant observation, interviews, performance, recordings and my own experience as a member of the *Kigisu* culture to study the *imbalu* ritual process and establish the reasons as to why the Bagisu circumcise.

2.5 Music and Dance, and Gender

The scholarship on the relationship between music and gender is a recent phenomenon. In fact this scholarship is as recent as the late 1980s when Ellen Koskoff (1989) presented her viewpoints on studying the “gender factor” in music (and dance). Koskoff discusses how a society's gender ideology and the resulting gender- related behaviours can affect its musical thought and practice. As she argues, music performs, reverses, transforms or mediates gender relations in society. In addition, the society's gender ideologies influence the kind of music

and dances performed. Koskoff's views resonate with the reciprocal relationship theory. Like Koskof, I demonstrate that there is a connection between *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music, dance and gender. I argue that whereas *imbalu* music and dance form a platform for performing the gender ideology of the Bagisu people, the created gender ideologies may influence the nature of music and dances performed in *imbalu* rituals. As such, *imbalu* music and dance may perform gender while the created gender categories may shape *imbalu* music and dance.

Scholars like Robert Walser (1993), Phillip Brett as well as Wood Elizabeth (2002) and Gillan Rodger (2004) have presented music as a stage for negotiating or contesting a person's gender identities. These scholars have particularly presented women as a gender which has resisted the traditional roles ascribed to them by taking over roles and identities constructed for men. Using the case of popular music, Rodger, for example, observes that women have always been associated with the role of dancing while men acting as lead singers and instrumentalists. However, as the music videos of Annie Lennox depict, the above roles are contested through impersonation, use of body language and vocal manipulations. The above views resonate with the present study especially in what I call "reversal of roles and identities" during *imbalu* performances. As this study demonstrates, while performing *imbalu* music and dance, some men put on women's dresses and skirts. Similarly, some women put on trousers, shirts and even mould objects which imitate men's penises. These situations stimulate a number of questions which inform this study. For example, what genders do these women and men want to identify with if they wear clothes which the *Kigisu* culture constructs for "men" and "women"? Are they contesting what society has designated for them and are creating their own identities?

In a journal article, Paul G. Woodford (2001) gives theoretical insights on the role of music and dance performances. He discusses music as a medium through which meanings about a particular culture are played out. Woodford approaches musical meaning as socially constructed. This view relates with Steven Feld's music communication theory where he argues that meaning in music is socially constructed and can be understood by people who compose and consume the music. The above views relate with the present study in a number of ways: Firstly, *imbalu* music and dance are only meaningful to the Bagisu people

because they are the ones who make meaningful interpretations out of this music and dance. As such, to investigate meanings in *imbalu* rituals, music and dance, I interacted with the indigenous Bagisu people through fieldwork. Secondly, as Woodford argues, musical performances are a platform on which various players compete. There is a power struggle between performers on stage and the audience. This struggle may lead to the re-enactment of old identities, creation of new ones and contestation of other identities. This is one of the theoretical frameworks shaping this study. Considering the fact that people interact freely during the performance of *imbalu* music and dance, old identities may be enacted, new ones created and others contested.

Margrethe Silberschmidt (1999) investigates the antagonistic relations between men and women in Kisii District of Kenya. Silberschmidt examines the socio-political and economic perspectives of the Kisii people in order to establish how men and women were constructed among the Kisii before the disintegration of the traditional society. In her book, Silberschmidt includes a chapter where she discusses initiation rituals; presenting rituals as avenues of concretising cultural components such as gender. In addition, Silberschmidt discusses culture as a dynamic phenomenon and as such, the elements which define it change as well. Silberschmidt's discussion resonates well with my study in terms of continuity and change as witnessed in the *imbalu* circumcision ritual process, music and dance. Because of cultural dynamism, gender roles, identities and relations change and this explains the concept of gender as a performance².

Joke Dame (1994) discusses gender from the perspective of the pitch of the voice. Dame's major question of investigation is the genderedness of the voice where she asks the question: Is the voice gendered? She argues that because societies have constructed men and women to sing up to particular pitch levels, to sing below or above a designated pitch makes one to lose his / her gender. According to Dame, since gender is constructed, femininity and masculinity are neither natural nor unalterable, but rather social culturally and historically determined categories which are subject to change (See page 140). Among the aspects of investigation in *imbalu* music are the symbolisms embedded in the

² Silberschmidt also discusses female circumcision as a form of gender construct among the Kisii. While conducting this study, I established that the Bagisu have never carried out female circumcision much as *imbalu* among the Bagisu is linked to Nabarwa, a woman.

pitches of the drums and their relationship to men's and women's voices among the Bagisu. To add to Dame's views, this study also examines *imbalu* dances and how the associated motifs, formations, themes and costumes relate to the gender ideologies of the Bagisu.

A discussion on the relationship between music and social relations is also presented by Jane .C Sugarman (2004). In her analysis of women's wedding songs among the Prespa Albanians of Macedonia, Sugarman stresses that notions of gender can be "heard" or even "seen" (my emphasis) in music. To show that men and women occupy "given" places in society, Sugarman demonstrates that Prespa Albanians use objects of nature- such as birds to designate the man and woman preparing for wedding. Since women, for example, are portrayed as vulnerable people in the wider society, they are segregated during performance practice and are given roles which demonstrate "their place" in society. On the hand, men are expected to sing in such a way that portrays their masculinity. Through out this study, I also show that *imbalu* music and dance participate in the performance of gender ideologies of the Bagisu by portraying the position of men and women.

Like Sherry Ortner's (1996) discussion on the relation of women to men in society, I argue that roles given to men and women in *imbalu* music and dance relate to their predetermined positions among the Bagisu. Women, for example, respond to songs led by men and dance while men play instruments, lead songs and preside over the dances. Women's and men's roles resonate with their identities in society such as being associated with emotions and weakness (as associated with women) and strength and aggressiveness, the tenets the Bagisu use to define men. Because *imbalu* is primarily performed to elevate the status of men, all artefacts which accompany these rituals are under the custodianship of men. This is intended to uphold men's status in society. On the other hand, women are charged with responding to songs and dancing in order to enhance the male gaze (See also Gillian Rodger, 2004).

The ethnomusicological study of the relationship between music, dance and gender in Uganda was done by Nannyonga-Tamusuza. In a book chapter, Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2002) projects music as a site for identity construction. Through analyzing the song "Kayanda" by Willy Mukabya, Nannyonga-Tamusuza discusses gender, ethnicity and politics as some of the identities that can be performed through music (and dance). In addition, she discusses how

veiled language can be used as a tool for “carrying” messages which cannot be communicated in daily discourse. Nannyonga-Tamusuza also discusses the gender ideology of the Baganda, noting the roles of men and women as well as the identities and relations between these genders. According to Nannyonga-Tamusuza, music can perform roles, identities and relations societies attach to men and women. Nannyonga-Tamusuza’s insights inform the present study. For instance, the notion that music and dance perform gender roles, identities and relations is the foundation of the present study. I add to Nannyonga-Tamusuza’s insights by examining a different context, the context of defining and performing gender ideologies through *imbalu*, a cultural performance of the Bagisu.

Similarly, in a journal article, Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2003) demonstrates that a music and dance genre can be recreated or reconfigured just as society can reconstruct its gender roles, identities and relations. This view is illustrated by analysing the relationship between *baakisimba* music and dance of the Baganda and schools’ music, dance and drama festivals. Nannyonga-Tamusuza demonstrates that through choreography, assignment of roles, instrumentation and performance practice, *baakisimba* changes shape. Her major concern is how *baakisimba* performance practice in schools has led to the new interpretation of gender roles, identities and relations among the Baganda.

Further more, in an ethnographic study, Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2005) discusses the various gender categories among the Baganda and shows how *baakisimba* music and dance are used as a stage to enact and negotiate gender categories among the Baganda. In this study, Nannyonga-Tamusuza advances the view that music and dance are highly integrated, the idea she uses to define music as dance. In addition, Nannyonga-Tamusuza argues that music, dance and gender can be linked through what she calls the reciprocal relationship theory: music and dance define gender while gender informs music and dance. Nannyonga-Tamusuza’s views resonate with the present study since I stress that *imbalu* is both the rituals, music and dance. Further, I link the variables of gender, music and dance by the reciprocal relationship theory: *imbalu* rituals, music and dance define the Bagisu gender ideology while gender informs the *imbalu* rituals, music and dance. By relating to Nannyonga-Tamusuza’s discussion on gender constructions among the Baganda, my study presents another understanding of gender among the Bagisu, another Ugandan context.

According to La Fontaine (1981), Heald (1982) and Khamalwa (2004), it would appear that music and dance in *imbalu* circumcision rituals of the Bagisu establish and perform normative gender roles and identities which are very fixed-not fluid or open to negotiation. While conducting this study, I was attentive to ways through which *imbalu* music and dance performance potentially become a stage for contesting or questioning the Bagisu gender norms and opening them up for negotiation. However, this study established that the Bagisu gender ideologies are fluid and *imbalu* rituals just form part of the gendering trajectory among the Bagisu. In the next Chapter, I discuss the methodologies I employed while conducting this study.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Since this study deals with gender, rituals, music and dance, it is informed by theories on gender, integration of music and dance in ritual performance as well as theories that link music and dance and gender. This study demonstrates that there is a close interaction between music and dance, an area of concern in the field of ethnomusicology since the 1950s (see for example, Rose Brandel, 1954; Kwabena Nketia, 1965; Claire R. Farrer 1980 and John E Kaemmer (1993). This research has revealed that music and dance are an integral part of ritual performances and that one cannot distinguish between music, dance and the ritual performed. The study has also demonstrated that music and dance “mediate” meaning in ritual performances by dramatizing the essence of the ritual performed.

Music and dance are significant in *imbalu* rituals because they “mediate” the meaning of the different stages of a ritual. In other words, one can understand the embedded meaning in the different parts of the ritual by studying the nature of music and dance in the ritual. Similarly, in his theoretical viewpoints on ritual performance in general, John E. Kaemmer argues that “...music [, dance] and ritual are ... so intertwined that it is difficult to determine with any certainty which one is affecting the other [in the ritual process]” (1993:69). In relation to rites of passage, he adds that music is a very important part of such ceremonies,

“... because it frequently marks the division between the stages of the ritual” (*ibid.*). The integration of music and dance resonates well with *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Indeed, it is quite hard to differentiate music and dance from other aspects of *imbalu* rituals. *Inemba*, for example, is both an *imbalu* ritual, performed to “commission” *imbalu* initiates into manhood, and a dance, marking the climax of *imbalu* rituals. In addition, the *kadodi* drum set derives its name and meaning from the *kadodi* dance, also performed in *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Because of the integrative nature of music and dance and other cultural elements in *imbalu*, the Bagisu refer to the whole *imbalu* cycle as “*khushina imbalu*”, which denotes “dancing circumcision”. The music and dances performed at every stage of *imbalu* “mediate” the meaning behind the performance of these rituals, which is to “make” men is society.

Using Anthony Seeger’s (1987) concept that music is not merely the sounds heard on the tape recorder but a process of creation, performance and consumption of the music, I use the concept of musicking to demonstrate that *imbalu* music is a process (see also Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2005 and 2007). The musicking process in *imbalu* rituals begins when the boy composes songs to be sang in *imbalu* and goes on through *isonja* dance and searching *imbalu*. Musicking *imbalu* also includes the musics performed during the rituals of brewing, smearing candidates with yeast, pen-surgery to the performance of *inemba* dance. Drawing on the musicking (and dancing) processes of *imbalu* circumcision rituals, I examine how *imbalu* music and dance form a platform for defining and performing the Bagisu gender roles, identities and relations.

This research also resonates with Frits Staal’s theory that those involved in the performance of rituals may not understand what they are doing but just execute what they found in society. According to Staal, there “are no symbolic meanings going through [the minds of ritual performers] when they are engaged in performing the ritual” (as quoted in Kreinath 2005: 103). According to Staal as well as also articulated in the present research, ritual performers just follow the procedures of performing the ritual and do not ask questions as to why they perform these rituals. Staal also argues that “ritual actions are essentially self-referential and should therefore be studied on their own terms” (*ibid.*). In reference to *imbalu*, meanings attached to these rituals are constructions of society. In other words, ritual meanings are societal performances which differ

from one generation to another. As this study demonstrates, *imbalu* music and dance are among the platforms through which meanings in *imbalu* circumcision rituals are performed.

Another theory pertinent to this study is the view that gender is a product of cultural and social correlates and is an ongoing process (see Marcia Herndon 1990; Sherry Ortner 1996; Tullia Magrini 2003 and Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2005). According to La Fontaine, the process of constructing gender categories is performed through “socialisation and maintenance of social sanctions” (1981: 335) or what Herndon refers to as “enculturation” (1990: 12). As this study reveals, gender categories among the Bagisu are constructed. This process begins by society rewarding boys and girls according to the roles they are expected to perform. *Imbalu* circumcision rituals participate in concretizing these gender categories by emphasizing to the new “men” what society expects of them. Further, the idea that gender is a societal and cultural construction indicates that gender categories are unstable. In this study, I demonstrate that among the Bagisu, someone is a boy for sometime and becomes a “man” after undergoing *imbalu* circumcision rituals. However, if the man does not fulfill his societal obligations, he is assigned a different gender. This explains the view that gender categories are in “a process never completed- always ‘in process’” (Stuart Hall as quoted in Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2005: 25). And like other performances, gender is different from one context to another. In *imbalu* circumcision music and dance, gender performances are not fixed and this is depicted through the recreation of new costumes, songs and meanings as attached to these songs.

Finally, I use Nannyonga- Tamusuza’s (2005) reciprocal relationship theory to enhance an understanding of the relation of gender, music, dance and *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Music and dance are a platform where the society may perform its gender ideologies while the society’s gender ideology can influence the kind of music and dance performed. In relation to the present study, I argue that whereas *imbalu* circumcision music and dance may participate in defining the gender ideology of the Bagisu, gender informs the music and dances performed in *imbalu* circumcision rituals. I affirm that *imbalu* music and dance participate in performing gender categories among the Bagisu. On the other hand, *imbalu* music and dance performances are also a platform where new gender identities are created and old ones affirmed.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Like anthropologists, ethnomusicologists are ethnographers and therefore must base their analyses from data gathered from the field (Hellen Meyers 1992: 22). And yet, before embarking on field studies, scholars must make a plan. In this chapter, I discuss the methodology I employed to gather data for this dissertation. I also discuss the design, the various sampling techniques and the tools of research I used to gather this data. Further, I discuss the various approaches I used while analysing data for this dissertation. Lastly, I discuss the ethnical issues I observed while gathering data and include some of the constraints (limitations) I faced during fieldwork.

3.2 Research Methodology and Design

This study was informed by the qualitative research methodology which requires scholars to work towards acquiring descriptive facts through discovery and exploration. The use of a qualitative research methodology necessitated me to to analyse, describe and interpret data with solid field examples through an ethnographic approach. Ethnography aims at producing systematic and descriptive facts about people's beliefs, values, rituals and other general patterns of behavior (see Sara Cohen, 1993: 123). Further, since ethnography strives to produce descriptive results, researchers are expected to have a close interaction with their informants. In this study therefore, I used an ethnographic approach so as to acquire data on how *imbalu* rituals interact with music and dance and how they define and perform social discourses on gender. As such, this approach necessitated me to establish rapport with my informants and interact with them so as to get their views and experiences on *imbalu* circumcision rituals (see also Bruno Nettl 1983:9). In the next section, I discuss the various sampling techniques I used while conducting fieldwork.

3.3 Sampling

I employed purposive, snowball and stratified sampling techniques to gather data for this dissertation. Purposive sampling, which involves choosing informants who can offer closely guarded information, was employed because not all people were able to give the required information. In fact, during the performance of *imbalu* rituals, not all people are directly involved in performing rituals like smearing, circumcising or brewing the beer used on candidates. As such, I selected elders charged with the above rituals as well as song leaders and custodians of ritual drums to share their views and experiences about *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Similarly, Meyer has also observed that “ethnomusicologists [should] rely on a few key informants, individuals with special musical knowledge who are willing to share their time” (1992: 36). As such, I selected the above people because they have societal secrets about *imbalu* circumcision rituals which ordinary Bagisu cannot possess. Wotsuna Khamalwa refers to the Bagisu with closely guarded information as the “custodians of the gourd” (2004: 14).

Further, I employed snowball sampling technique to gather data. This sampling technique is where the fieldworker uses the known contacts to be introduced to informants he or she does not know. In this regard, I was introduced to informants I had neither known before nor planned to meet. Snowball sampling technique enabled me to trace for the custodians of *imbalu* ritual drums such as the reminding drum (*ingoma ye khushebusa*), *isonja* song leaders, circumcisers, *kadodi* Band leaders and elders charged with the custodianship of the sacred swamp. Custodians of ritual drums, for example, are found in specific clans and as such, I found out that the only way to access such informants was to use the contacts I had in my own clan. With snowball sampling, however, I discovered that informants with whom I had contacts were only leading me to either their relatives or friends.

Lastly, I employed stratified random sampling technique, which involved classifying informants in clusters in order to have a fair representation of the population. As such, I classified informants in accordance with age, gender, role in relation to *imbalu* rituals and levels of education. For example, I selected ten women without formal education; ten women with formal education; ten youths

who had been initiated in 2008; ten local politicians, and community educators; five custodians of ritual drums; ten religious leaders; and ten circumcisers. I randomly selected four people from each group for the interview. I carried out the selection process during the performance of *imbalu* dances, musical performances and conversational interviews. I considered education as one of the factors to classify my informants since people with formal education tend to present ideas influenced by what they learn at school as opposed to their counterparts who do not have formal education. Much as stratified sampling enhances a fair representation, it involves a tedious process of classification in order to ensure that all groups of people are represented.

3.4 Research Tools

Since I conducted a qualitative research, I found it necessary to use the following tools of research: 1) participant observation; 2) interviews; 3) photography, audio and visual recording of *imbalu* songs and dances; 4) library research; and 5) personal experience. These research tools are important for ethnomusicological research and enabled me to gather descriptive data for this study (see for example Alan Merriam, 1964).

3.4.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation is one of the tools I used to gather data for this study. This tool of research requires ethnomusicologists to “immerse [themselves] in the [culture] ... and experience music first hand in its diverse settings” (Meyers: 1992: 22). As such, I got involved in *imbalu* circumcision rituals by leading songs and dancing with *imbalu* candidates when they were taken for pen-surgery. I also participated in *imbalu* dances including *kadodi* which was performed before pen-surgery. Because three days before pen-surgery involve smearing rites, visiting cultural sites and maternal clans, I participated in the above ceremonies. I was particularly interested in hearing the nature of the words

spoken to *imbalu* candidates by their fathers and other clan members and how these words correspond with the song texts embedded in *imbalu* circumcision music.

Further, the Bagisu discern the candidates' resolve for *imbalu* by examining how candidates sing and dance before pen-surgery (see for example Heald, 1982:18). As such, I attended *kadodi* dance and participated in the songs sang on the eve of pen-surgery to hear the kind of remarks elders make to approve or disapprove the candidates' resolve for *imbalu*. I also observed the reaction of candidates to the words spoken to them (see the list of events I attended in appendix 3). Since *imbalu* rituals continue after pen-surgery, I attended the purification ritual, the ritual of "walking" the village paths, the hatching ceremonies as well as *inemba* dance. I attended the purification ritual to observe how this ritual is administered and hear the words spoken to the initiate by the circumciser and how these words relate to the role of men and women among the Bagisu. During the performance of *inemba* dance, I participated in taking initiates to assembling places, observed the ritual of tying skins and also danced with the initiates.

Meyer advises that ethnomusicologists need to employ participant observation while doing field work because "[it] enhances validity of the data, strengthens interpretation ... [and] helps the researcher to formulate meaningful questions" (1992: 29). In this regard, participant observation enabled me to correlate views from informants and what actually happens in the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals. For instance, I was able to confirm informants' views that performers of *inemba* dance move closewise while dancing.

However, as Nannyonga-Tamusuza stresses that emic scholars need to distance themselves from their cultures and use different "lenses" if they are to understand their own cultures (2005: 37), I kept some distance from the above events. Caution against "over participation"³ in an event while doing fieldwork is also given by Meyer when she writes that fieldworkers should remind themselves that they have "[gone there] to study ... [and] do not belong [there] ... (1992: 30). As such, I was aware of my role and did not over participate in singing and

³ Over participation in this context is used to refer to the situation where a researcher gets over involved or "carried away" and becomes completely part of the event. As a result, he or she may forget his or her identity as a scholar.

dancing in *imbalu* rituals. Further, I stood at a distance and watched the performers of *imbalu* rituals, music and dance. My aim was to examine how different performers take on their roles, the nature of music performed, dance motifs, just to mention a few. However, since ethnographers need to spend some time with people they study (see for example Silberschmidt, 1999: 24), this study was spread over a period of at least four months (December, 2008 to March, 2009). This was intended to enable me have ample time to interact, learn and understand *imbalu* rituals and how they interact with music and dance.

3.4.2 Interviews

Interviewing is another tool which I used to collect data for this study. I interviewed various informants including song leaders, elders charged with the responsibility of smearing candidates, circumcisers, teachers, political leaders, custodians of *imbalu* dances and instruments, as well as *imbalu* candidates to gather data (see appendix 4 for the list of informants). I used both formal and informal interviews with open-ended or non structured questions. With formal interviews, I made appointments with my informants. To have a systematic discussion, I wrote down the themes and questions about the topic of investigation to guide me during interviews (see appendix 2 for the sample of the research guide questions). Because of using open-ended questions, I was able to have free interaction with my informants by asking follow-up questions to interrogate further the new ideas brought up by the informant.

Further, I used informal interviews especially with members of the audience during and after the performance of *kadodi* and *inemba* dances. These are interviews which Nannyonga-Tamusuza calls “conversational interviews” (2005: 48). According to Nannyonga-Tamusuza, conversational interviews are convenient where formal meetings are not possible for informants who could not have time for formal interviews. Since they are “impromptu”, informal interviews may take place anywhere including taxis, kiosks or along roadsides. As such, I interacted with people as they went to the market, shopkeepers, taxi passengers as well as students and talked about *imbalu* rituals, music and dance. Since interviews expose scholars to deep interactions with their informants, they require

that the researcher builds rapport with them (Rosalie Wax, 1960). As such, I cultivated a good relationship with my informants through exercising patience with them and not rushing them to give answers they would otherwise not have wished to. In addition, I attached “value” and interest to every opinion my informants presented (see also James Spradley, 1979).

3.4.3 Library Research

Since new knowledge builds onto old knowledge, I reviewed works of scholars who have written on *imbalu* circumcision rituals, the relationship between ritual, music and dance as well as music, dance and gender. I reviewed works of scholars with respect to the content, nature, methodologies, the trend of scholarship on music, dance, gender and rituals to inform this study. As such, I visited the Makerere University Main Library, Faculty of Arts Library, Music Reading Room at Music, Dance and Drama Department and libraries at the University of Bergen- Norway to inform this study. The sources I surveyed included news paper and magazine articles, research reports, journal articles, monographs and dissertations. In addition, I visited some academic websites such as www.jstor.com and www.google scholar.com.

3.4.4 Photography, Audio and Visual- Recording

I took both still and video pictures of the dancers, candidates and the ritual drums during *kadodi* and *inemba* dance performances and used them in the analysis of my data. Jackson Bruce (1987) informed the choice of this tool since he stresses that one’s memory alone cannot be relied on as a store for information because memories do not recall all information kept. Bruce also advises that field workers need to accompany their recordings with short notes to explain where, who and when recordings took place. Similarly, Meyer emphasises the need to take notes while doing fieldwork because when the ethnographer has a problem with the “mechanical aids”, he or she “can fall back on [the] pen and pencil ...” (1992: 39). As such, I took notes during field work to “back-up” my recordings. I

also recorded interviews on a cassette recorder to save time as well as enhance the payback during transcriptions and analysis of data.

Furthermore, I used pre-recorded materials done by Bugisu Cultural Board during the launching of *imbalu* ceremonies at Bumutoto Cultural Village in 2006 to make comparisons with the *imbalu* performances of 2008. These recordings enabled me to acquire data on *isonja* and *tsinyimba* dances. *Isonja* dance, for instance, is performed between the months of January and March and yet during these months, I was still at the University doing other course units of my course. I also acquired recordings of the speeches by Bagisu elders during *imbalu* launching ceremonies and this enhanced my understanding of the origin of *imbalu* as well as the value the Bagisu attach to *imbalu*.

3.4.5 Personal Experience

Being part of the *Kigisu* culture, my personal experience also informed the research tool of this study. I am circumcised and have participated in *imbalu* circumcision rituals since childhood and as such, I have a wealth of data. Besides, my father was a custodian of *imbalu* costumes, which I had access to from childhood. This experience certainly informed the topic, but also a number of questions I asked.

Similarly, Nannyonga-Tamusuza advises that “indigenous scholars’ knowledge is worth including in scholarly studies since it is knowledge acquired over a long period” (2005:33). In this respect therefore, indigenous scholars have a right to claim possession of the knowledge about their cultures since they are part and parcel of that culture. Indeed, an emic scholar can be regarded as an informant who can even quote him or herself (2002: 457) (see also Chou Chiener, 2002).

3.5 Data Analysis

I carried out two kinds of data analysis in order to make this study complete: in-field and after-field analyses. According to John Blacking (1995), there is need for ethnographers and their informants to interact and share knowledge and experiences which may lead to intellectual analysis. As such, I conducted in-field-analysis by playing back some of the interviews to my informants and cross-checked whether all the themes for the study were covered.

After data collection, I went through an intensive process of analysis which involved transcription of interviews as well as organizing the data in themes. I coded all the transcribed interviews as well as literature for easy access during the writing process. While discussing the concept of thick description, Clifford Geertz (1973) stresses that scholars need to ‘think and reflect’ a lot if they are to get indepth interpretations, the view which shaped the interpretation of data for this study.

Writing about song texts and sounds, Nicholas Cook (1998) emphasises the significance of analysing how these variables interact so as to enhance interpretation of the messages embedded in the song. Hence, since I examined how *imbalu* songs and dances are used as a platform for performing gender among the Bagisu, I did not only analyse song texts or structure but also the pitches (sounds) of the songs in order to establish the meanings attached to them by the Bagisu people. I carried out dialogic, thematic, structural and textual analysis. As such, I organised the songs and discussed their themes and structures in order to understand how the Bagisu gender ideologies are performed through them.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

During fieldwork, I respected the rights of my informants such as the right to remain anonymous. As Spradley (1979) advises, if informants request to remain anonymous, this request must be granted. As such, I used pseudo names while referring to informants whose identity I needed to conceal. Further, I was cautious to consult the informants before engaging them in any of my research

activities. In this regard, I first explained to informants the objectives of my study and even presented an introduction letter from Makerere University before interviewing, photographing or carrying out any recordings. This ethical consideration is shared by Brian M. Toit who stresses that scholars should first inform their informants about the implications of the research and seek for their consent (1979: 14). Similarly, Meyer cautions ethnomusicologists to seek peoples' consent before involving them in their studies. In this regard, she writes that "[t]he participation of people in [your] research activities [should] only be on a voluntary ... basis" (1992: 27).

Further, while participating in *inemba* dance, I respected the taboos the Bagisu attach to *inemba* drums such as the caution not to touch or look into the drums. During the performance of *inemba* dance, only people possessed with the spirits of *inemba* (*kimisambwa kye nemba*) are supposed to touch and play *inemba* drums. However, I only touched *inemba* drums when elders charged with *inemba* dance in Buchunya Parish (Bushika Sub-County) granted me permission. Lastly, Anthony Seeger (1986) observes that ethnographers should give back to the communities from whom they conduct research or should acknowledge the efforts of their informants after field work. In this dissertation, I have acknowledged my informants by quoting them. Further, there will be no limitation to any of the informants to read the final copy of this dissertation. Finally, I sought informants' permission to deposit music recordings as well as the photos of the musical artefacts in the Makerere University Klaus Wachsmann Music Archive to facilitate future studies about *imbalu* rituals, music and dance among the Bagisu.

3.7 Limitations to the Study

Like any field work, I faced a number of challenges and found solutions to these challenges for the success of this research. First, I could not rely on the digital recorder; I immediately discovered that not all the areas of my research had electricity. As such, I had to acquire a battery- driven recorder. Edward D. Ives also observes that recorders create the feeling of 'third persons'; hence causing nervousness and fear in expression by informants (1995). Many of the informants

were not comfortable with my recording gadgets. As such, I had to explain that recordings were only meant to ease my work. I explained that a lot of time which could be spent on writing notes during interviews was to be saved if recordings were done.

Some informants did not keep their appointments. This forced me to suspend the interviews and as a result affected my research schedule. I had to continue with some interviews even after the planned research period was over. Further, the big sample that I had made prior to the research enabled me to fill the gaps of informants who did not honour their appointments during field work.

Ethnographers studying their own cultures face a challenge of negotiating many identities- first as members of the culture studied and secondly, as researchers (Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2005: 36). During fieldwork, I had more than one identity. I was a university student, someone whom a number of informants considered to be of a higher level. Secondly, I was a Mugisu who had participated in *imbalu* rituals since childhood, someone who had also been circumcised. Further, I was aware of the fact that informants would give views which they think are “suitable” for a university student. I also was aware of my identity as a music and dance performer and how this identity would shape the questions I would ask. Because of my identity as a Mugisu who had been circumcised, for example, some informants expected me to know what I was looking for. Most informants wondered why someone who grew up and got circumcised under the same culture could ask “obvious” questions. However, as Nannyonga- Tamusuza (2005) stresses, scholars need to first “map out a strategy before and during ... fieldwork [...] ... [They should] be aware of ... [their] own views and how they ... can influence [their] data” (2005:37). As such, I showed my informants that I was interested in whatever they were offering; sometimes stressing that as a Mugisu, I only know that I had to be circumcised but did not understand why I had to. This form of attitude re-assured my informants.

Furthermore, other informants thought that I was doing something beyond “mere studies” with their culture, thinking that I had gone to the field to look for information to go and “sell”. This “fear” was compounded by the fact that at undergraduate, I had studied the “Role of music and dance in circumcision ceremonies of the Bagisu of eastern Uganda”. During the present study, most informants became suspicious. When I met my earlier informants especially from

Kinabulya *Kadodi* Band and Yekonia Shibulo, Peter Massa, and Jose Mwaga at Bukigai Sub-County⁴, these informants were suspicious. They thought that I was only an impositor. By portraying me as an impositor, these informants thought that I was pretending to be a scholar yet my real aim was to gather data for “sale”. I overheard one of these informants say to his colleagues:

This man has always been here. After going to the white man’s country [Norway], he must have got market for this music and dances. You see, he even has cameras. He wants to make recordings and take them for sale.

As such, they wanted money before sharing their views with me. In fact, this complicated the idea of making informants sign the consent form I had designed (see the informant consent form in appendix 6). In order to overcome this challenge, I had a big sample of informants from whom I chose rather than confining myself to those who were not willing to share their ideas and experiences (see for example Toit, 1989).

⁴ I have used pseudo names in order to protect the identity of these informants. I fear that exposing their true identities undermines the principle of being ethical as a researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONTEXTS OF MUSICKING AND DANCING IMBALU

4.1 Introduction

Imbalu circumcision rituals among the Bagisu are so interwoven with the peoples' lives that these rituals are defined by the geographical, social, historical, economic and religious perspectives. As such, providing a geographical, social, historical, economic and religious background of the Bagisu does not only provide an understanding of the Bagisu, but also strengthens the argument that *imbalu* is shaped by the context in which the Bagisu live. In this chapter, I examine the geographical, historical, social, religious and economic contexts in which musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals has thrived. I also discuss the conceptualisation of gender among the Bagisu, focusing on the definition of gender roles, identities and relationships and the gendering process among the Bagisu.

Since the origin of *imbalu* and the performance of the associated rituals are linked to spirits (*kimisambwa*), I find it pertinent to discuss the religious beliefs of the Bagisu. I discuss the deities of the Bagisu; especially those directly related to *imbalu* circumcision rituals and stresses that *imbalu* is a religious performance since it involves the evocation of spirits.

Through agriculture and trade, the Bagisu acquire food and animals, which are not only eaten or given as gifts, but are also sacrificed during the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Therefore, the economic structure of the Bagisu also forms a significant point of discussion in this chapter. Further, in this chapter, I examine the historical background of the Bagisu and link it to the history of *imbalu*. I stresses that *imbalu* pervades the life of the Bagisu because it is associated with the origin of the Bagisu people.

4.2 Origin of the Bagisu and *Imbalu*

The origin of the Bagisu, which is interwoven with the origin of *imbalu* remains a mystery not only to scholars (see for example, Naleera, 2003), but also to the Bagisu themselves. However, Timothy Wangusa (1987), John Baptist Naleera (2003) and Wotsuna Khamalwa (2004) have presented what I term as the “Mundu and Seera” legend and this has become one of the foundations for explaining the origin of the Bagisu. Wangusa (1987), who is a novelist and literature scholar, recounts that the first man among the Bagisu was called Mundu. Together with his wife Seera, Mundu emerged from a hole on top of Mount Elgon (Mount Masaba). They produced two sons- Masaba and Kundu, the former being a hunter while the latter a herdsman. According to Wangusa, Kundu left the Mount Elgon while Masaba stayed and brought *imbalu* circumcision rituals to the Bagisu. Wangusa writes that:

Kundu, who, standing upon the mountain one day when the sky was unusually clear, saw a lake on the horizon in the direction of the setting sun[.] [A]nd yearning to go and find out the secret of the lake, [Kundu] journeyed many, many days and nights till he got lost, never to return. Travellers in subsequent generations [told] the stories of a man called Kundu, later known as Kintu, who came from the mountain of the heavens, *mu ggulu*, and alighting upon the far side of lake Nabulolo, gradually subdued his neighbours and became the founder of a still-surviving line of heroic kings[.] ... [Kintu was] ... the father of a prodigious people, whose native language was incredibly akin to that of the far-removed Mountain of the Sun, inhabited by the great- grandchildren of Masaaba the elder (1987: 79).

Presenting the same story, Khamalwa (2004) narrates that Kundu, whose name later changed to Kintu, moved and settled in Buganda. After overthrowing the Buganda king, Kintu became their king. Indeed, scholars who have written about the Baganda correlate Khamalwa’s view that their first king Kintu, might have come from the Mount Elgon region in Bugisu. Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza, for example, stresses that the theories about the origin of Buganda

assert that Buganda was founded by Kintu. She says that one of these theories “relate to Kintu as a foreigner who came from eastern Uganda in search of greener pastures for his cow ... [H]e reached Muwawa (which later became the core of Buganda) [and settled]” (2005: 9). Another story, as presented by Naleera argues that Kundu disappeared from the Mount Elgon ranges because he feared to be circumcised. Naleera writes that after witnessing the circumcision of Masaba, his elder brother, Kundu was so terrified that he moved westwards and never came back (2003:18-19).

Despite the fact that scholars have not articulated whether Masaba was circumcised before or after Kundu had moved away from his father’s household, they agree that *imbalu* circumcision rituals among the Bagisu were introduced by Masaba. According to Khamalwa, as Masaba went on with his hunting expeditions in the Mount Elgon forest, he met a Kelenjin girl called Nabarwa. Nabarwa fascinated Masaba so much that he proposed marriage to her. In spite of the fact that Nabarwa had been circumcised and Masaba was not, she agreed to Masaba’s marriage proposal. And since it was an abomination for Nabarwa to marry an uncircumcised man, she proposed circumcision to Masaba. After consenting, Masaba was circumcised and was married to Nabarwa. Masaba and Nabarwa produced three sons-- Mwambu, Wanale and Mubuya-- and one daughter, Nakuti. Mwambu settled in the north of Bugisu and became the ancestor of the Bagisu called *Badadiri*. Wanale, who settled in the central, is the ancestor of the Bagisu living in central Bugisu and Mubuya moved to the south and became the ancestor of the clans there.

In confirmation of the above legend, most informants told I that *imbalu* among the Bagisu was introduced by Masaba. Michael Wesonga, an elder charged with leading songs in *isonja* dance (performed during *imbalu* rituals) told me that *imbalu* owes its origin to Masaba (*imbalu ye Masaba*) (interview, January 25th, 2009).

Wesonga emphasised that the Bagisu only perform *imbalu* to fulfil the promise Masaba made to his wife Nabarwa that his offsprings will perform *imbalu* circumcision rituals in all the generations to come.⁵

And so, whatever is done during the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals is geared to the evocation of Masaba's name. In fact, most of the songs sung during *imbalu* circumcision rituals include in their texts the name of Masaba as will be illustrated in Chapter Five.

The fact that the Bagisu merely circumcise to "carry on" Masaba's spirit explicates the view that *imbalu* circumcision rituals are merely a performed phenomenon. People are just in a trance, as they may not understand why they "carry" on these rituals. As Frits Staal argues, "ritual action is performed for its own sake ... ritual action is meaningless" (as quoted in Kreinath 2005: 103).

Throughout my life as a Mugisu who also got circumcised, I have witnessed and participated in *imbalu* circumcision rituals and can stress that candidates are repeatedly told by their instructors that the spirit of Masaba (as *imbalu* is sometimes called) is part and parcel of the life of the Bagisu. As such, no grown up male Mugisu, after sixteen years, escapes *imbalu* even though he is dead. As the boy grows, he is reminded by his parents, peers and other members of the community that at one time, he must become a "man" through Masaba's spirit (*kumusambwa kwo Masaba*). The boy is expected to execute Masaba's covenant by losing blood to the land Masaba gave to his children.

In fact, the original name of the Bagisu is Bamasaba, which means "that of the Masaba origin". According to Khamalwa, the name Bugisu is recent and traces it to the late nineteenth century when the British colonialists came to Uganda (2004: 20). Joram Webisa, an Anglican Church leader told me that Masaba's name stands out unlike that of his father Mundu because of the fortitude he displayed while undergoing the ordeal of *imbalu* (interview, June 21st, 2009). Although there may be a number of stories which explain the origin of the name Bagisu, only one will be told here.

⁵ Although Nabarwa – a woman was circumcised and therefore lured Masaba to follow suit, the Bagisu do not circumcise females. Is it because *imbalu* raises one's status and therefore men want to guard this space? As will be discussed in Chapter Five, circumcised "men" among the Bagisu are highly respected and are assigned roles which are intended to portray this high status. As such, to exclude women from being circumcised may have been a strategy to tell women that "you see, since we can face the knife, we are able to manage". However, investigating reasons as to why the Bagisu do not circumcise females is an area for future research.

According to Khamalwa, the name Bugisu is associated with Mwambu, the eldest son of Masaba. According to a legend, Mwambu, who used to look after his father's cattle, was attacked by the Masaai from Kenya. The Masaai took all the cattle he was herding. Mwambu is said to have raised an alarm for help but as his clansmen mobilised to come to his rescue, he followed the raiders singlehandedly and caught up with them. The Masaai were shocked with Mwambu's courage and handed over all the cattle they had raided including an extra bull (known in the Masai language as *ingisu*) as a symbol of Mwambu's bravery. When Mwambu's father heard about the ordeal, he was so shocked that he gave Mwambu a nickname of Mugisu. However, when the British sent Semei Kakungulu as their representative to "pacify" the eastern part of Uganda including the Mount Elgon region, he was fascinated by people who spoke a language similar to his own.⁶ When some local chiefs recounted the above legend, Kakungulu renamed the Bamasaba, the Bagisu.

As the above stories suggest, the origin of the Bagisu is invariably the origin of the *imbalu* circumcision ritual. Both origins point to one source: Masaba, who was the eldest son of Mundu. According to Wangusa, Masaba promised to carry on the *imbalu* circumcision ritual through the subsequent generations (1987: 79). And yet in another story about the origin of *imbalu*, Naleera reports that the *imbalu* circumcision ritual must have stopped after the circumcision of Masaba. He suggests that it was not until a man called Fuuya-- from Bumutoto clan in the present day Bungokho South County-- was confronted with the sickness of his male children that *imbalu* was revived as a remedy to cure sickness. Therefore, the following story explains the origin of *imbalu* and weaves it with sickness.

I stress that the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals is associated with spirits (*kimisambwa kwe mbalu*) and indeed the spiritual nature of *imbalu* is traced from the origin of *imbalu* (see also Namanda 1999; Khamalwa 2004; Makwa 2005). In their discussions, the above scholars allege that Fuuya, who was married to a Kalenjin woman, had his male children bed-ridden most of the time. According to Khamalwa, during one of his visits, Aramunyenye, Fuuya's brother-in-law, was shocked to find his sister's children terribly sick (2004:21). After

examining them, Aramunyenye discovered that the children were haunted by the spirits of circumcision from their mother's clan. According to Khamalwa, Aramunyenye advised his bother- in- law to have the children circumcised (*ibid.*). When Fuuya consented, Aramunyenye circumcised and nursed these children so well that they emerged out of convalescence very healthy and strong young men. As a result, it was established that since all the Bagisu are the children of Nabarwa whose people circumcise, they all have *kumusambwa kwe mbalu* (the spirit of circumcision) in them and should be circumcised in order to appease this spirit. As such, it became mandatory for all Bagisu males to be circumcised, lest the spirits of *imbalu* would haunt them.

To avert the spirit of circumcision from haunting people, the Bagisu put in place a stern condition to the effect that if someone who is “physically” mature and has children dies before being circumcised, his body must be circumcised. However, to circumcise a dead body is very expensive because it has an implication of an immediate retirement on the part of the circumciser. The person who circumcises dead bodies is not allowed to circumcise the living anymore. As such, a circumciser is extremely expensive as he demands whatever he wants, which forces the Bagisu to circumcise anybody of “marriageable” age voluntarily or by force so as to avoid the embarrassment and expense of circumcising his body before burial.⁷

While officiating as Guest of Honour during the inauguration of *imbalu* circumcision rituals at Bumutoto in 2008, David Wakikona re-echoed the argument that the origin of *imbalu* among the Bagisu is linked to spirits. Wakikona explained that a “certain Mugisu”, whose male children were sickly, was advised to have them circumcised as a remedy for restoring their health. Ronnie Kijjambu, The New Vision journalist also reported that three Bagisu youths “arrested” their father Stephen Mujoroto for dodging *imbalu* (2008: 17). According to Kijjambu, these youths forcefully circumcised their father because

⁶ Semei Kakungulu was a Muganda and as such, spoke *Luganda*. *Luganda* is among the Bantu languages and since the Bagisu are of the same language family with the Baganda, their language is similar to *Luganda*.

⁷ It is important to note that because of the influence of education and Christianity, the practice of circumcising dead bodies has drastically reduced. However, those who die before being circumcised but have children do not pass their names over to other people in society. Since children are named after clansmen, the clansmen who die while still “boys” among the Bagisu do not pass on their names to others.

their homes had been “invaded” by strange sicknesses. The “cure” for the said sickness lay in circumcising their father who had dodged *imbalu*.

In this era of HIV/AIDS, Kellen Namusisi’s view connects practices like *imbalu* to the prevention of illnesses. Namusisi explains that “male circumcision, the surgical removal of the foreskin of the penis ... help[s to] reduce the risk of acquiring HIV [/ AIDS]” (2007: 32). According to Johnson Kanyanya, the Bagisu as a circumcised “race” stand lesser risks of acquiring Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) because the skins which harbour “sicknesses are removed” (interview, 2009). The connection of *imbalu* circumcision rituals to the prevention of STDs, especially HIV/AIDS may explain the hold of the Bagisu on this ritual. *Imbalu* is deeply rooted in peoples’ lives that it is believed to be a remedy to medical as well as spiritual problems. This historical interrelatedness of the people and the ritual also explains why *imbalu* has perpetuated among the Bagisu and how the latter proudly undergo it despite calls from the church, feminists and other activists to abandon it. While one camp of HIV/AIDS activists argues that *imbalu* accelerates the spread of HIV/AIDS, another camp of these activists stresses that male circumcision like that of the Bagisu prevents the spread of HIV/AIDS. Of course, there is need to conduct more scientific research to establish the effectiveness of *imbalu* in the “cure” of HIV/AIDS since *imbalu* is not mere pen-surgery. *Imbalu* includes the rituals, music and dances.

As earlier mentioned, *imbalu* circumcision rituals and the integrated music and dance are religious performances. This view suggests that *imbalu* music and dances are supposed to be performed only in *imbalu* contexts. However, like any cultural aspect, the performance of *imbalu* music and dance has transcended its original context as a ritual performance. Indeed, Alan Merriam has acknowledged this cultural dynamism and argued that “no culture escapes the dynamics of change over time” (1964: 303). *Imbalu* music and dance are performed as music hybrids in discos; they are performed in school competitions as well as sounds of protests and campaigns during political rallies, to mention some of the new contexts. As such, *imbalu* musics and dances have been reworked upon and recreated in terms of choreographies, costuming and accompaniments to suit the new contexts. The recontextualisation of *imbalu* music and dance presents a renegotiation of the relationship with the Bagisu gender discourse. Details about

the recontextualisation of *imbalu* music and dance can be addressed in future research.

4.3 Bugisu Environment and Imbalu Rituals

In his comparative study of the circumcision rituals among the Bagisu (Uganda) and Ndembu (Zambia), Victor Turner demonstrates that there is a correlation between the performance of circumcision rituals and the environment in which they are performed. Turner discusses this correlation in terms of population densities and availability of land. He stresses, for example, that high population densities have forced the Bagisu to clear bushes unlike the Ndembu. As a result, the Bagisu perform seclusion rituals in their homes unlike the Ndembu who seclude their boys from the bush (1969: 232). Apart from seclusion, the present study demonstrates that environmental factors determine how the Bagisu perform *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Specifically, the relationship of the Bagisu with their neighbours, climatic conditions as well as the physical features of Bugisu sub- region shape the way the Bagisu construct gender and how they perform *imbalu* rituals as discussed below.

First and fore most, the location of the Bagisu influences the views about their identity in relation to their neighbours. Since they circumcise their males like the Bagisu, the Sabinys (to the north) and Babukusu (to the east of Bugisu) are considered to be men (*basani*) by the Bagisu. However, the Itesots (to the West), Karamajongs (to the Northwest), Jopadhola (to the Southwest) as well as the Bagwere and Banyoli (to the South) do not circumcise. As such, all males from these tribes- whether young or old are considered to be “boys” (*basinde*) in the eyes of the Bagisu.⁸

⁸ It is important to note that the Sabinys also perform female circumcision, which is commonly known as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to initiate adolescent girls into womanhood, a practice which the Bagisu have never had.

To show that they do not tolerate uncircumcised men in their midst, the Bagisu do not even encourage their daughters to marry from these ethnic groups. Further, the Bagisu have a saying that any man who can not cope with *imbalu* must seek refuge among “boys” (the uncircumcising neighbours). This message is always said to *imbalu* circumcision candidates by elders during the *imbalu* rituals. Further, *imbalu* music and dance act as a platform through which messages against cowardice are communicated as will be illustrated later in Chapter Five.

Although this study does not investigate the similarities and differences between circumcision rituals among the Bagisu, Babukusu and Sabinys, one finds similarities in the geographical features where the above ethnic groups live. The ethnic groups mentioned above are all located along the Mount Elgon slopes, cultivating the same volcanic soils, growing similar crops and carrying out such activities like hunting, tree cutting just to mention a few. One would wonder as to whether their location in the plains justifies why the Bagwere, Itesots, Jopadhola, Banyoli and Karamajongs do not circumcise. As such, is circumcision only reserved for mountain or forest people? These questions are beyond the scope of this study.

Further, the climatic conditions of the Bagisu participate in influencing when *imbalu* circumcision rituals among the Bagisu are performed since these conditions determine the planting and harvesting seasons. Indeed, people must be sure that they have harvested their food before performing *imbalu* circumcision rituals. As I will demonstrate in this dissertation, food is important in *imbalu* circumcision rituals since it is used to feed the participants, decorate candidates, as well as used in offering sacrifices. The following discussion on the climatic conditions of Bugisu enhances an understanding on when the Bagisu perform *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Bugisu region is endowed with two rainy seasons. The first rainy season stretches from March to June while the second one from July to December. During these seasons, crops like beans, maize, millet and sorghum are planted. These crops are harvested in July and the beginning of December for the first and second seasons respectively⁹.

Because food is very necessary in offering sacrifices, feeding participants, *imbalu* circumcision rituals are only performed after the harvest seasons.

Therefore, August and December became the appropriate months when *imbalu* circumcision rituals are performed. Candidates who are not students, commonly known as *banabyalo* (villagers) are circumcised in August, during school time and the school-going candidates are circumcised in December, during the long school holidays.

In fact, the influence of food on the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals has been a historical phenomenon. For instance, the Bagisu had to postpone *imbalu* rituals in 1919 to 1920 since they had no food because of the famine. Benayo Mukhwana informed me that the period between 1917 and 1919 had a severe food shortage to the extent that people relied on relief food provided by the colonial government (interview, June 15th, 2009). Since there was not enough food to offer sacrifices as well as feed the participants, the Bagisu postponed *imbalu* rituals to 1920, a time when there was plenty of food. From then on, the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals changed to even years (see also Khamalwa, 2004: 115; Makwa, 2005: 23).

Furthermore, the hilly nature of Bugisu has led to the occurrence of natural hazards such as landslides. Some of these landslides had never occurred during the *imbalu* season. For instance, Charles Mashipwe told me that 1970 is remembered as a year of landslides (*nangulurwe*). As a result, the *imbalu* circumcision season of 1970 was named *nagulurwe*, after the landslides. As this study demonstrates, environmental hazards which occur during the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals have enhanced the creation of new songs which are performed in these rituals. During the performance of such dances like *isonja*, song leaders (*banamyenya*, singular *namyenya*) bring historical events to the fore through the songs they sing to the candidates. The aim is to “transform” *imbalu* candidates into men who are aware of the history of their society and enable them recount such events to future generations¹⁰.

⁹ Whereas crops like beans, maize and millet are grown at the beginning of each rainy season, the Bagisu also grow bananas (*kamatore*) which are their staple food-throughout the year.

¹⁰ This view is also discussed by Claire R. Farrer (1980) in her article on The Mescalero Girls’ Puberty ceremony among the native Indians in America. Farrer discusses that through music, the society’s past is “brought” to the present and only “intelligent” song leaders who are able to narrate what happened in society are entrusted with the role of leading songs. Farrer writes that “singers recount tribal history from the time of the beginning ... [they] must be intelligent and able to memorise long stories of the people, their travels, and accounts of tribal interactions ...” (1980: 126).

Generally, Bugisu is a mountainous region, a view evidenced by the presence of the towering Mount Elgon ranges. The highest point on these ranges goes as high as 8000ft while the low ones go as low as 4000ft above sea level (Khamalwa, 2004: 19). Interwoven with the hills, caves and gorges are rivers like Manafwa, Sorokho and Lwakhakaha, with countless tributaries where *imbalu* candidates perform the ritual of washing their penises before proceeding for pen-surgery. In the areas neighbouring River Lwakhakha, *imbalu* candidates are taken very early in the morning to the river in order to make their muscles numb.

Like many Bantu communities, the Bagisu are agriculturalists. Those who stay as far as 5000ft above sea-level grow Arabica coffee, the biggest portion of it being sold to Bugisu Co-operative Union (BCU) though other companies dealing in coffee also exist. On the other hand, cotton is grown in the lower plains extending as low as 4000ft above sea level. Tobacco is another cash crop grown by a small proportion of the population. Much as bananas are grown primarily for food, the Bagisu also sell them to supplement the income earned from coffee, cotton and tobacco. In addition, the Bagisu grow maize, beans, millet, sorghum, yams and cassava. During unfavourable climatic conditions, the Bagisu acquire millet and other foodstuffs from the Itesots, Banyoli, Jopadhola, Bagwere and Sabinys which they use in the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals. The Bagisu also engage in business with their neighbours. Among the items traded in include food, sugar, salt, soap, cattle and musical instruments.

The Bagisu also rear a number of domestic animals such as cattle, goats, sheep, and chicken. Like the foods discussed above, these animals play vital roles in *imbalu* circumcision rituals in terms of being used in offering sacrifices, providing meat, which is used as the main sauce and gifts to *imbalu* candidates. Because *imbalu* involves monetary expenses especially in terms of buying food, payments for the circumciser, hiring of *kadodi* drums and hire of costumes, one must be economically sound to perform these rituals. Indeed, there is a correlation between the economic base of the Bagisu and the success of *imbalu* circumcision rituals. The wealthier one is, the well placed he is expected to organize *imbalu* rituals and the more the blessings he is expected to receive from his ancestors.

In fact, the Bagisu have a saying which goes: through hard work, a person is able to feed others and perpetuate the ways of the society. As such, elders use *imbalu* rituals, music and dance as a platform for encouraging *imbalu* candidates

to be hard working men. Candidates are constantly told that they should not only feed their own families, but also the clan and ancestors during such occasions like *imbalu*. The need for hard work for the “new” man is also emphasised by the circumciser during the purification ritual when he hands to the initiate the hoe, axe and *panga* which are the basic tools of production among the Bagisu.

As already mentioned, Bugisu environment has had a direct influence on the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals. This environment has undergone many changes which have also directly affected the nature of music and dances performed in *imbalu* rituals. Hunting in the Mount Elgon forest is restricted and therefore the Bagisu have no easy access to the skins of colobus monkeys which are used in the making of head gears (*kamalubisi*) worn by *imbalu* candidates. Furthermore, such animal species like antelopes and buffalos¹¹ from whose horns the Bagisu make musical instruments have become endangered species. To protect endangered plant and animal species, the government of Uganda imposed a strict ban on hunting. Because of the inaccessibility of costumes and materials for making instruments, the Bagisu have reinvented costumes and instruments thus affecting the nature of music performed in *imbalu* circumcision rituals. In the next section that follows, I discuss *imbalu* as a religious performance in order to establish how this ritual has pervaded all aspects of the life of the Bagisu people.

4.4 Imbalu as a Religious Ritual

Imbalu circumcision rituals are a religious ritual performance. Like other religious performances, these rituals are associated with spirits and their performance follows strict procedures. In addition, *imbalu* circumcision rituals are administered under the unquestionable authority of ritual executors; they involve the evocation of the dead; convenating; and have symbolic meanings which are not known by all the participants.

The performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals is associated with spirits (*kimisambwa*), which are believed to have come from the clan of Nabarwa, the

¹¹ Many informants told me that most of the costumes and instruments used in *imbalu* rituals are made from “fierce” wild animals in order to depict the “fierce” nature of men among the Bagisu. The buffalo, for example, is believed to be one of the fiercest animals.

wife of Masaba who is believed to have lured her husband into getting circumcised. According to Khamalwa (2004), since all the Bagisu are children of Masaba and Nabarwa, they need to be circumcised in order to avert the spirits of circumcision (*kimisambwa kyembalu*) from haunting them. It is believed that when the Bagisu had attempted to “abscond” from *imbalu*, these spirits attacked the male children of Fuuya, thus forcing the Bagisu to revive the circumcision rituals. It has become mandatory that all the Bagisu get circumcised lest spirits of *imbalu* would haunt them. To appease these spirits, *imbalu* candidates are taken to various places to offer sacrifices, as will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Further, *imbalu* circumcision candidates are smeared with clay from the sacred swamp as a way of putting these candidates in “fellowship” with the spirit of *imbalu* (*kumusambwa kwe mbalu*). The swamp where the clay (*litosi*) is got is sanctified with sacrifices in terms of slaughtered hens and goats in appreciation of the power of the spirits of *imbalu*. Furthermore, this spirit is evoked through songs and dances performed in *imbalu* circumcision rituals. In fact, *imbalu* candidates are told through song that they should be firm in the spirit of Masaba, the name given to *imbalu*, as will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Imbalu circumcision rituals involve the evocation of the dead to come and “witness” as well as bless the candidate. Many informants told me that the Bagisu respect the dead members of their society to the extent that they are referred to as *balamu* (the “living”). Among the means through which the dead are respected include naming children after them and leaving some food in the cooking pot so that the ancestors may find something to “eat” when they visit at night. Another means of relating to ancestors as the “living” is “calling” them to be “present” during *imbalu* circumcision rituals. If these dead people (*bakuka ni bakukhu*) come on their own during the performance of these rituals, they are believed to cause severe harm to the candidate. So, they must be “invited” through sacrifices, music, and dance so as to make the candidate firm during pen-surgery.

Imbalu is a religious performance since it involves covenanting. It is believed that the blood which is shed as a result of the surgery of the penis is a confirmation to the ancestors that the boy is part and parcel of the society the ancestors left.

While explicating the making of the covenant between the boy and his ancestors, Khamalwa writes that:

Shedding of blood by the novice signifies the sealing of a covenant bond with the living community and the ancestors ... The mingling of [the novice's or boy's] blood with dust is an inseparable covenant ... with the ancestors who have become *liloba* (soil) (2004: 144).

As such, it becomes impossible for the uncircumcised males among the Bagisu to be counted as part of the society. Not only are they denied by the living community, but are also not recognized by the ancestors. They are considered to have betrayed the values and norms of their society (Khamalwa, 2004: 129).

Like other religious performances, ritual executors in *imbalu* follow strict procedures. Time must be set aside for brewing beer, going to cultural sites, as well as smearing and shaving candidates. In addition, before taking candidates to places where they assemble before going to cultural sites or for surgery of the penis, clan leaders wait to hear the sound of the reminding drum first. This drum reminds people about the ritual they must perform before the ritual in question is performed. Further, *imbalu* ritual executors must follow the right routes while taking candidates to cultural sites or for circumcision. They must also know where to fetch water or take candidates for washing before taking them for pen-surgery. People charged with responsibilities of taking care of the reminding drum, circumcising candidates or playing *inemba* drums must be from “special” clans. For instance, to play the reminding drum, one must come from the clan of *babashebusa* (those who remind others). Since *imbalu* circumcision rituals continue up to convalescence, strict rules must also be observed there. For example, candidates must sleep in certain postures, they must not shelter under the roof of other people or should not walk at night.

And yet, in executing any religious rituals, performers do not ask the question why they “do it the way it is done”. Rather, their only concern is how they “should do it” successfully, a feature which is core in *imbalu* circumcision rituals. During fieldwork, I established that most informants were not able to explain, for instance why candidates are sprinkled with beer, put on skins of certain animals or follow certain directions while certain *imbalu* rituals. They

emphasise that “we also got these rituals done like that”. Similarly, Jens Krenaith writes that “[t]here are no symbolic meanings going through their minds when [religious ritual executors] are engaged in performing [their work]” (F. Staal as quoted in Krenaith, 2005: 103). According to Krenaith, what matters most to these ritual executors is the ritual action. Krenaith explains that “[r]itual action is performed for its own sake [,] implying that ritual action is meaningless ‘without function, aim or goal, or also that it constitutes its own goal’” (*ibid.*). Due to this, investigators on religious performances be patient with their informants and also should take time and interpret the meaning behind the symbols used in the performance of these performances.

Another feature associated with religious performances is the total authority exerted by ritual executors on those they “ritualise”. Indeed, what these executors say is final. No one is expected to question their authority and this feature is also experienced in *imbalu* circumcision rituals, especially during the time of smearing candidates with yeast or sprinkling them with beer. In fact, executors tell *imbalu* candidates to stand in specific postures before they begin doing their work. In *imbalu*, circumcisers also yield a lot of authority because they are considered the ones “making men”. Apart from exercising their power during the time of pen-surgery, a lot of their authority is executed during the performance of the purification ritual as will be discussed in Chapter Five. Similarly, Turner has argued that “[t]he community is the repository of the whole gamut of the culture’s values, norms, attitudes, sentiments and relationships. Its representatives in the specific rites ... represent the generic authority of tradition” (1969: 103). As such, ritual executors represent the authority of the society and therefore have power to “prosecute” whoever goes against the will of the society. The Bagisu “decrees” rules against disrespecting age-sets¹² (*bamakooki*- singular *umumakooki*). *Umukooki* is a person with whom you were circumcised. Society decrees that he is someone who has shared the knife with you and as such, one must not love the wife or daughter of his age-set. When the *umumakooki* is circumcising his son, he must give part of the meat or beer to his fellow *umumakooki*.

¹² In this dissertation, an age-set is a person with whom the boy was circumcised (see also Turner 1969; Heald 1982; Khamalwa 2004).

I witnessed an age-set who had been receiving gifts of meat, local beer and chicken from his fellow age-sets. However, when time for circumcising his own son came, he took the son to the hospital. However, his age-sets heard that their friend's son was circumcised in hospital and seriously bounced on him and beat him fiercely. In fact, the Bagisu believe that a person with whom you were circumcised can “make” you dance and sing as if you are going to be circumcised if you offend him. Therefore, when this man began behaving “abnormally” (singing and dancing around the village), his clansmen concluded that he had been bewitched by his *umumakooki*.

Since it deals with *kimisambwa* (spirits), *imbalu* is a means through which the Bagisu re-examine themselves, remember their gods and connect the present to the past. To enhance the readers' understanding of the religious nature of *imbalu*, I therefore discuss the religious life of the Bagisu by examining some of the deities worshipped in day-to-day life while noting their significance in *imbalu* performances.

Naleera writes that the Bagisu worship a supreme God called *wele lunya*—also known as *wele Namanga* (2003: 10-12). According to Naleera, *namanga* is derived from *nanga*, denoting a cloth, a view indicating that God wears a white cloth to symbolise his ‘holy’ nature. And yet, Khamalwa (2004) notes that *wele wemungaki*, the God who resides above, is the supreme God of the Bagisu whom the latter consider to be a porter, one who is able to do anything or the one who has power (2004: 22). Since *wele* is invisible and resides above, the Bagisu expect him to be everywhere and dwell in every activity they perform including *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Similarly, the Bagisu believe that everything which takes place comes from him thus respecting *wele* as much as they can.

Naleera enlists three assistants to *wele* (whom he calls *wele lunya*) as follows: *wele maina*, the one responsible for animal wealth (*buhindifu*) and is the one who removes barrenness from cows. To appease *wele maina*, a person sacrifices a barren cow to him in a special shrine. The priest (normally a diviner) brews beer, blesses it and then sprinkles it over the remaining cows to “remove” barrenness from them. Further, there is *wele nabende* who was responsible for rich crop yields and was in charge of banana plantations. The Bagisu sacrificed to him by deliberately leaving some bananas to ripen in the banana plantations.

Further, *wele nabulondela* was responsible for births and was symbolised by millet put on the pillar of the house. While brewing beer, the Bagisu keep it under the pole which holds the house in order to allow this deity have her share (see also Turner 1969). When a woman is in labour, she gets hold on the pillar of the house and the Bagisu believe that *wele nabulondela* is there to help her. In addition, since millet is used to symbolise this deity, the Bagisu expect the house wife to be as productive as millet and produce as many children as possible. As *imbalu* symbolises the second birth, when the boy is brought to the courtyard for circumcision, the mother runs to the house and gets hold on this pillar to symbolise the second birth of her son (see for example, Wangusa 1987).

Another deity, *wele namakanda* was responsible for fertility and was symbolised by the frog.¹³ As such, when frogs enter peoples' homes, they are not supposed to be pushed away since they are believed to bring blessings to the woman of the home to have as many children as possible. Among the Bagisu, people, especially children are forbidden from hitting frogs. It is believed that since frogs "bring" blessings to women to have as many children as possible, hitting them causes the breakage of the back of one's mother. As such, the mother may not be able to have more children (Naleera, 2003).

Wele is not only responsible for bringing blessings to the people but also inflicting punishments on wrong doers. To do this, the Bagisu believe that God uses small deities among whom is *wele matsakha* who resides in thickets and is responsible for punishing his victims with sudden illness and fevers. Another dangerous deity is *wele lufutu* who was responsible for draining blood from people especially pregnant women. *Wele lufutu* is believed to reside in the river and is symbolised by a rainbow. Whoever could see a rainbow was not supposed to go to the river lest *wele lufutu* drains his or her blood.

¹³ It should be noted that the influence of western religion and education has affected the traditional religious life of the Bagisu. However, although the traditional deities are not worshipped in daily day today life, these deities are evoked during the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals.

While *wele wanyanga* was responsible for causing drought, *wele murabula* was responsible for breaking the legs of people and animals. *Murabula* could also cause peoples' and animals' eyes to swell and was also appeased around the pillar of the house. *Wele kitsali* was responsible for causing epidemics like diarrhoea, typhoid, fever, cholera and plagues.

Robert Kuloba told me that a “real” Mugisu man is expected to know how to avoid and also appease these deities (interview, January 12th, 2009). During the performance of *imbalu* rituals, these deities (especially those which are not harmful) must be called upon to come and bless the candidates. In fact, these gods are believed to have power which can make candidates bleed profusely if neglected. The Bagisu believe that next to the gods are the ancestors who also have power to bless or harm people. Indeed, ancestors are believed to be part of the candidate since the candidates' name is that of his grandfather or uncle who has recently been part of the human race. In the subsection that follows, I discuss the conceptualization of gender among the Bagisu so as to enhance an understanding of how the Bagisu gender ideology is performed through *imbalu* rituals, music and dance.

4.5 Conceptualisation of Gender among the Bagisu

Indeed, as Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2005) has argued, gender is a biocultural condition of being a “man” or “woman”. According to Nannyonga-Tamusuza, “gender ... is based ... on biological characteristics and arbitrarily assigned traits” (2005: 16). This view suggests that the concepts of male and female refer to sex. The sex categories are then used as “raw materials” to construct gender categories which are compatible with the existing norms and conditions of society (see also La Fontaine 1981: 335). In this dissertation, I use the concepts of “man” and “woman” to denote gender and male and female to denote sex. Furthermore, gender roles are the tasks “men” and “women” are expected to perform in society. Most societies expect men to build houses, lift heavy objects, provide the basic necessities of a home including looking for food, clothing just to mention a few. On the other hand, societies expect women to cook food, look after children, fetch water, clean the home among other roles. In fact,

gender roles are assigned on the basis of the traits expected of men and women in society.

Further, gender identities are the traits societies attach to men and women. Among the Bagisu for example, men are expected to possess such traits like strength, assertiveness, aggressiveness and objectivity. On the other hand, women are defined as weak, emotional and subjective beings. Since the Bagisu define gender roles on the basis of whether one is strong or weak, men and women use these roles as spaces of defining their own identities. In order to enhance an understanding of the conceptualization of gender among the Bagisu, one also needs to define the concept of gender relations. According to Sylvia Tamale, gender relations refer to the “interaction that occurs between men and women as they carry out their different roles in society” (1999: 4). Tamale stresses that relations between genders reflect roles men and women play in their respective societies as well as the value attached to these roles by society. In fact, the Bagisu assign men roles, which put them in positions of decision making in homes and the wider society and music and dance are among the vehicles through which gender relations are performed as will be discussed in Chapter Five. In this section, I examine the conceptualisation of gender among the Bagisu in two ways namely 1); Gendering from birth through puberty; and 2) Gendering after *imbalu* rituals.

4.5.1 Gendering from Birth through Puberty

The gendering process among the Bagisu begins when the child is born and this process is dependent on the sex one acquires at birth. Like in many other African societies, females and males are the only recognized sexes among the Bagisu. In the case where the child is born with both sexes, it is deemed abnormal and society does everything possible to change its sex especially through an operation, a discussion which is outside the scope of this study. When a male child is born, it is called *umwana umusinde* while a female one is called *umukhana*. George Weanga, a 75 year old retired Church leader, told me that

female children are called *bakhana* (plural of *umukhana*)¹⁴ because they are expected to marry and bring home wealth as soon as they become mature. And yet, males are called *basinde*¹⁵ (plural form of *umusinde*) because society expects them to grow and become the custodians of the fathers' households when the latter grow old (interview, 2009).

Further, male children are likened to a tree known as *lusoola*¹⁶. Phillip Wamayosi, the custodian of the reminding drum explained to me that *lusoola* is a tree which is normally planted in or near people's compounds because it is associated with good luck (interview, January 4th, 2009). As such, its bark, or branches are cut and used in the performance of a number of rituals including *imbalu*. In addition, the wood from this tree is fairly hard and can be used in the construction of houses. *Lusoola* cannot be easily eaten by termites unlike eucalyptus trees (*kalutuusi*). Reuben Wamaniala, a 50 year old man whose role is to smear *imbalu* candidates with yeast, enumerated to me the following reasons why the boy child among the Bagisu is related to *lusoola* (interview, December 28th, 2008). Firstly, Wamaniala stressed that males among the Bagisu are associated with good luck. When a male child is born, the mother is congratulated for having brought good luck (*tsingabi*) to society. As such, someone on a journey to meet a boy or man on the way concludes that his or her mission is already successful. On the contrary, when someone meets a female, the person may postpone the journey because he or she has met "bad omen". In fact, girls are associated with bad luck among the Bagisu. A woman who produces only girl children is publically rebuked and society strongly asks her husband to marry a second woman in the hope that he may produce a boy. Secondly, Wamaniala explained that just as *lusoola* is used to construct a "strong" house, the boy child is taken as hope or someone who will sustain his father's household. He is not easily "eaten" or "taken" away like the girl. Male children are expected to stay permanently in their fathers' homes and are the ones who become the heirs among the Bagisu.

¹⁴ Although I was not able to establish the explicit meaning of the female child (*umukhana*- plural *bakhana*), most informants told me that female children are defined in terms of property. They are taken as beings who must get married and bring wealth to their fathers' homes.

¹⁵ I was also unable to establish the explicit definition of the male child among the Bagisu. However, most informants told me that male children (*basinde*- sing *umusinde*) are taken as heirs of their fathers' households as this study will reveal.

¹⁶ *Lusoola* is a tree which most Bagisu use to construct houses.

Similarly, Annet Nabutuwa, a 48 year old woman told me that when girl children are born, they are referred to as *maswa kanjelekha* (the lands across) (interview, January 4th, 2009). According to Nabutuwa, in the *Kigisu* culture, women do not have authority in their paternal clans. They get married, produce children and become part of the husbands' clans¹⁷. And yet, Stephen Nakhokho, a 52 year old man who is also a Church leader told me that girl children are known as *kamasopo* (singular *lisopo*). *Lisopo* is a shrub, whose trunk is very weak and can only be used as fire wood. Nakhokho explained that women are weak people and are only "valuable" in the production of children and cooking. According to Nakhokho, since girl children are expected to be weak, society relates them to weak objects of nature (interview, December 30th, 2008)(see also Sugarman 2004: 261).

As La Fontaine has stressed, gender categories are constructed through "socialisation and maintenance of social sanctions" (1981: 335). Societies expose the male and female sexes to what Marcia Herndon calls "enculturation", the process of learning the tasks and behaviours society expects of particular genders. According to Herndon, enculturation "begins at birth [and] persistently [rewards] boys and girls for different behaviour ... [which] ... varies from one social group to another ..." (1990: 12). As Phillip Wamayosi also stressed, males among the Bagisu are socialised to become strong, aggressive and objective people (interview, January 4th, 2009). As they grow, society exposes them to tasks and games intended to instil the above traits in them. Male children are always encouraged to build "houses", make "spears" or "machetes". Johnson Kanyanya told me that a boy who practices building "houses" grows knowing that a man among the Bagisu must construct his own house. Kanyanya explained that "you can never find such a boy when he grows up staggering to go to other men's houses to sleep" (interview, January 18th, 2009). Further, the "spears" or "machetes" he makes symbolise the tools men use to provide security in society (*ibid.*). In fact, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, the matchet and spear are among the items the circumciser gives the initiate when defining manhood among the Bagisu.

¹⁷ In fact, the authority of women among the Bagisu is determined in terms of how many children one has produced. As such, the more children a woman produces, the greater is her authority among her husbands' people.

My experience while growing up relates well with Kanyanya's views. As I grew up, I was told that the role of fetching water and cooking is for girls. As an upcoming "man", I was assigned the role of looking after goats and cows. My father emphasised that looking after goats or cows exposes the boy to other "tough" boys, a practice which enables him to become "tough" too. My father used to say:

Kumulimo kwo Makwa khuyila tsingafu ni tsimbusi khukhwaya. Inganama namunyola mufumbiro ta. Akhile waba ni kamani ate warafua nga basani balala. Akhile azye basheewe bamupe nio aangale. Umusinde oyu akana khunjila imalu. Kene eme aryena burafu bwe kumubono nga alime umusitoifu?

Makwa's role is to take cows and goats to the bush for grazing. I do not want to get him in the kitchen. He needs to grow "strong" and "aggressive" like all other "men". He must go there and be beaten by his friends so that he "toughens". This boy is soon getting circumcised. How will he stand the pain of the knife if he is not strong?

According to Juliet Muduwa, a primary school teacher who also doubles as a *kadodi* dancer, male children need to be more exposed to the "world" than females. In this regard, Muduwa stressed that males must be given tasks outside the home. She said that,

Umusinde akhile wazya anzye, walula iburafu. Akhile me wekhala ni mayi wewe ta. Inga umanyile, ife bamayi khwakhile khwekhala ango ni bakhana beefe khwateekha. Khulekha babana beseetsa bazyia ibulafu. Nga ne bayisa tsimbusi, oba khulanya tsingu, baba bari khurula ibulafu. Nga basani, bakhile balula iburafu (interview, February 27th, 2009).

a boy must be exposed to the world beyond home. He should not stay home with the mother. You know, for us mothers, we are supposed to stay at home cooking with our daughters. We let our sons to go out. As they look after goats or fetch firewood, they get exposed. As future "men", they need to be exposed"

Muduwa demonstrates that male children need to stay out from the kitchen and “explore” the world so as to develop into “appropriate” men. Muduwa also portrays mothers as people whose duty is to “nurture” children, especially the girl children. And yet, when male children are of “age”, they must be separated from the mother to go and “explore” the “manly” world: to become strong, aggressive, assertive and objective. Similarly, Sherry Ortner contends that “mothers and their children, according to cultural reasoning, belong together. [However], boys must be purged of the defilement accrued from being around mother and other women so much of the time [when they grow up] ... (1996: 31-32). Ortner’s views serve to explicate the roles society ascribes to women; to be primarily in charge of children.

As mentioned earlier, a female child among the Bagisu is called *umwana umukhana*. When it is born, the female is welcomed into society as someone who must bring wealth to the parents when she gets married. As such, she is socialised to become a “good” wife by being associated with activities like making mats, cooking and knitting. To become a “good” woman, girl children are expected to stay near their mothers or aunties and learn “good” eating habits, sitting postures, how to cook and all those behaviours expected of “good” women in society. In fact, a girl who does not behave well exposes her mother to abuses. The mother is looked at as someone who does not know how to nurture her daughters “properly” and possible suitors may not come to such a home when looking for marriage partners. To make girl children turn into “appropriate” women, the Bagisu also use proverbs such as “*bukhwale butuufu intekhelo*” (proper marriage is cooking) or “*umukhasi umutuufu amanya inda yo museetsa*” (a proper woman knows the husband’s stomach). These proverbs are intended to remind the girl that her office in marriage is in the kitchen. She is expected to “maintain” the husband’s stomach. To demonstrate that cooking is one of the principle tenets of marriage, girls who go for marriage among the Bagisu are said to have gone to “*Bufumbo College*”, literally meaning she has gone to cook. If a Mugisu man wants to chase away his wife, he begins to occupy the kitchen and cook his own food. A “man” to cook food is abominable, a view which suggests that his wife is worthless.

Despite the fact that children are supposed to stay with their parents in the same house, when they reach adolescence, children relocate to their own huts called *tsisimba* (singular, *isimba*). According to Aidah Namwano who is a local government counselor and headteacher, the adolescent stage induces boys and girls to “explore” and become “aware” of the “world”. And yet, a typical traditional house among the Bagisu is built in such a way that the mother and father cannot have adequate “privacy” when grown up children stay with them in the same house. As such, children may come to know about the parents’ sexual acts (interview, 12th March, 2009). Therefore, when they reach adolescence, a sign that they are “ripe” for marriage and circumcision, boys construct their *tsisimba* where they may dwell with their peers from the same clan. Likewise, girls at adolescence leave their parents’ houses and stay in the *isimba* constructed for them as they wait for marriage. Charles Mashipwe, born in 1952, explained to me what is expected of boys and girls who leave their parents’ houses and go to live in *tsisimba*. He noted that boys are expected to stay in harmony with one another and are frequently visited by their paternal uncles. These uncles instruct the boys on how to behave in society, the need to be initiated into manhood as well as the responsibilities of a circumcised man.

In addition, Mashipwe noted that girls are taught by their mothers how to dig, cook and treat their husbands when they get married. Among the precautions given to the girls is to ensure that they do not allow boys to come and stay in these huts. Girls were cautioned against losing their virginity as this would make their mothers to lose the prestigious goat called *iyebwana*. *Iyebwana* is a goat given to the mother of the newly married girl in appreciation for “guarding” the girl properly. In the past, girls who were found to have lost their virginity were returned to their mothers or married by old men as second or third wives. In fact, the status of a girl among the Bagisu is elevated when she gets married and begins to produce children. As a result, the roles and identities assigned to her also change because she has become a “woman”. The “woman” is expected to be submissive to her husband, cook food for him, take care of the house and above all, produce children.

Among the Bagisu, imbalu circumcision rituals concretise the boy’s status by re-echoing what parents and people from the clan told him as he grew up. *Imbalu* circumcision rituals also concretise what the paternal uncle used to tell the

boy when he was in *isimba*. This emphasis is passed on through ritual admonitions as well as the songs and dances performed in *imbalu*. In fact, *imbalu* is a transition through which the roles and identities among men in society are tested. In the next section, I discuss the conceptualisation of gender after *imbalu* circumcision rituals.

4.5.2 Gendering after *Imbalu* Circumcision Rituals

Although the gendering process among the Bagisu begins at birth when the sex of the child is established, it is after *imbalu* circumcision rituals that the Bagisu begin evaluating whether someone is a “real man” or not. David Walela, a primary school teacher and religious leader told me that performing *imbalu* rituals is just one of the activities on the gendering trajectory (interview, February 2nd, 2009). According to Walela, a “real” man among the Bagisu is also defined in terms of marriage, production of children and sleeping in one’s own house and that circumcision is a mere mark inflicted on someone’s penis. Furthermore, Samuel Watulatsu, a member of the Bugisu Cultural Board told me that the Bagisu emphasise the production of children and whoever is circumcised but has no children is not a complete “man”. According to Watulatsu, the Bagisu want to test whether someone as a circumcised “man” can be able to solve the problems which come when one has children. He explained that a “real” man should be able to buy food for his children and discipline them (interview, February 27th, 2009).

Further, informants emphasised that to be a “real” man, one must have a wife. A “real” man must also rule his wife. Bumali Namanda, for instance, emphasised that a man who does not control his wife is a wasted person in the eyes of the Bagisu. Namanda said that, “a real man must make sure that his wife is under him. We do not circumcise you and expect you to become a ‘woman’. My brother, you should rule your household!” (interview, March 15th, 2009).

According to Khamalwa Wotsuna, one of the ways of testing a man’s control over his wife was the famous practice of “making” the newly married wife “jump over the cooking stones” (conversational interview, 24th July, 2008). This practice is literally known as *khumushisa kamayika*. Khamalwa observed that when a Mugisu man got married, he was expected to beat his wife within the first

two weeks to demonstrate to the clansmen that he will have control over the wife. Within those two weeks, the man was supposed to make surveillance over his wife, especially when she was in the kitchen. At an opportune moment (especially the time she is busy with work), the man was supposed to slap her to the extent that she jumps over the cooking stones crying. This type of beating was supposed to be done in such a way that the wife is caught unawares so as to make her jump and go over the cooking stones. Much as the elders may come to “rescue” their daughter-in-law, inwardly they know that their son will not be “driven” by his wife. Whoever did not demonstrate to the clan that he will “control” his wife within the first two weeks of marriage was declared a soft man who will always yield to the demands of the wife.

As mentioned earlier, staying in one’s own house is among the qualifications of “real” manhood among the Bagisu. This need is concretised through the admonitions administered by the circumciser while performing the purification ritual. As will be illustrated in Chapter Five, the circumciser stresses to the initiate that “real” manhood (*busani bubweene*) is cutting trees and building one’s own house. According to Stephen Wanyera, a house “compels” a man to think about marriage, produce children as well as buy household items. Wanyera noted that a house without a wife is always “cold” (interview, January 18th, 2009).

However, one’s gender is not only defined in terms of the roles one performs in society, but the traits he or she possesses as well. Among the Bagisu, “real” men must portray what Robert Walser calls “masculinity” (1993: 108). Writing about heavy metal music, Walser argues that societies, especially in the western world construct men to be assertive, powerful, dominant, strong and aggressive. These traits enhance an understanding of the traits the Bagisu use in the construction process of men in their society.

Betty Nabulwala, a Sub county Councillor told me that “real”, “full” or “complete” men among the Bagisu are those who are aggressive, strong, and assertive (interview, 2009). Nabulwala explained that a “real” man must be strong because he needs to defend himself, his household and society. According to Nabulwala, a man who possesses the above traits is known as *umusani burwa* (one who is “real” or “bitter”). Apart from being strong, aggressive and assertive, *umusani burwa* must have land, animals and food. Nabulwala added that such a man is one who makes sure that his property is not tempered with by other people.

Further, Robert Kuloba stressed that *umusani burwa* must also have more than one wife (interview, January 12th, 2009). As Kuloba noted, a man with many wives is “assured of many children. These children provide his household with a lot of labourforce and wealth, especially when the girls get married” (*ibid.*)¹⁸.

Many informants informed me that a man who does not fulfil his societal obligations among the Bagisu loses his man gender and is defined in terms of worthless societal objects. For instance, Reuben Wamaniala calls a man who does not have a wife, children and a house *uwe kamawusu* (one who is spoiled). As Wamaniala noted, a man without a wife is a worthless object who just wasted the clan’s yeast and the circumciser’s knife (interview, December 28th, 2008). However, Robert Kuloba, whose view is shared by Charles Mashipwe, David Walela and Vincent Matanda stressed that a man who does not measure to societal obligations among the Bagisu is called *Mateleesi*¹⁹. Particularly, Kuloba stressed that *Mateleesi* denotes soil from a destroyed house that cannot be used on another house (interview, January 12th, 2009). As such, if a circumcised person is not married, has no children and sells off his property, he is as useless as soil which cannot make a house.

Further, George Wekoye observed that the gender of a man among the Bagisu is defined in terms of production and reproduction. Wekoye stresses that if a person is circumcised but does not have children, he is believed to have killed his clan and his title is *umukumba*- one who does not produce (interview, January 29th, 2009). Similarly, Khamalwa argues that among the Bagisu, “whoever dies without offspring ...[is] not accepted ... in the world of the ancestors, as he will have betrayed their cause by not fostering clan continuity” (2004: 129).

Furthermore, Betty Nabulwala told me that a man who does not fulfil societal obligations among the Bagisu is a “half” person. According to Nabulwala, “half”men do not have houses of their own, they do not have wives and children. Such people cannot be given any role in *imbalu* circumcision rituals because society has not “benefited” from them. Nabulwala calls such men *bisanisani*

¹⁸ Due to the influence of the market economy, religion and education, most Bagisu men are abandoning the practice of polygamy. Many informants stressed that producing many children is associated with high expenditures in terms of buying food, meeting medical bills as well as paying schoolfees.

¹⁹ It should be noted that *Mateleesi* is an oxymoron name which is also given to “normal” men in the *Kigisu* sense. As such, someone can be a man who fulfils societal obligations and is given such a name especially if he inherits it from his grandfather.

(singular, *khasanisani*), those who are “just men for the sake of it” (interview, January 17th, 2009). And yet, Benayo Mukhwana, a 70 year old man who is also a church leader noted that a man who fails to perform male roles is called *umuwanga angi*, which means one who just roams around (interview, June 15th, 2009). Mukhwana’s view was shared by Yoram Webisa who elucidated the features of the above man as one who has no house of his own, he sleeps in other peoples’ kitchens, has no children and no capacity to host fellow clansmen to his home (interview, June 21st, 2009).

With regard to the above discussion, I contend with Joke Dame when he says that “gender is constructed, and ... masculinity [is] neither natural nor unalterable, but [a] rather socioculturally and historically determined [trait], and therefore subjected to change” (1994: 140). Gender categories change “form” from time to time. Similarly, Silberschmidt stresses that “masculinity and femininity as well as notions about appropriate behavior for each gender [are fluid]. These notions are based on codes of behavior and expectations ... In situations of change and the breaking up of traditional structures, new norms and values are created. While old norms and values [may] die” (1999: 10). This view explains why one among the Bagisu is a boy for sometime but changes his status to become a “man”. Further, even circumcised men among the Bagisu do not have the same status. Their statuses depend on how much one has achieved in society (see also Turner, 1969: 233). In fact, this research established that *imbalu* initiates are constantly cautioned to engage in agriculture, cattle keeping, get married and produce children if they are become “complete” men. As such, even the “half” men (*bamateleesi- sing mateleesi*) can change their identities if they can transform themselves and do what society expects of them.

As mentioned earlier, women among the Bagisu are considered as weak people, emotional, subjective and above all, expected to be submissive to their husbands. Isaac Matanda, a secondary school teacher, told me that a woman’s behaviour to men should be that of submissiveness and respect. Matanda’s views are influenced by biblical teachings of Genesis 2: 21 that a woman was formed from the man’s rib and as such must submit to him. Matanda said that:

Umukhasi ama mu lubafu lwo musani. Shimanyisa shiri umukhasi akhile Khumanya ari umusani ari angaji awe. Akhile khukhusomo umusani lukoosi (interview, June 10th, 2009).

The woman came from the man's rib which means that the woman should know that the man is above her. She should treat the man with respect.

Similarly, Kuloba asserted that,

Umukhasi umutufu nga watuyile umusani khunzila, ema wamushesa bulayi, wafukhamila asi wamushesa. Oba nga akhunu akhubi isi akhafukhamila asi ta, wema bulayi, wabusa tsingubo tseewe atwela washesa umusani bulayo. Umusani naye wamulomo, umukhasi yo wamusibula, bawukhana bazya (interview, June 12th, 2009).

When a 'real' woman meets a man on the way, she humbles herself and greets him. She kneels down and greets him. But if where they have met [woman and man] is a bad place where she can not kneel down, she stands humbly, puts her clothes in order and greets that man humbly. The man also replies to that woman, bids her farewell and they part.

The Bagisu construct women as humble people who must treat men with respect. As such, women are assigned roles which shape them into submissive and subjective positions. As Tamale puts it, women's identities are also structured in such a way that these women are relegated to the domestic arena of the home and family (1999: 1)²⁰. Furthermore, the Bagisu have prescribed specific ways of behaviour for women so as to place women in submissive and subjective positions. As such, sitting with legs crossed as well as eating while standing are among the mannerisms considered "masculine" which women are expected to avoid. Consequently, the Bagisu expect women to teach children (especially girls) on how to "dress", "eat" well and how to conduct themselves towards men.

²⁰ Tamale's views accrue from her analysis of gender roles, identities and relations among the Baganda people of Central Uganda. However, unlike the present study, Tamale writes about gender categorisations in relation to parliamentary politics in Uganda.

Just like men lose their man gender if they do not perform roles society assigns them, women who do not perform roles as expected of them by the Bagisu lose their woman gender. Women who portray traits which the Bagisu consider masculine or those women who go against “appropriate behavior” as well as fail to cook, wash, submit to the husband, produce or take care of their children lose their woman gender. According to Yekoyasa Matanda, a “real” woman among the Bagisu is defined by her ability to cook food for her husband and children. However, some women fail to perform the above role and automatically lose their woman gender and become *biteshe* (the one who just roams all over the village looking for the already cooked food) (interview, March 13th, 2009). *Biteshe* is the kind of woman who does not settle down to cook food in her own home but enjoys “roaming” to other peoples’ homes in search of the already cooked food (*ibid*). A woman is also given the name *biteshe* due to her sexual behavior. Wekoye and John Makulo told me that a woman who acquires the gender of *biteshe* is one who may have sexual intercourse with any man in society.

Further, Joram Webisa told me that the woman gender among the Bagisu is defined in terms of marriage (interview, June 21st, 2009). According to Webisa, the gender *nasikoko* denotes a woman who gets married to one man after the other and such a woman destroys the identity of women in society as women are supposed to “stick” to only one man. In addition, Aidah Neumbe, 37 years and a primary school teacher, told me that much as women are considered weak and are expected to be submissive to their husbands, some women are as “aggressive” and “strong” as men. They stand their ground and fight back when men threaten to beat them. Such women are called *sikonga* and their bodies are “manly” (interview, June 13th, 2009). Similarly, the name *uwokhula shisani* (she who is build like a man) is used interchangeably with *sikonga*. During this study, I noted that women who were described as having grown like men were those who had “deep” voices, “rough” bodies and had developed beards. In fact, among the Bagisu, like in other African cultures, women are “expected” to have smooth bodies and high pitched voices unlike men whose bodies are expected to be “rough”. Men are supposed to speak in “deep” voices.

In this chapter, I have discussed the context which defines the Bagisu people and musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals. I have discussed the origin of Bugisu and *imbalu* circumcision rituals and stressed that the origin of

the Bagisu is invariably the origin of *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Furthermore, I have discussed the relationship between Bagisu environment and the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals. I argue that the influence of the environment on the performance of *imbalu* rituals is portrayed in terms of the physical features, changes in human activities, climatic conditions and the location of the Bagisu in relation to their neighbours. Among other issues, I have noted that the climatic conditions of the Bagisu have dictated when *imbalu* circumcision rituals are performed. Climate dictates when crops are planted and harvested, for it is only after harvests that *imbalu* circumcision rituals are performed.

In this chapter, I have also discussed the gendering process among the Bagisu and noted that this process begins when the sex of a child is established. As I have stressed, the gender of the Bagisu is a construction of society and is hirerachal. A “man” or “woman” maintains his or her position only if he or she performs the societal roles assigned to that gender. Failure to perform the assigned roles leads to one’s lose of his or her gender. In the following chapter, I discuss the various *imbalu* rituals, music and dances and relate them to the Bagisu gender ideology which is the foundation of this dissertation.

CHAPTER FIVE: GENDERING IMBALU RITUALS, MUSIC AND DANCE

5.1 Introduction

In this Chapter, I examine how musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals participate in the performance of gender ideologies among the Bagisu. I examine the nature of *imbalu* rituals, musics, symbolisms in instruments, dance motifs, formations and themes embedded in *imbalu* dances as sites that perform gender roles, identities and relations among the Bagisu.

To stress the argument that musicking and dancing *imbalu* is a process, I examine the nature of music and dances at every phase of the ritual to establish how they participate in transforming a baby boy into a “man”. I also investigate musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals under the *imbalu* preparatory, pen-surgery and the cultural reintegration stages. For illustration purposes, I also include transcriptions of some of the *imbalu* songs. However, these transcriptions are only intended to give a description of *imbalu* music.

5.2 Rituals, Music and Dance: An Integrative *Imbalu*

The integration of music, dance and *imbalu* rituals is articulated in a number of ways: 1) the use of similar names to denote *imbalu* rituals, music and dance; 2) the use of music and dance in the performance of *imbalu* rituals. I use the concepts of musicking and dancing to articulate that music and dance are part and parcel of *imbalu* circumcision rituals. And yet, *imbalu* music is not merely the sounds which can be captured on tape recorders (see for example, Anthony Seeger as quoted in Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2005: 21), but a process. As mentioned earlier, musicking in *imbalu* rituals begins when the boy declares his candidature until the post pen-surgery ritual, which is crowned with *inemba* dance. Furthermore, dancing in *imbalu* circumcision rituals denotes the meanings of the dance motifs, formations, costuming, and themes embedded in *imbalu* dances. Due to the integrative nature of *imbalu*, music and dance, it is impossible to distinguish between these components. Similarly, John Kaemmer has stressed that “music [dance] and ritual are ... so intertwined that it is difficult to determine with

any certainty which one is affecting the other” (1993: 69) (see also Thomas Johnson, 1974 and Claire R. Farrer, 1980).

According to Suzette Heald (1982), when the Bagisu perform *imbalu* rituals, they actually sing and dance. In fact, Heald stresses that even when some rituals are not explicitly music and dance, *imbalu* candidates are “accompanied by song” to the venue of the ritual (1982: 21). Indeed, when *imbalu* candidates²¹ are taken for brewing (*khukoya*) or pen-surgery (*khusheba*), music and dance take precedence. In such incidences, music and dance participate in empowering *imbalu* candidates especially through the song texts. Johnson Kanyanya told me that when Gisu boys seek for manhood, society expects them to show that they will become strong men. More so, the quality of being strong is also inculcated in candidates through songs and dances integrated with *imbalu* rituals (interview, 2009). In addition, he stressed that since *imbalu* is painful, music and dance “lure” the boy into the act without stopping to ponder about the fierce pain (see also Khamalwa, 2004: 142). Kanyanya noted that:

Umusinde afuna kamani. Eleyo akhabomo ni buri tawe.

Ngatsila busa mushilima she khushina (interview, January 18th, 2009)

the boy gets strength. He cannot be fearful.

He just moves through the “darkness” of dancing

[and finds himself getting circumcised].

Further, according to Robert Kuloba, music and dance are so intertwined with *imbalu* circumcision rituals that if music and dance are removed from the rituals, it tantamounts to removing the “real flavour” from these rituals. Kuloba relates music and dance in *imbalu* rituals to salt in soup. He said:

Kumukholo kwembalu nga barusilomo jimyenya [ni kamashina],

Kuli nga no amba jumbi warusa mu supu.

Ari waloma ori unanywa supu angae?

Jimyenya [ni kamashina] nikyo jingaisa kumukholo kwembalu ate

²¹ In this dissertation, I use the concepts of boy and candidate interchangeably to refer to the male undergoing the *imbalu* circumcision rituals.

kyakyila imbalu yabomo kumukaso (interview, January 12th, 2009).

If you remove music [and dance] from *imbalu* rituals,

It is like removing salt from soup.

Can you drink and enjoy this soup?

Music [and dance] are part [and parcel] of these rituals

George Wekoye emphasised the interrelatedness of *imbalu* rituals, music and dance by referring to the whole *imbalu* circumcision ritual process as “playing” (*jiminyawo*). To Wekoye, *imbalu* without music and dance is not *imbalu* at all for it cannot be enjoyed by those taking part in these rituals. As Wekoye stressed, despite the fact that pen-surgery is what defines the boy’s manhood, music and dance give meaning to *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Wekoye argued that:

*Imbalu iri kumunyawo. Singa benyaa kumunyawo kwaawe kwo,
Nakwo kubaa kamani nabi. Imbalu singa iba iye shiminyi siba intuufu
ta. Iyo khane ilimomo ni kamasanyu ta. Ne kamasanyu ketsila mu
khushina bulayi ni jimyenya, nio wajila imbalu yakhwashila*
(interview, January 29th, 2009).

Imbalu is play. If they perform that play, it gives them [the Bagisu,] a lot of strength. If *imbalu* is quiet [meaning: without music and dance], it is not a “true” ritual. That type of *imbalu* is without play. But enjoyment comes through good dancing and music ... that is when you will enjoy *imbalu*.

Similarly, Khamalwa also reminds us that since the inception of *imbalu*, music and dance have been part and parcel of these rituals. As Khamalwa discusses, during the *imbalu* season of 1833, it is believed that the Bagisu saw a lot of comets flying over the whole of Bugisu. The Bagisu were so terrified because they thought that the end of the world had come since the comets had “tails” of fire. Despite all the fear created by the comets, the Bagisu did not suspend singing and dancing while performing *imbalu* circumcision rituals- they

performed music in form of humming as they danced *imbalu*. Khamalwa writes that:

[The *imbalu* of] 1833 [was known as] *Bamakombe/ Bawuma*. It is said that this time [,] there were many comets seen in the sky. As these comets had tails of fire ... people thought these were spirits flying about ... Because of this fear, while dancing [,] the initiates did not sing but simply hummed (*khuwuma*) ... (2004: 109).

As such, *imbalu* rituals without music and dance are not complete since these rituals, music and dance are part of the whole ritual process. As Khamalwa explicates, even during times when the Bagisu were feeling “insecure”²², they hummed to demonstrate that *imbalu* is integrated with music and dance.

The integration of *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance is also demonstrated through the use of similar names to certain rituals, dances and musical instruments. In this case, *kadodi* which is a dance and music genre is a name which also denotes the drum set accompanying the *kadodi* dance. Likewise, *inemba* ritual and dance as performed to mark a climax in the *imbalu* ritual process is named after the long drum known as *inemba*.

From the above discussion, it is clear that *imbalu* is not the mere cutting of the foreskin of the penis; it is music and dance as well. Therefore, to study *imbalu* circumcision rituals without examining the music and dance is an incomplete study of these rituals. In this chapter, I examine how *imbalu* rituals are integrated with music and dance and how these performances intersect with gender.

5.3 *Imbalu* Preparatory Stage

The preparatory stage is the first phase in the *imbalu* cycle, which begins in January till July of an even year, the year of *imbalu*. The rituals, musics and dances performed in the preparatory stage are intended to announce to the prospective *imbalu* candidates, their parents and relatives that the year for *imbalu*

²² As a matter of fact, to see fire “flying” over their place meant that the Bagisu were too insecure. Perhaps if this was not a year of *imbalu*, the Bagisu would have hidden in houses.

rituals has began (Makwa, 2005: 28-30). As such, those who are ready to graduate into manhood are expected to come forward and declare their candidature through singing and dancing. Further, during the preparatory stage, *imbalu* candidates visit distant relations for blessings and to solicit for money and materials that will be used in the rituals, as well as gifts.

The *imbalu* preparatory stage also involves the reminding ritual (*khushebusa imbalu*). Andrew Mukhwana, (a thirty-nine year old man), told me that the primary aim of the reminding ritual is to inform *imbalu* stakeholders that the year for *imbalu* has come so as to give them ample time to search for costumes, food and animals which are used to feed people and offer sacrifices (interview, 2009). And yet, Philip Wamayosi, an elder charged with the role of keeping the reminding drum stressed that *khushebusa* reminds boys aged between sixteen and twenty- two years about paying the “cultural debt” (interview, January 4th, 2009). As this study has already demonstrated, *imbalu* as a form of identity must be performed by all the Bagisu. As such, *imbalu* is also considered a cultural debt, which is an activity every male Mugisu must fulfill in order to be considered a member of the society. Following is a discussion of the different rituals in the preparatory stage.

5.3.1 *Khushebusa imbalu*: Reminder about Manhood

Khushebusa is a ritual that reminds prospective *imbalu* candidates, their parents, relatives and circumcisers that the year is for *imbalu* (see also Makwa, 2005:27). This ritual is performed on 1st January, during the circumcision year and involves sounding a special drum known as *ingoma ye khushebusa* (the drum that reminds). *Ingoma ye khushebusa* is a medium size drum of about three feet in length. It has a double membrane though only one side of this drum is played. The top part of the reminding drum is larger than its bottom. In every clan, there is a special family called *babashebusa* (those who remind others) charged with the responsibility of keeping and performing the reminding drum. The custodians of this drum are always aware of the beginning of the circumcision year and the activities it brings with. As such, when this year begins, they play the reminding drum from either their compounds or the village playground to tell people to

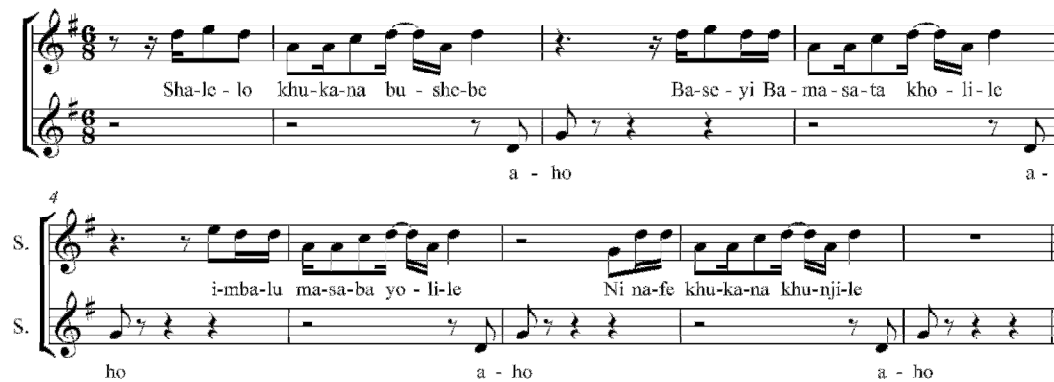
“wake up” and prepare for *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Apart from being sounded to remind people about *imbalu* rituals, the reminding drum is also sounded during last funeral rites, especially the burial of men who produced male children. In fact, men who are circumcised and have produced sons are highly respected among the Bagisu and are accorded “powerful” burial ceremonies when they die. Relating *imbalu* circumcision rituals to activities like funeral rites establishes that *imbalu* defines the whole life cycle of a Mugisu.

Usually, the beating of the reminding drum begins at 4:00 O’clock in the morning. This drum is sounded every after six hours until 4:00 O’clock in the evening. Phillip Wamayosi, an elder charged with the custodianship of the reminding drum informed me that sounding the reminding drum begins early in the morning so as to deliver the message to all people. He said that “there are people who may go on journeys. We aim at giving the message when all people are still at home. They go on their businesses when they have heard the message” (interview, January 4th, 2009). Moreover, at noon is when most people come from their gardens. Wamayosi explained that sounding the reminding drum at noon is aimed at informing people that whatever they may do, *imbalu* rituals are part and parcel of their programme. Finally, 4:00 O’clock in the evening is a time when most social activities like naming or last funeral rites are performed. And since *imbalu* is defined as a social activity²³, the reminding drum is sounded at 4:00 O’clock to inform participants to come out and show the clansmen and women their intentions for *imbalu* in that year.

The sounding of the reminding drum follows a pattern which depicts clan seniority. A number of informants told me that among the Bagisu, older brothers are the ones to lead younger ones in all aspects of life and this hierarchy must be articulated during the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals. As such, the most senior clan sounds its drum first. Hearing the drum rhythms, the next clan follows until the least senior clan joins. At 4:00 O’clock in the evening, when prospective *imbalu* candidates hear the reminding drum, they put on thigh bells, headgears and other dancing regalia and go around villages singing and dancing. Among the songs sang during *khushebusa* rituals is “*Khukana Bushebe*” (We Want Circumcision) whose basic melody and text is illustrated in Figure 2.

²³ *Imbalu* is defined as a social activity since it brings together people of different identities in terms of age, gender and economic background.

Figure 2: *Khukana Bushebe* (We Want Circumcision)²⁴



The literal translation of the text of the song *khukana bushebe* is thus:

<i>Shalelo khukana bushebe</i>	today, we want circumcision
<i>Baseyi Bamasaba khwolile</i>	Masaba elders, we have come
<i>Imbalu ye Masaba yolile</i>	Masaba's imbalu has come
<i>Ni nafe khukana khunjile</i>	We also want to be circumcised

The candidates then move to village playgrounds or along major roads with other people responding to the songs they sing. The music performed by boys during this period is intended to announce to elders that they are ready for the *imbalu* circumcision ritual this year. As a matter of fact, this music and dancing are a way of communicating one's candidature. Indeed, it is after hearing the reminding drum that the prospective candidates come out to portray their candidature through singing and dancing. In Figure 3, I illustrate the rhythms played on the reminding drum (*ingoma ye khushebusa*).

²⁴ It should be noted that the musical transcriptions included in this dissertation are just estimations of the melodies. Like the music of other African cultures, *Kigisu* music does not have definite pitches and keys.

Figure 3: *Ingoma ye Khushebusa* (Reminding Drum) Rhythms



John Makulo, a song leader in *imbalu* rituals interpreted the rhythms played on the reminding drum as saying that: “*inywe inywe inywe inywe, kwola kwola kwola kwola, mutima mutima mutima mutima*”. The literal translation of the rhythm- text is: “*you you you you, it has come, it has come, it has come it, has come, run run run run*” (interview, January 25th, 2009). Makulo explained that boys who are not circumcised (*basinde*) are reminded that the year has come and therefore should prepare themselves for *imbalu* circumcision rituals. They should run and join the counsel of men (*basani*) if these boys are to fit in the Bagisu community²⁵.

Khushebusa ritual is also a “school” for *imbalu* candidates to learn how to sing and dance *imbalu*. And since these boys do not have experience about manhood, circumcised men are the ones who lead them in songs and dances. These are men who are skilful in singing, dancing and other societal values. While men inform boys about the role of men in society, they also educate boys on how to relate with other men in society. Such men are known as *banamyenya* (singular, *namyenya*). In his study about *imbalu* rituals, Khamalwa defines *namyenya* as “a local poet and historian, adept at composing didactic songs, knowledgeable in the history of the tribe in general, knows the myths and genealogies of different clans, as well as the legends associated with the different heroes” (2004: 74).

²⁵ However, Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2002) stresses that music meaning is a mere construction by those listening to the music. Otherwise, the musical sounds in themselves do not mean anything. I contend with Nannyonga-Tamusuza because the meanings attached to these drum rhythms can be as varied as the people who are listening to the drum. After all, if the drum communicates *inywe, inywe* (you, you), who are these people? In addition, *kwola, kwola* (it has come, it has come), what is it? Is it the knife or the circumcision year or is it even about danger, which has come? However, since the knife and *imbalu* are synonymous with conferring manhood unto the boy, I contend that the above drum rhythms emphasise the need for boys to become men by performing *imbalu* circumcision rituals.

Since he is hoped to impart societal values, including the traits expected of men among the Bagisu, *namyanya* is charged with the responsibility of leading *imbalu* circumcision candidates.

Among other activities of the *khushebusa* ritual is the blowing of horns (long and short horns known as *tsingombi* and *tsimbebe*, respectively). Candidates from adjacent ridges blow horns and are answered by their counterparts across the ridge. However, because buffalos are no longer hunted and yet they are the ones where horns are fashioned, horns have drastically reduced from *imbalu* musical performances. Most informants told me that since *imbalu* is intended to “turn” boys into “tough”, “aggressive” and “strong” “men”, costumes and props used in these rituals must be made from fierce wild animals. As a matter of fact, the buffalo is considered by the Bagisu to be among the “toughest” and “fiercest” animals. After the *khushebusa* ritual, *imbalu* candidates gather and perform *isonja* dance which is discussed in the section that follows.

5.3.2 *Isonja* Dance: A Site for Testing Manhood

Isonja is an *imbalu* dance performed to train candidates about dancing skills as well as enable them get acclimatized with the items they wear when performing *imbalu* rituals. This dance is staged in an open field, normally one preserved for special clan meetings. *Isonja* dance is performed between the months of January and March since this period is not characterized with a lot of agricultural work. This dance is performed in the evening when candidates, their song and dance instructors, as well as the spectators have finished the day’s work²⁶ and therefore have time to participate in the dance.

In staging *isonja* dance, *imbalu* candidates from a particular clan come together and hire an instructor either from their own village or another place to lead them in songs and dancing skills. Instructors are hired due to their scarcity in many parts of Bugisu; a situation that increases their demand in society.

²⁶ The period from January to March is dry. The major work people perform during this period is to prepare their gardens as they wait for the rainy season which normally begins in mid-March. However, the commonest work is looking after animals (mainly men), looking for food and cooking (by women). Normally by 5:00 Pm, most of the domestic work is finished and people go to watch *isonja* dance as a way of spending their leisure time.

Prior to the emergence of the “monetary economy”, each *imbalu* candidate could pay the instructors of *isonja* dance in terms of eggs, local beer or by physically going to work for them in their gardens. However, during fieldwork, many informants told me that each *imbalu* candidate contributes between two and five hundred Ugandan shillings per day for the *isonja* instructor.

While going to the venue of performing *isonja* dance, music takes central place. Candidates run to the venue while singing songs they learnt during *khushebusa*. Candidates “lead” themselves as they move to the performance venues. When they lead themselves, candidates show that they are people who can stand on their own as “men”. When candidates arrive at the performance venue, they stand in a circle and are led by their instructor, *nanyenya*. *Nanyenya* “tutors” *imbalu* candidates on how to sing, dance and take care of their dancing items—thigh bells, headgears, beads as well as the strips of skin which hang on their backs. Figure 4 is an illustration of *nanyenya* (song and dance leader) “tutoring” candidates during *isonja* dance.

Figure 4: *Namyenya* Leading Candidates in *Isonja* Dance



Photo by the researcher during field work in 2008

John Makulo told me that *namyenya* takes on the “mantle” of leading *imbalu* candidates in songs and dancing skills at the dancing venue to test whether these candidates are ready for *imbalu* or not (interview, January 25th, 2009). According to Makulo, what defines a man among the Bagisu is having “tough”

muscles as well as being strong. As such, someone seeking manhood is expected to prove that he is tough through the dancing. Among the songs *namyenya* sings while instructing *imbalu* candidates during *isonja* dance is entitled *Yolele Yolele* (*Imbalu Has Come*) as illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: *Yolele Yolele* (*Imbalu Has Come*)

yo-le-le yo-le-le yo-le-le yo-le-le

i-ya-ya yo-le-le yo-le-le i-ya-ya i-ya-ya yo-le-le

8 tso-bo-le-le u-wa-ko-ne-la

yo-le-le i-ya-ya i-ya-ya yo-le-le yo-le-le i-

13 ku-mu-ka-mbaya-ko-bo-le

ya-ya i-ya-ya yo-le-le yo-le-le i-ya-ya

As demonstrated in Figure 5, the song is in call and response form. *Namyenya* (instructor) takes the lead part while the candidates take the answering part. Below is the English translation of the song text:

Soloist: *Yolele yolele*

it has come, has come

Chorus: *I yaya yolele, yolele, iyaya*

sincerely it has come,
has come

Soloist: *Tsobolele uwakonela*

tell the one who
Postponed

Chorus: *I yaya yolele, yolele, iyaya*

sincerely it has come

Soloist: *Kumukamba yakobole*

tomorrow, it will come

Chorus: *I yaya yolele, yolele, iyaya*

sincerely it has come

In the first line of the song, *namyanya* reminds candidates that the year for *imbalu* has come. In response, candidates confirm what *namyanya* tells them by singing “sincerely it has come”. While the song leader changes the text, candidates keep on repeating the same text. This musical form relates to the authority of “men” among the Bagisu. Men have authority and as such, when they talk, their authority must be adhered to. According to Kanyanya, by re-emphasising that “it has come, has come”, *imbalu* candidates reaffirm their obligation to undergo *imbalu* (interview, January 18th, 2009). *Namyanya* tells candidates to go and tell whoever is not circumcised, particularly those who had postponed *imbalu* that it has come. In fact, *namyanya*’s last line “tomorrow, it will come” re-echoes the fact that one can never dodge *imbalu* among the Bagisu.

This instructor demonstrates the basic dance motifs before candidates try them out and for those who do not show the correct motifs, he punishes²⁷. One of the basic motifs in *isonja* dance is performed when candidates bend their backs and stamp the ground with their right feet. Then one spreads his arms and moves them from the body (trunk). As he dances, the candidate stamps the ground; each time turning to a different direction. As a matter of fact, *isonja* dance is primarily intended to enable *imbalu* candidates to acquire dancing skills and become “tough” in preparation for the pen-surgery ritual. Further, it enables candidates to get acclimatised to items like thigh bells, a cirlet of wood or ivory on the forehead, and the headgear, all used during different *imbalu* circumcision rituals. Other items include wooden circular objects with holes curved in the middle of each object so that the candidate can put his hand in it till it fits at the elbow. All these items are heavy and therefore, need mature, muscular, and strong candidates to carry them. As such, *isonja* is meant to transform boys into people who are muscular and strong enough to match with the traits used to define men among the Bagisu. Figure 6 is an illustration of *imbalu* candidates performing *isonja* dance.

²⁷ *Namyanya* normally carries a stick to beat those who fail to execute the motifs he demonstrates.

Figure 6: *Imbalu* Candidates Performing *Isonja* Dance



Photo by the researcher during field work in 2008

Isonja is indeed a site for testing manhood. Throughout the performance of this dance, traits which the Bagisu associate with men like aggressiveness, strength and persistence are emphasised and imparted. According to Andrew Mukhwana, a “real” man must be strong because after *imbalu* rituals, he is expected to become independent. Moreover, a man’s wife and children depend on him for protection. Further, in case of any war, men are the ones called upon to defend the society (interview, January 4th, 2009). As such, for someone to be allowed to undergo *imbalu* circumcision rituals, he must prove that he is strong while performing *isonja* dance. Similarly, Heald argues that “[l]ike a warrior, the boy must conquer his fear by convincing himself that he has the strength to overcome an enemy” (1982: 17). To “perform” strength through *isonja* dance, *imbalu* candidates are expected to bend the upper parts of the body and stamp the ground heavily, with their right feet. As one stamps the ground, the arms must protrude outwards from the main body, forming a concave shape with them. This concave shape, which Andrew Mukhwana called “*khureka tsingumbo*” (“sharpening the arms”) is a posture of protection (interview, January 4th, 2009). Sam Waneroba, aged forty-eight, told me that even in daily life, a man who defends himself is one who builds a wall around his home (interview, 2nd March, 2009). According to Waneroba, such a man protects himself before disaster

befalls him. Indeed, performers of *isonja* dance who do not keep their arms “sharpened” are elbowed out of the dancing circle. Depending on how one dances, he is either pronounced young or weak by spectators and may be asked by the clansmen to wait for the next season as he matures and grows strong (see also Khamalwa, 2004: 75).

Further, Wamayosi informed me that prospective men among the Bagisu are expected to portray the qualities of aggressiveness and persistence. Wamayosi explained that to persist means being patient, taking good care of one’s property and tolerating other people in society. He added that aggressiveness enables a man to guard whatever he has (interview, 4th January, 2009). Wamayosi also links aggressiveness to the defence of one’s land, ability to control one’s wife and children and readiness for warfare. Land is the major factor of production as well as source of political power among the Bagisu. To illustrate the peoples’ hold on land, the motto of the Bagisu is “*lwe bulamu ni liswa lye Bamasaba*” (For the life and land of the Bamasaba [Bagisu]). A Mugisu man can never forfeit even an inch of his land to his neighbour, a stand that is only taken if one “wears” a tough face. James Wanakoolo, a 90 year old World War II veteran told me that the Bagisu threaten war only if their land is tempered with. Wanakoolo said that:

Khukhwama mu bakuka beefe, khwakhubetsakokho ni lutalo lundi busa ta. Bagisu abe bapana khubalaisa tsinzakha, balala khulinda tsinzakha tsingaale. Ne khengubolele, Umugisu akhulekhelama liloba angaba khapatu ta. Umusani umweene abikhe kamakhono alolelele nga liloba lisya (laughs) ... (interview, June 20th, 2009).

Since the days of our ancestors, we have never had war over other issues. The Bagisu have been fighting to expand their boundaries or just retain the old ones. But let me tell you, no Mugisu has ever left even an inch of land to go! A “real” man to fold hands and look on while land is going (laughs) ...

In fact, during field work, I witnessed very fierce clashes between the Bagisu and Bagwere over their boundaries. To prevent R. Namatala from flowing in their land, the Bagisu constructed a “wall” (*lulwakha*) and “pushed” the river to

the side of the Bagwere. As the Bagwere tried to “prevent” their land, clashes erupted and about five Bagwere people were killed. Commentators blamed the Bagisu and noted that their pride traces influence from *imbalu* circumcision rituals which they perform.

As such, during the performance of *isonja* dance, candidates are expected to be tough and maintain their positions in the circles or lines where they dance. They are expected to persist however hard fellow dancers strive to “knock” them out. Vincent Matanda, a Pentecostal Church pastor stressed that those who easily “give- up” during the performance of *isonja* dance are told to continue under the care of their mothers because they are not yet mature (interview, March 10th, 2009). Among the Bagisu, like in many other African cultures, women and children are associated with weakness, emotionality, subjectiveness and fear. Therefore, for a circumcision candidate to portray fear or be emotional is a direct pronouncement that one is still young and needs the care of the mother as he grows older and stronger²⁸. Because candidates from Bududa District are circumcised when they are in their late teens or early twenties, they are expected to be strong. As a result, *isonja* dance is mainly performed in Bududa District and the use of the term *isonja* is common there.

Further, Khamalwa observes that the performance of *isonja* dance offers a platform for *imbalu* candidates to learn the art of composing songs (see 2004: 74). John Makulo re-echoed Khamalwa’s view when he stressed that to compose *imbalu* songs, one has to be inspired by his peers during the performance of *isonja* dance. He noted that:

*jimyenya kyo, umusani nga wasambile isonja, ufuna shilukuluku
shakhuwa kamani. Ubona ori uzya ibulafu yi urikho samba bitsenze, wabona
basho nabo balikho bapa tsinimbo bebulula naawe wakobola watatasokho
kukwowo* (interview, January 25th, 2009).

²⁸ As will be discussed in other sections of this dissertation, a circumcised man is not expected to associate with women because women are not expected to “effectively” advise him. Women are considered weak people whose thoughts are also “weak”.

If you perform *isonja* dance, you get motivated. When you go out to dance, you see your peers “beating” sticks, singing. You also return home and begin learning [composing] yours.

After composing their songs, candidates practice them as they move and dance on road sides with the peers escorting them. Sometimes, *imbalu* candidates meet with *kadodi* drummers to establish how the songs they had learn from *namyanya* can be enforced by *kadodi* music. To establish this connection, candidates first sing their lines as the drummers create the accompanying rhythms. The searching for *imbalu*, as discussed in the following subsection is a stage which ushers candidates to the search for manhood. In the next section therefore, I discuss how searching for *imbalu* participates in transforming the boy into manhood.

5.3.3 *Khuwenza Busani*: Boy “Searching” for Manhood

Imbalu rituals require a lot of resources in terms of money, food and animals and yet only one’s parents may not be in position to provide everything. As such, the novice needs assistance from other relatives. There is also need to visit relatives and friends for blessings so as to perform *imbalu* circumcision rituals successfully. As such, after the performance of *isonja* dance, *imbalu* candidates visit distant relatives not only to seek for blessings and material help, but also to announce their intentions of becoming “men”. George Wekoye told me that since *imbalu* ushers someone into manhood, the prospective candidate is expected to be bold enough to inform others that he needs to become a “man”. According to Wekoye, the boy must announce “it” himself such so as to enable his clanmen know that he is “ripe” for manhood (interview, January 29th, 2009).

Similarly, Heald writes that:

throughout the rituals [,] there is a constant stress by the boy ['s] kinsmen and those officiating, that the desire for *imbalu* can come from the boy alone. He himself chooses the year in which he will be circumcised and it is repeatedly said that no one is putting any pressure on him to undergo the ordeal (1982: 18).

Another informant, George Weanga, told me that to search for *imbalu* denotes searching for the “spirit of the Bagisu” and likened it to the Kigisu proverb “*khuwenza kumusambwa kweefe*” (we search for our spirit) (interview, January 3rd, 2009). According to Weanga, *imbalu* is “war” and therefore, the boy must mobilize his relations (near and far) to come and stand by his side (see also Heald, 1982). As such, during *imbalu* rituals, one’s relatives must be visited and told about his candidature. In most cases, the female relations are the ones visited since they moved from their clans and got married in distant places. And since they are now in “their” own clans, these female relations must be visited well in advance because during the period when smearing, brewing of beer, visiting cultural sites and the cutting rituals are performed, these relatives are also busy with *imbalu* rituals of their husbands’ relations. In fact, searching for *imbalu* explains the fact that *imbalu* rituals are collective as they involve relatives from near and far as well as ancestors.

As they visit these relatives, the boy and his escorts run while singing and dancing. During my childhood, I participated in the activities of searching for *imbalu* where the song “*Masaba Akana Imbalu*” (Masaba Wants *Imbalu*), as illustrated in Figure 7 was sang.

Figure 7: *Masaba Akana Imbalu* (Masaba Wants *Imbalu*)



The literal translation of the text of the above song is as follows:

<i>Masaba amile i Luteeka ari ngana imbalu</i>	Masaba came from the land of Bamboo demanding for <i>imbalu</i>
<i>Neewe kana imbalu Masaba imbalu</i>	But you demand for <i>imbalu</i> , <i>imbalu</i>
<i>Yarafua</i>	is tough
<i>Imbalu yarafua Masaba,</i>	<i>imbalu</i> is tough Masaba,
<i>Bakhala bijele</i>	they cut legs

As illustrated in Figure 7, the song leader (*namyanya*) announces to the public that Masaba is demanding for *imbalu*, which literally means manhood. However, he warns Masaba that *imbalu* is “tough”, very “painful” and it tantamounts to cutting off one’s legs. *Namyanya* leads the song, telling people how Masaba is demanding for manhood. Members of the escorting team just respond *ae*, as if asking, “is it?” As Khamalwa explains, [t]he novice carries a long stick whose bark has been peeled off. This stick [,] known as *kumukheti* [,] is what he waves in the air as he dances ... (2004:77).

Apart from the boy leading songs, *namyanya* also play a significant role in leading songs during the period of searching *imbalu*. *Namyanya* is always close to the boy to ensure that he learns other songs which he will sing while going to cultural sites, the maternal clan among other rituals. Sometimes, the boy is escorted by his female relations including his sisters and paternal aunts. The

Bagisu expect men to be at the forefront during all public performances unlike women who are expected to merely follow what men do. *Imbalu* is a space through which men consolidate their power and as such, roles of leading songs, smearing candidates, brewing beer and circumcising are assigned to men.

When I asked Shibulo Mukhokoosi²⁹ why men lead songs during *imbalu* circumcision rituals especially when candidates are searching for *imbalu*, he said that:

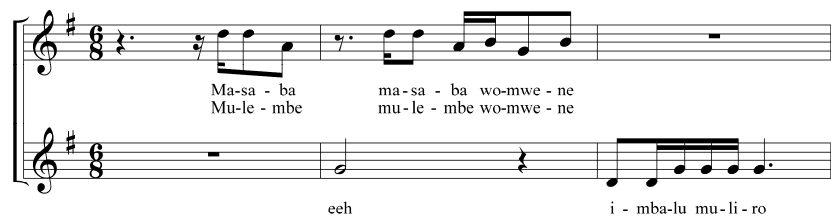
Lead what? In our [*kigisu*]culture, have you ever seen women coming to the forefront? This is [leading songs during *imbalu* rituals] is men's work. We just excuse them [women] to come near us during the performance of *Imbalu* (interview, April 18th, 2009).

Mukhokoosi consolidates *imbalu* as a space for men to articulate their dominance over women. As a matter of fact, during the singing, women merely respond to what the candidate, *namyenya* and other men sing. In cases where *kadodi* music is performed when searching *imbalu*³⁰, women perform the role of dancing. Informants told me that women do not lead songs in *imbalu* rituals because they have never experienced the “bitterness” of the knife (*burafu bwe kumuboono*). For example, Wesonga stressed that “the spirit of Masaba is not for women. What can they tell the candidate? Have you ever heard that a woman is circumcised? *Imbalu* rituals are for men” (interview, January 25th, 2009). In fact, the performance of *imbalu* rituals, music and dances are a stage where the relationship between men and women among the Bagisu are performed. Among the songs sung during searching for *imbalu* is *imbalu muliro* (*Imbalu* is Fire) and is transcribed in Figure 8 below;

²⁹ Shibulo Mukhokoosi is a pseudo name I have used so as to protect this informant's identity. I found out that this man looks at women as people of low esteem. Shibulo used such expressions like “we buy women”, “women's work is to produce children” or “how can we entrust our boys to women during *imbalu* rituals?”

³⁰ *Kadodi*, a music and dance genre is performed from the period of smearing candidates with yeast, visiting cultural sites as well as the maternal clan. Normally, *kadodi* bands are hired, the reason why *kadodi* music is performed for only three days. On average, a band of *kadodi* drums costs 50,000/= Ugandan shillings per day.

Figure 8: *Imbalu Muliro* (*Imbalu* is Fire)



The literal translation of the text of the melody in Figure 8 is as follows:

Soloist: <i>Masaba</i>	Masaba
Chorus: <i>Eeh</i>	Eeh
Soloist: <i>Masaba wabweene</i>	Masaba, yourself
Chorus: <i>Imbalu muliro</i>	<i>Imbalu</i> is fire

As illustrated in the above melody and text, *namyanya* addresses the candidate and calls him Masaba (meaning that the first Mugisu to be circumcised was called Masaba). He cautions the candidate that it is himself who asked for *imbalu*. The chorus re-affirms that *imbalu* is fire and therefore the candidate must be firm during pen-surgery.

5.4 The Pen-Surgery Stage

After the “search for manhood”, the next stage is what I have called the “the pen-surgery”, the rituals that climax with the removal of the foreskin from the penis. Indeed, the pen-surgery is the most intense stage in the performance of *imbalu* rituals and includes the rituals of brewing, smearing, visiting cultural sites and the surgery of the penis. These rituals are performed during the month of August since this is the month of the first harvest when people usually have enough food to feed candidates, their escorts and ancestors through sacrifices. In addition, the August *imbalu* rituals are performed for candidates who are commonly known as *banabyalo* (those who do not attend school).

Before examining the rituals, musics and dances performed during the pen-surgery stage, it is important to note that the performance of *imbalu* among

the Bagisu follows clan seniority. As such, senior clans circumcise their boys before junior ones, to open the *imbalu* rituals. To “open” *imbalu* rituals denotes the fact that boys from Bumutoto, the most senior clan are circumcised first. According to Naleera, though many Bagisu believe that Masaba is the man who introduced *imbalu*, there was a time when the Bagisu stopped to circumcise. *Imbalu* was “revived by a Mugisu called Fuuya, son of Mukhama of the Bamutoto clan of Bungokho County” (as quoted in Makwa, 2005: 19). Because Bamutoto are associated with the revival of *imbalu*, they are considered senior and therefore, are the first to circumcise their boys before any other Bagisu. In the beginning of August, the Bugisu Cultural Board, instituted by the Local Councils from Bugisu organises the inauguration of *imbalu* ceremonies for Bamutoto boys to be circumcised. All the Local Council V Chairpersons of Bududa, Manafwa, Sironko and Mbale Districts as well as Members of Parliament from Bugisu sub- region and other political leaders attend *imbalu* inauguration rituals. In Figure 9, I present a photograph of the Local Council V Chairpersons from Bugisu during the *imbalu* inauguration ceremonies of 2008. All, apart from the one on the extreme right wore headgears to signify their authority in society. They have also worn skins, the traditional wear of Gisu men.

Figure 9: Bugisu Local Council V Chairpersons Officiating at *Imbalu* Ceremonies



Photo by the researcher during field work in 2008

The inauguration activities include speeches as well as music and dances by candidates from the Counties of Manjiya, Bubulo (East and West), Bungokho (North and South), Bulamburi and Budadiri (East and west). In fact, the inauguration activities are a platform for displaying the varieties which exist in *imbalu* musics and dances as performed in different parts of Bugisu. While analyzing the performances of 2008, for example, I realised that even where two or three regions seem to perform the “same” music or dances, there are always variations in the style of performance. For instance, in *isonja* dance as was performed by candidates from Manjiya, Bubulo West and Bungokho North, I noticed that candidates from Bungokho North stamp the ground with both the left and right feet. However, their counterparts from Manjiya and Bubulo West stamp the ground using the right foot alone. Further, in Bungokho North, candidates tie a piece of skin around their ankles to facilitate the articulation of the dance motifs, an item which candidates from neither Manjiya nor Bubulo west had. Wilson Kuloba told me that the structure of *imbalu* rituals, including the use of costumes is different from county to county (interview, April 29th, 2009).

Another dance performed during *imbalu* inauguration rituals is *tsinyimba* and was presented by candidates from Bubulo East. *Tsinyimba* is a word used to denote the hand bells candidates use to hit a metal tied around their wrists to create rhythm for dancing. Unlike *isonja* dancers who use the feet to stamp the ground, *tsinyimba* dancers use the upper part of the body to display the basic dance motifs. As they shake their shoulders and heads, candidates spread out their hands. They then shake their heads; moving them to the front and behind. Moving to the pace of *nanyenya*'s song, candidates finally kneel down while moving their backs up and down (see also Makwa 2005: 69). In Figure 10, I illustrate *imbalu* candidates performing *tsinyimba* dance.

Figure 10: *Imbalu* Candidates Performing *Tsinyimba* Dance



Photo by the researcher during fieldwork in 2008

According to Makwa, despite the fact that *tsinyimba* dance “does not need excessive energy as *isonja*, it is also a rigorous dance. The rigorous movements are intended to portray the candidate as a strong person, ready to stay an independent life ...” (*ibid*). Bugisu Cultural Board hires judges to adjudicate the musical and dance performances and winners are given trophies. Indeed, the

element of competition induces the competing groups to innovate so as to win the trophy (see for example, Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2003). Basing her work on school competitions, Nannyonga-Tamusuza argues that “school competitions promote innovative approaches to music and dance practices” (2003: 97). In relation to *imbalu* music and dance, one may argue that the varieties in the music and dances as performed at Bumutoto cultural site were induced by the desire to win. However, competition in *imbalu* music and dance is beyond the scope of this study.

After witnessing the dances and musics, the invited guests, are led by Bamutoto elders to witness the circumcision of their children. Since Bamutoto boys “open” *imbalu* rituals, the courage they display during the operation is significant for all *imbalu* candidates throughout Bugisu. Many informants confirmed that it is considered bad luck for the *umulala* (the one who faces the knife first) to shout or fall down when is being circumcised. Other candidates may follow *umulala*’s example and yet a “real” man must be firm and endure the pain from the beginning to the end of the pen-surgery. To show cowardice during pen-surgery is a demonstration that the candidate will not withstand the challenges of manhood. As such, when Bamutoto boys display courage during pen-surgery, the Bagisu become confident that all *imbalu* candidates will be firm and eventually transform into the men society desires.

After the circumcision of Bamutoto boys, other clans circumcise their boys but following their order of seniority (see time table illustrated by Khamalwa 2004: 26). The performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals in accordance of clan seniority demonstrates that there are gender differentiations between the various clans in Bugisu. By the fact that the Bamutoto revived *imbalu*, they consider themselves as “better” men than men from other clans of Bugisu. Further, in all other clans among the Bagisu, *imbalu* candidates are arranged according to the age of their fathers. If there are five boys, whose fathers are brothers, it is son of the eldest brother circumcised first. However, before the actual pen-surgery, the rituals of brewing, smearing and visiting cultural sites, as well as maternal clans are performed as will be discussed in the sections that follow:

5.4.1 *Khukoya Busera*: Boys Sharing Men's Space?

The brewing of beer, done three days before pen-surgery, ushers in the most elaborate rituals performed on *imbalu* candidates. This ritual is performed both at the home of the candidate's father and the clan leader where the candidate will be circumcised. In any of the above venues, the candidate is escorted to the stream to fetch water in a pot, which he carries on bare head. There is symbolism in the water taken directly from the stream and that which people keep in their houses. According to Reuben Wamaniala, an elder charged with smearing candidates with yeast, stream water is preferred because it is running unlike the "static" water kept in one's house. To usher some one into manhood is ensuring that life is a constant "flow". To ensure this, the Bagisu collect "flowing" water and use it while performing *imbalu* circumcision rituals (interview, December 28th, 2009).

When the candidate reaches home, he pours the water in a pot containing roasted dough called *tsimuma*. The elder then adds more water and places the pot under the pillar of the house (*inzeko*) for maturation. According to Victor Turner (1969), it is under the pillar of the house that the deity *mulabula*³¹ resides. *Mulabula* is connected with reproduction and when a woman is in labour, she gets hold on this pillar in order to give birth. It is believed among the Bagisu that the head of the house must always appease this deity by brewing beer under the place it dwells if his wife is to have normal births. And since *imbalu* is likened to second birth, *murabula* must be appeased if the boy is to successfully undergo *imbalu* rituals. *Murabula* is also evoked to be present so as to bless the boy.

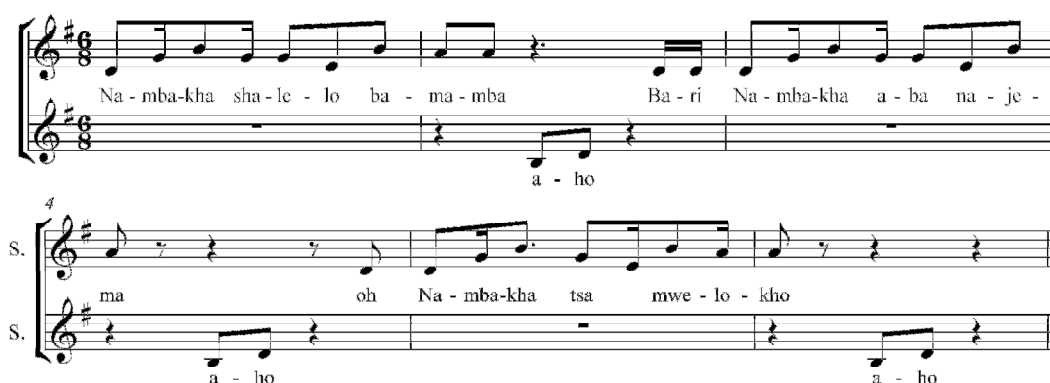
Normally, the beer brewed at the home of the candidate's father is for clansmen to drink after the operation ritual. On the contrary, the beer brewed at the clan leader's home is what is known as *busera bwe kumwendo* (the beer for the gourd). In every clan, there is an elder chosen due to his kindness, firmness during his circumcision as well as reproductivity to be in charge of the gourd.

³¹ Although Turner notes that the deity *murabula* is responsible for reproduction, John Baptist Naleera (2003) argues that *nabulondela* is the deity which gives the Bagisu the power to reproduce. Naleera argues that *wele nabulondela* is symbolized by the millet kept in peoples' houses (see also Dominic Makwa 2005: 17). Of course, there is need for more research on the traditional religious life of the Bagisu.

In the gourd, he puts the millet-brewed beer and it is this beer that is sprinkled using the mouth on candidates for evocation of ancestral spirits. Millet is highly considered in the performance of *imbalu* rituals because it symbolised reproduction. According to Wekoye, after being circumcised, the Bagisu expect the novices to produce as many children as the millet does (interview, January 29th, 2009).

Like in other *imbalu* rituals, the brewing process is accompanied by music and dance. While going to the clan leader's home, the candidate and his escorts sing songs depicting the boy's resolve for the knife. Although Idid not witness any brewing rituals during this study, during the *imbalu* of 2006, I witnessed a number of *imbalu* candidates when they were brewing beer. In all the incidences, the candidates' escorts were very excited as candidates were singing and re-affirming themselves for *imbalu*. Candidates sang about their clans, parents and the readiness they had for *imbalu*. Among these candidates was one Kibooki whose song was entitled "*Nambakha Shalelo Bamamba*" (The Stubborn One, Today I am caught) as illustrated in Figure 11.

Figure 11: *Nambakha Shalelo Bamamba* (The Stubborn One, Today Iam Caught)



The literal English translation of the song in Figure 11 is as follows:

<i>Nambakha shalelo bamamba</i>	The stubborn one, today I am caught
<i>Bari Nambakha abe najema</i>	That the stubborn one, I had relaxed
<i>Oh Nambakha tsa mwelokho</i>	Oh the stubborn one, time is out

As illustrated in Figure 11, the candidate tells people that he had been stubborn but is now “caught” up by *imbalu*. He stresses that he was “relaxed”- not thinking a lot about *imbalu* but he is “caught”. The days he had are over for now, his days are numbered. The escorting group replied only one word “*aho*” to reaffirm what the boy was singing.

The boy leads the songs while his escorts respond. He must show that he is ready for *imbalu* by announcing “it” to the clan leader himself. Further, he must portray boldness, a trait men among the Bagisu are expected to have. As the boy sings, his escorts refer to him by the titles of *umwami* (chief) or *umukhulu* (the honoured) and they form a sort of fortress around the boy. A number of informants told me that the status of the boy at this time changes to that of a chief to “lure” him into *imbalu*. The people around tell the boy that “look, upon being circumcised, your life will be like that of a chief” (Johnson Kanyanya interview, January 18th, 2009).

Further, the music performed during the brewing ritual is intended to portray the boy as a tough man. At the clan leader’s home, the boy jumps up and stamps the ground so hard that he is given permission for *imbalu*. As the boy and

his escorts head to the stream, music and dance become the means of communication. The boy behaves like one who is possessed and anything he wants is intoned through the song. While escorting the group of *imbalu* candidates including Kibooki in 2006, I heard Kibooki's father ask:

Are you ready for *imbalu*? Tell me if you are not ready so that I do not waste my resources. *Imbalu* is fire, *imbalu* is tough. Are you hearing? All these sticks you see here [what Kibooki's escorts were carrying] will be used to beat you if you do not stand firmly.

As soon as his father finished speaking, Kibooki just went on with his song (the one illustrated in Figure 11 above). While the boy re-affirms his resolve for *imbalu*, his followers emphasise to him that it is himself who asked for *imbalu* and no one is forcing him (see Heald, 1982: 18-19). This emphasis is intended to make the boy withdraw if he is not fully ready because fear in the course of the operation is not only shameful to the boy but, also the family and whole clan as well.

According to George Weanga, the performance of *imbalu* rituals among the Bagisu is intended to enable the boy share in some of the spaces which are preserved for men (interview, January 3rd, 2009). Weanga enlisted such tasks as brewing beer, preparing drinking tubes as well as speaking in public as some of the man- controlled spaces. As such, when the boy is allowed to brew beer, it is a demonstration that he is prepared for entry into men's space. The boy is also urged to stand firm during the operation in order to guard this "dear" space. Wekoye argued that people who get circumcised in hospitals are not allowed to interact and "enter" the guarded space of men because they did not undergo the "proper transformational" process. Similarly, Wangusa describes an incident where one of his characters (Mwambu) is warned against trampling on men's space since he was circumcised in the hospital (see 1987: 116).

5.4.2 *Khuakha Kamamela*: Enforcing Man Traits?

Khuakha kamamela literally means “smearing yeast”. It is a ritual where *imbalu* circumcision candidates are smeared with yeast, beginning on the evening of the day when candidates brew beer and is repeated every evening up to the day boys are circumcised. This ritual involves putting powdered yeast (*kamamela ke buufu*) into water and mixing it to form a paste. And then, an elder considered for his kindness, wealthy and “productivity” because he has children- especially males, is chosen to smear the candidate. As he performs his task, he calls upon ancestral spirits to come and bless the candidate. He also tells the candidate to be firm during circumcision as well as what society expects of him as a man. A number of informants explained to me that the significance of the ritual of smearing candidates with yeast is to remind the candidates about what society expects of “men”. Elisaphan Mabala, an 83 year old man, views the smearing ritual as a site for enforcing “men” traits in boys- especially the need to be “tough”, “strong” and “productive”. Mabala stressed that:

*Nga umanyile, ibowo babanu bakali bababowo nga baakha kamamela:
Basani, bakhasi, babana besinde ni bakhana. Shilime shekumunyawo
khukhwawula bakhula akali wo ... Bakhurama awo warama in
kamanganyu ta ... Umusani akha khuba umurafu ate ni kamani. Nga
umusani, bakhushibusu bari ulole umukhasi naawe
uruse babana. Angaba uwafa tsimoni, oba ari ni moni ndwela, khuloma
khuri uyile ... (interview, March 5th, 2009).*

You know, there are many people who witness the smearing ritual:
Men, women, boys and girls. It is not easy my son, to be isolated
and be put in the middle there ... You can't undergo such treatment and
remain a fearful man ... A man must be tough and strong, As an upcoming
man, you are reminded about the responsibility of looking for a woman
and produce children. Even if a woman is blind or has one eye, we expect
you to pick on her ...

Similarly, Robert Kuloba stressed that the smearing ritual forms a site where *imbalu* candidates are reminded of their responsibility to be hardworking people in society. Kuloba argues that among the Bagisu, it is only through hard work that a man becomes happy and is able to entertain other people as well as ancestors in his home. He argued that:

Nga balikho baakha babana kamamela, babashebusa buri mbuka bari busani nibwo khuramba ni kamani. Bari busani khunyalisa khukhwakanila banashikuka mungo mwoo. Beleyo bamushebusa bari ashile wakanila basambwa ... (interview, June 12th, 2009).

When candidates are being smeared with yeast, they are reminded from time to time that manhood is hard work. That manliness is being able to welcome other people to your home. The [candidate] is also reminded that he should welcome ancestors ...

The excerpt in Figure 12 illustrates the admonitions of the yeast man while smearing the *imbalu* candidate.

Figure 12: Admonitions of the Yeast Man while Smearing *Imbalu* Candidates

<i>Shalelo ise boona nakhulokho bulo</i>	Today, I smear you with yeast
<i>Eni ube nga nase</i>	That you be like me
<i>Umusani ukuma imbalu</i>	As a man, be firm during <i>imbalu</i>
<i>Imbalu yarafua</i>	<i>Imbalu</i> is tough
<i>Ukhakhuswatsa ta</i>	Do not shame us
<i>Ifi mushikuka shino</i>	For us in this clan
<i>Si khurya imbalu ta</i>	We do not fear <i>imbalu</i>
<i>Uyile umukhasi</i>	Get a woman
<i>Angaba uwafa mooni</i>	Even that with one eye
<i>Usaale babana</i>	Produce children

Naafe shikuka shitsoe

As a clan we also expand

Ulinde bajeni

Keep visitors

Ba ni lukoosi, ni butweela

Be respectable and united

Further, the ritual of smearing candidates with yeast enhances the definition of “real” men as people who are united, social and respectable in society. The smearing ritual concretizes the *Kigisu* proverb that “*kali atweela kaluma ligumba*” (literally translated as “the teeth which bites together are the ones which can eat the borne”). The above proverb means that men among the Bagisu should be together, united and respect one another in order to fight common enemies. Otherwise how can one man resist an attack alone? As the yeast man gives the above admonitions, the candidate must stay still and listen. He should not shake his body or even twitch an eye as this is interpreted as a sign of fear. Other members of the congregation may supplement on what the yeast man says. After smearing the wet yeast, the yeast man, known as *uwakha kamamela*, takes powdered yeast and spreads it on the candidate and repeats what he has said before.

Meanwhile, the candidate’s relations and friends punctuate the whole ritual of smearing with singing and ululations. Among the common songs I witnessed during the smearing ritual was entitled “*Sheeta Umwana afane papa we*” (Cut the Boy to Resemble his Father). This song is transcribed in Figure 13.

Figure 13: *Sheeta Umwana Afane Papa We* (Cut the Boy to Resemble His Father)



The song in Figure 13, being in call and response form, is lead by the song leader (*namyenya*) while the candidate’s party of escorts responds. The soloist sings “*lele*” two times to denote the fact that the time for the candidate has come and the group witnessing the smearing ritual replies, “*sheeta umwana afane papa*

we- cut the boy to resemble his father”. Indeed, the above song portrays how patriarchal the Bugisu society is. Among the Bagisu, children belong to the father and society decrees that he gives them names. Boys are more recognized than girls and are the ones who inherit the fathers’ authority. For a man to circumcise a male child on his courtyard is a confirmation that the child belongs to him. Through *imbalu*, a father “dedicates” his son to the ancestors and the beliefs and values of society. *Imbalu* music is used as a vehicle to perform societal beliefs and passes them over to the next generation. Men play metal gongs and sing songs to inform a candidate that he wanted *imbalu* himself. They use music to re-echoe what the yeast man said through the admonitions. Women ululate and respond to the songs sang. The candidate is expected to re-affirm what the yeast man emphasised by jumping and stamping the ground.

Apart from the admonitions and songs, the traits of manhood are symbolized by the yeast. The Bagisu believe that yeast enhances the process of maturity. They argue that when yeast is put on the beer being brewed, it facilitates the beer’s maturation process from the tasteless “water” on the first day to bitter, concentrated beer on the third day (see also, La Fontaine, 1986). The process of maturation is measured in the way the beer bubbles while turning into the strong alcohol. During *imbalu*, boys are turned into tough looking individuals from the time of brewing. It is believed that by the time they reach the third day, the day of pen-surgery, they are as mature as the beer they had brewed on the first day. According to Philip Wamayosi, just as yeast turns mere water into alcohol, it also transforms *imbalu* candidates into manhood (interview, 2009). Indeed, “yeast shows [the boy] that *imbalu* is tough. [when] yeast dri[es] out on the boy’s skin [,] he feels [the skin] gripping ... [yeast] show[s] him that he too must be fierce and determined and he knows that he is going for circumcision” (Heald, 1982: 26).

At around 4:00 o’clock in the evening, the reminding drum is sounded urging elders to take candidates to assembling places³². Normally, people whose clans point to a common origin meet in these assembling places and move together (with an elder from the eldest clan leading them) to the cultural site. In Bududa District, there are three cultural sites namely Namasho, Nalufutu and Iyerakha where *imbalu* candidates are taken to dance on the day of brewing. In

³² It should be noted that the rhythms played on the reminding drum are homogeneous through out *imbalu* rituals. These rhythms encourage people to “wake up”, run and perform the coming ritual.

fact, the spectacle in the cultural site is that of varied music and dances. Being an assembling place for candidates from different clans, there are varieties of music and dances being performed. Candidates compete with one another to sing songs their various instructors taught them during *isonja* performances. Similarly, song leaders (*banamyenya*) compete with one another to lead their parties in songs outlining the boy's lineages and the need to be firm during the operation. On their part, boys sing and even create new songs to entertain the people following them. Otherwise, since there are other candidates, a less creative candidate may lose people following him to other candidates.

During my childhood, I escorted *imbalu* candidates as they went to the cultural sites to interact with their counterparts from other clans. Indeed, the scenes in these places are nothing but music and dance. During the *imbalu* season of 1986, I was fascinated by one candidate called Kuloba John who sang to the extent that many people followed him. Kuloba's father was staying in a place where candidates, together with leaders from different clans meet before proceeding to cultural sites. Because the various clan leaders carry gourds (*kimwendo*) in which they put local beer, Kuloba composed a song about the gourds and related them to *imbalu*. Kuloba's song is illustrated in Figure 14 and was sung to the elders and other *imbalu* participants in Namasho Cultural Site (Bulucheke).

Figure 14: *Nakholola Imbalu* (I am "Coughing" *Imbalu*)



The literal English translation of the above song is given below:

<i>Nakholola imbalu</i>	I am "coughing" <i>imbalu</i>
<i>Inaama khunamwendo</i>	For me who comes from where gourds meet
<i>Nakholola imbalu</i>	I am "coughing" <i>imbalu</i>

Like other *imbalu* songs, the above song is in call and response form. The candidate mentions where he comes from and re-affirms himself that he is “coughing” *imbalu*, literally meaning that he is ready for *imbalu*. By using the word “coughing” while singing about *imbalu*, Kuloba was projecting himself as a “tough” man.

In cultural sites, *kadodi* music takes the greatest precedence. Competing *kadodi* bands accompany candidates from different clans. Discussing the scenes of the cultural sites, Heald writes that:

the atmosphere is charged with excitement. The boy himself dances more or less non- stop ... Emotions ... [run] extremely high and *imbalu* dancing parties give way to no one, with unwary passers- by risking getting a lash from the sticks they carry. For the boy, normal rules of conduct can appear suspended; his absorption in the dancing and thus in *imbalu* should be so total that the normal courtesies of every day life are irrelevant (1982:21).

The reversal of the social code is mainly depicted in the way people dress, talk and behave. Women put on outfits which are considered to be for men such as shirts, trousers among others. They even make objects which resemble male reproductive organs and tie them around their waists. In addition, they speak in voices which are considered masculine. Some men also look for costumes which portray them as women. Such clothing includes women’s dresses and betticoats. Men may also plait their hair to look like women. Indeed, *imbalu* music and dance performances become stages of performing, recreating and contesting gender categories among the Bagisu. When a man identifies with women, it is an indirect voice of wanting to be called a woman and the reverse is true for women. Martin Stokes (1994) relates to the above issue when he argues that music and dance performances lead to the creation of new gender categories which men and women want to be associated with.

From the cultural site, *imbalu* candidates move back to their homes while singing and dancing. The songs performed at this time are what Wangusa (1987) calls *sisiwoyo* (plural *bibiwoyo*) and *tsisinyo*. Among these songs is the song

entitled “*Kalibala Umusani Utsya Khubwoki*” (Kalibala the Man, You will Go for the Knife). This song is transcribed in Figure 15.

Figure 15: *Kalibala Umusani Utsya Khubwoki* (Kalibala the Man, You Will Go for the Knife)



To “lure” the boy into pen-surgery, the song leader calls the candidate “*Umusani*” (Man), the title reserved for only circumcised men among the Bagisu. In fact, the soloist implies that *imbalu* is the only conduit through which this “respected” space is acquired. The candidate has to accept and join manhood.

Bibiwoyo are songs which are intended to persuade, “pull” and bring the candidate nearer and nearer to the knife. These songs are led by singers who entice candidates to feel that when one is circumcised, his status is high. The boy is given titles like *umwami* (the one above), *umukhulu* (the one above others) or *uwe lukoosi* (the one who is respected). In most case, *tsisinyo* (singular, *lusinyo*) are sang from the time boys are smeared with yeast. *Tsisinyo* and *bibiwoyo* (singular, *shishiwoyo*) are very repetitive and short. Benayo Mukhwana told me that these songs are intended to inform the candidate over and over that if he feels weak, he should withdraw from *imbalu* (interview, June 15th, 2009). *Imbalu* is likened to “fire” and whoever exhibits fear during the operation brings disgrace to all members of his family and the clan. Particularly, the family is branded “cowards” and no one can ever take members from such a family seriously especially during clan meetings.

5.4.3 *Khubeka Litsune*: Female- Father “Making” the Man

Before the candidate is smeared with yeast on the second day, he performs the ritual of shaving off the hair from his head, which is known as *khubeka litsune*. This ritual is performed by the paternal aunt (*senje*) chosen because of her good behaviour, kindness and production of children especially males.³³ The Bagisu belief that one’s paternal aunt is more or less his or her father. As such, the paternal aunt is given the title of female-father (*papa mukhasi*) and freely calls the mother of her nephews or nieces as “my wife”. After all, the cows she brought home in form of bride price are the ones her brother used on his wife’s bride price. As *imbalu* is likened to second birth, even the *senje* can give birth to the boy by “shaving off his boyhood” and prepare him for manhood (Wamayosi, interview 4th January, 2009). Furthermore, Wekoye told me that *imbalu* is a social activity which attracts all relations from various corners. And each of these relations must participate in transforming the boy into manhood. As such, shaving is the occasion “dedicated” to the female- father to give “birth” to her nephew (interview, January 29th, 2009). This occasion also enables the boy to know the significance of his paternal female relations and give them due respect in future.

Wekoye observed that while cutting off the boy’s hair, the paternal aunt evokes ancestral spirits to come and bless him. She also emphasises the fact that the boy should be firm during pen-surgery, get married and produce children as “real” manhood is assessed in terms of the above features. Figure 16 is the excerpt of the paternal aunt’s evocations on her nephew (now *imbalu* candidate) while performing the shaving ritual:

Figure 16: Paternal Aunt’s Evocations During the Shaving Ritual

<i>Ise senje wowo</i>	I your aunt
<i>Shalelo ingurusokho litsune</i>	Today, I remove your hair
<i>Ukuma imbalu</i>	Be firm with <i>imbalu</i>
<i>Uyile umukhasi</i>	Get a woman

³³ Male children are highly respected among the Bagisu. The Bagisu argue that unlike girls who get married elsewhere when they grow, boys remain and keep their father’s homes.

Usaale babana

Produce children

Umanye basenji, bakoko

Know your aunts, sisters

Obwo busani bubweene

That is “real” manhood.

Explaining the relationship of the paternal aunt to her brother’s children, Stephen Wanyera stressed that the gap between these personalities is not wide (interview, 2009). For example, female children take their paternal aunt as their elder sister and can discuss issues of sexuality with her. As a matter of fact, paternal aunts teach their nieces “bed matters” and how to conduct themselves in marriage (see also Tamale, 1999: 18). Likewise, boys can entrust their paternal aunts with secrets about their lovers. Wanyera told me that in the event that a male child is suspected to be impotent, it is his paternal aunt to “check” to ascertain whether the allegation is true or not (interview, January 18th, 2009). In fact, the paternal aunt can have sexual intercourse with her brother’s male children if she is to find out about their virility. Similarly, during *imbalu* rituals, the paternal aunt can persuade her nephew to say whether he is ready for *imbalu* or not. In other words, the boy may tell his paternal aunt his feelings about *imbalu* especially if he has some fear for the knife and the aunt can persuade him to withdraw from *imbalu*.

Like other *imbalu* rituals, the shaving ritual is punctuated with music and dance. Among the songs sang when the boy’s hair is cut is entitled “*Umusani womweene Ukana*” (You Demanded for Manhood Yourself) as illustrated in Figure 17.

Figure 17: *Umusani womweene Ukana* (You Demanded for Manhood Yourself)



The following is a literal translation of the song in Figure 17:

Leader: *Umusani womweene ukana* you demanded for manhood yourself

Chorus: *Aho*

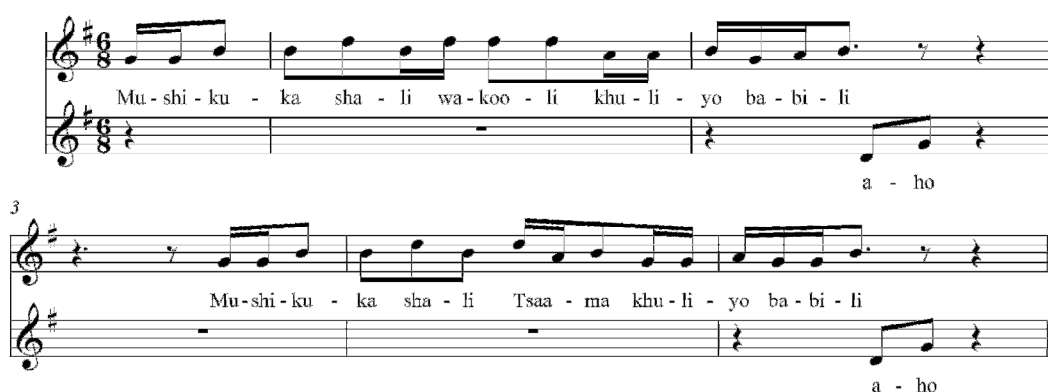
Leader. *Umusani womweene wakanile*: You wanted manhood yourself

Chorus: *Aho*

This song is sung by female relations as the paternal aunt shaves the boy's hair. In the song, the boy is told to be strong during pen-surgery; after all he is the one who demanded for (*imbalu*) manhood. He is also told to be ready to take on the "mantle" of manhood. According to George Wekoye whose role is to sprinkle *imbalu* candidates with beer, by re-emphasising the concept of manhood, female relations tell the candidate to perform the roles expected of a man in society (interview, January 29th, 2009). Among the roles a Mugisu man is expected of is to get married, produce children, sustain the basic needs of a family and welcome other members of the clan to his home.

After the shaving ritual, *imbalu* candidates are again smeared with yeast and taken around the major roads to sing and dance their way to manhood. They meet candidates from other clans, sing songs which depict their resolve for *imbalu* as well as confirm their readiness to fulfill the obligations of men in society. During my childhood, I used to escort a group of *imbalu* candidates, who were moving around villages singing and dancing *imbalu*, the day before pen-surgery. I observed that the atmosphere was punctuated with music and dancing just as the period during which candidates are in cultural sites. *Imbalu* candidates from various clans met together and re-affirmed their resolve for the knife. Among the candidates I witnessed was one Wakooba who sang about his ancestry and how he had been "crying" for manhood and his song is as illustrated in Figure 18;

Figure 18: *Mushikuka Shali Wakooli* (In Wakooli's Clan)



The literal translation of the text of the song in Figure 18 is as follows:

<i>Mushikuka shali Wakooli</i>	In Wakooli's clan,
<i>khuliyo babili</i>	we are two [candidates]
<i>Mushikuka shali Tsaama</i>	In Tsaama's clan,
<i>khuliyo babili</i>	we are two [candidates]
<i>Kumukamba mweesi</i>	Come all tomorrow
<i>yitsa keene muboone</i>	you will see
<i>Khwalila busani keene</i>	We have been crying for manhood
<i>khuboone</i>	we shall see.

Apart from going to sing and dance with other candidates as discussed above, *imbalu* candidates visit nearby relatives for gifts and blessings on the day they shave their hair. Unlike previous days, candidates are heavily guided by their kins on this day. As the Bagisu argue, “*amunji isi uwakhubiyila akhukholela bubi*”--He who hates you waits for you in crowds-- there are always malicious people wanting to destroy the candidate. Such wrongdoers might plant deadly herbs in road junctions to make the candidate fear *imbalu* or even bleed profusely after the pen-surgery. As such, the candidate and his escorts walk on new paths, they themselves create.

On the eve of the day of pen-surgery, the boy is led to the home where he will be circumcised. While in this home, women, men, young boys and girls lead the candidate in songs and dances. Johnson Kanyanya explained that candidates

are kept busy with music and dance in order to distract their minds from thinking about withdrawing from *imbalu*. Instruments including *kadodi* drums, bells, horns and metal gongs are played to produce music which keeps the candidate awake throughout the night. As they sing and dance, words which are considered abnormal in daily discourse are spoken. People speak vulgar words and may take anyone for sexual intercourse.

Imbalu is a prelude to marriage and the underlying bond in marriage among the Bagisu is sexual intercourse. In most African societies, sex is taken as a secret affair. In fact, most Africans do not even want to kiss their partners in public. However, one may wonder as to why issues of sex are talked about explicitly in public during the performance of *imbalu* rituals among the Bagisu. Robert Kuloba told me that the boy must be told directly that he exists as a human being due to the fact that his parents had sex before producing him. The boy must know that his organ is modelled primarily for reproduction but not merely for the seek of decoration. As Khamalwa notes, *imbalu* is a stage where the sexual organ is “commissioned” for the work of fostering new life (2004: 132-133).

Therefore, to have intercourse during *imbalu* performances is a sign of being “able” and “responsible” since you are considered to be showing candidates what they should do after *imbalu*. Indeed, Christian churches base their arguments against *imbalu* because of the indiscriminate sexual intercourse practiced on the eve of pen-surgery and advocate for the abolition of *imbalu* rituals among the Bagisu. The church’s argument is that *imbalu* accelerates immorality thus leading people away from the Christian teachings³⁴.

The morning of the day of surgery is punctuated with a lot of evocations, sacrifices, music and dance. First, a cow or bull or goat is slaughtered in the courtyard of the boy’s father or the home where the surgery will take place. As ancestral spirits are considered as the living dead, they are expected to come and witness the boy’s initiation. And yet, if they are not honoured with sacrifices, it is believed that they may harm they boy. Therefore, on the circumcision day, an

³⁴Wa Thiong’o discusses a similar scene in his writing about the circumcision initiation rituals of the Kikuyu people of Kenya. He notes that music and dance are the major items on the eve of circumcision. In addition, words spoken during this moment are offensive in normal discourse. As Wa Thiong’o stresses, people go into a frenzy “...swinging their hips and contorting their bodies in all provocative ways ... you [can] sing about anything and talk of the hidden parts of men and women without feeling that you had violated the otherwise strong social code that [governs] people’s relationships” ... (1965:41).

animal must be sacrificed to them. Through such sacrifices, the Bagisu believe that ancestral spirits will come and bless the boy, deter any other charm, which may have been planted to harm him. When the animal is slaughtered, the heart, lungs and liver are hanged on the ritual pole (*lukangu*) “planted” in the courtyard where the boy will stand for the surgery. More than any other part, the heart (*kumwoyo*), lungs (*kamatsukhu*) and the liver (*shini*) are believed to sustain the life of any animal and offering them to ancestors is like giving them the “whole” animal. In addition, the above parts are hanged on a forked pole for all to see. If ancestors come, they will easily see what has been given to them. It is believed that unless malicious people use charms to “influence” these ancestors, they will “think” twice before harming the candidate (see also La Fontaine, 1981). After the surgery, this meat is eaten since the Bagisu believe that the ancestors would have finished “eating their share.”

5.4.4 Ancestral Groove: “Fellowship” with Forefathers

Before visiting his maternal clan, the candidate is taken to the burial grounds of his paternal ancestors to have “fellowship” with them and receive their final blessings. Normally, the burial grounds are cleared-off any bushes that very morning. Elders slaughter chicken and roast them together with part of the meat from the animal that is slaughtered at the boy’s father’s home. Bananas are also roasted to be eaten with the chicken and meat. The candidate is then taken around the burial grounds while elders lead him in songs affirming the boy as part of the relatives that are buried there. In fact, *namyenya* mentions the names of the people who died and their heroic deeds in society. Through songs, the boy is told that he is from the clan of warriors, wealthy farmers, hunters or arbitrators. After patrolling the burial grounds, the boy eats the roasted bananas, meat and chicken together with his clansmen. This kind of fellowship is intended to bring the candidate nearer to his ancestors. As Robert Kuloba noted, a man must know where his ancestors were buried and should be able to feed them with food and meat, especially during *imbalu* rituals (interview, January 12th, 2009). At this time, the candidate also begins to name, through song his ancestry. If they were

warriors, porters, rain-makers or blacksmiths, he re-affirms his commitment to follow in their trade.

After the burial grounds, the boy is taken back to the father's home to be smeared with yeast. In addition, the beer brewed on the first day would have "matured" and is therefore sprinkled on the candidate. Part of the chyme from the slaughtered animal is also smeared on the boy's forehead, legs, and hands. All the above items are intended to make the boy firm as well as protect him from any possible harm planted by malicious people. The candidate is then led by members of the father's clan to his mother's place of origin. As the party moves, the song leader (*namyeny*) leads the coaxing song, repeating over and over that the boy must display his courage to the clan if he is to be considered a "real" man in society. In fact, everything the boy says or any elder around him is intoned through song. Elders also use music to tell the boy that he himself wanted *imbalu* and therefore must stand firmly during pen-surgery (see Figure 7 for a similar song).

5.4.5 Visiting the Maternal Clan: Affirming "Male- Mother" Ties?

Before the boy is circumcised, he visits his maternal clan (*Ibuwana*) for blessings and gifts. In the mother's clan, the boy is welcomed by his mother's brother, especially the one who received her bride price. The Bagisu stress that when a girl gets married, her bride price belongs to the father, but the father may surrender it to one of his sons. In fact, it is the same cows that this son uses on his wife's bride price. Therefore, during the circumcision of his nephews, the brother who took the bride price of one's mother gives him *iyebubuwana* (cow or bull from the mother's clan). This cow or bull can be slaughtered or given when is still alive. After handing over the gift, the boy is smeared with yeast by the mother's clansmen to evoke the ancestral spirits of their clan on their nephew. The boy is also sprinkled with local beer and is given a cock to carry in his hands as a sign of portraying the wealth of his mother's clan. This cock is called *isoso* and also symbolises the need to protect the relatives of one's mother in case of any problem.

In fact, the rituals performed on the boy by his mother's people are also intended to caution him that it is an abomination to wage war against the clansmen of one's mother. The Bagisu stress that *ibuwana usameyo ingabo ta*, meaning that you can not turn your shield against your mother's kinsmen (Makwa, 2006: 33). In the case of war against your mother's people, you are expected to ally and fight alongside your mother's people. After all, when misfortune befalls you in your paternal clan, you take refuge in the land of your mother. Achebe's discussion about the Igbo people of Nigeria resonates well with the above observation when he writes that "[a] man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness [,] he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you" (1966: 94). Because *imbalu* circumcision rituals are held in very high esteem by the Bagisu, people suspected to harbour ill feelings about the boy are pushed to the side. As such, only the boy's relatives surround him, especially the brothers of his mother. In fact, the Bagisu take one's maternal uncles to be his "male –mothers", people who share the "labour" pains with his mother. As such, it is believed that they can never harm their sister's child for they know he is their own flesh. Therefore, throughout the evocations, the boy is told to respect his mother's people, look for the wife and produce children, know his maternal relatives and welcome them to his home.

The boy thanks the mother's relatives in song, jumps in air and dances to bid them farewell. In 1990, for example, I escorted my cousin to the maternal clan. He was given a lot of gifts including a heifer. As a result, the boy sang about the generosity of his mother's clansmen, promised to defend them in case of any problem and above all, stand firmly during surgery. His song was entitled "*ise naama Busoto isolu yimambe*" (I am coming from Busoto, the Animal Will Get Me) as illustrated in Figure 19.

Figure 19: *Ise Naama Busoto Isolo Yimambe* (I am Coming from Busoto, the Animal Will Get Me)



Literal translation of the text of the song in Figure 17 is as follows:

<i>Ise naama Busoto solo yimambe</i>	I am coming from Busoto the animal will get me
<i>Nga khwolile</i>	when we reach
<i>iBumasata keene mbasiime</i>	Bumasata I will thank you
<i>Bakhotsa banje nywe mwanyala</i>	my maternal uncles thanks
<i>Nabi</i>	a lot

In the song, the candidate (*umusinde*) appreciates (*khusiima*) his maternal relatives for their generosity. He also confirms to the maternal relatives that when they reach his paternal clan (called Bumasata), he will also “thank” them. In this case, the phrase “when we reach Bumasata, I will thank you” denotes the fact that the boy will stand firmly when undergoing the pen-surgery ritual. *Imbalu* music and dance, like other musics in African cultures, are stages where direct and veiled languages are “played out” (see for example Maurice Bloch 1989: 22). To emphasise the relationship between *imbalu* candidates and their maternal clans, any fear during the operation is blamed on one’s maternal relatives. People even denounce marrying from such clans and as such, the boy must stand firmly if he is to uphold his mother’s relatives.

While singing this song, the boy was led by the elders from the maternal clan to the assembling place to wait for other candidates to proceed to the sacred swamp. Normally at around 4:00 O'clock in the evening, the reminding drum is sounded to inform people to proceed to the swamp (*itoosi*) to be smeared with mud as the last smearing rite as discussed in the section below.

5.4.6 Sacred Swamp: Final Blessings to Manhood

From the place candidates assemble when they leave their maternal clans, the boy heads to the sacred swamp to be smeared with mud. At the swamp, the boy is smeared by *umulongi* (the custodian of the sacred swamp). The Bagisu believe that this swamp is trampled upon during the period of *imbalu* by the spirits of *imbalu* (*kimisambwa kye mbalu*). Hence smearing *imbalu* candidates with mud from this swamp is believed to provide them extra power to stand the ordeal. Wamayosi informed me that smearing the boy with soil from the swamp symbolizes giving him blessings at the “hour of need” (interview, 2009). As he smears candidates, *umulongi* emphasises to him that *imbalu* is “hot”, “fierce” and “fire”. He repeats over and over that the candidate’s thoughts should be on *imbalu* since, just as Khamalwa stresses, “the boy needs to be encouraged to stand the ordeal with bravery and single- hearted resolve ... as the difference between *businde* (boyhood) and *busani* (manhood) is touted with the latter being proffered as the only adult thing to do” (2004: 88-89).

After the smearing ritual, boys are led by their relations³⁵ to the “surgery-theatre”. At this time, music and dance take precedence as there is no talking for it may distract the boy’s mind. From the time of leaving one’s maternal clan, the mood becomes tense because the boy’s “journey” to manhood is concretised through firmness during the course of pen-surgery.

³⁵ It should be noted that both paternal and maternal relatives escort the boy from the sacred swamp to the clan leader’s home where he is circumcised. Unlike paternal relatives, the boy’s maternal relatives walk very closely with him as they are believed to offer him extra protection against people who may want to harm him.

And yet, any fear does not only affect the boy but the whole family and clan as well. Further, the boy's relations are not only overwhelmed with fear that he may cry or fall down during the surgery but have fear that malicious people may bewitch him.

The man who is considered "courageous" is chosen to lead the coaxing song (*shishiwoyo and lusinyo*) whose tone is similar to that of a war song. Among the famous *shishiwoyo* songs sang when *imbalu* candidates are taken for pen-surgery is *imbalu muliro* (*imbalu* is fire) whose text is translated in Figure 20 below. As the party moves, the song leader takes over command by singing the verses of *shishiwoyo* (the coaxing song) while the rest of the people sing the chorus. At certain intervals, the boy leads the song and the party of followers responds to the chorus.

Figure 20: *Imbalu Muliro (Imbalu is Fire)*³⁶

<i>Masaba</i>	Masaba
<i>Ee</i>	Ee
<i>Masaba womweene</i>	Masaba yourself
<i>Imbalu muliro</i>	<i>Imbalu</i> is fire
<i>Shalelo</i>	Today
<i>Ee</i>	Ee
<i>Isolo ikhuruma</i>	The animal will eat you
<i>Imbalu muliro</i>	<i>Imbalu</i> is fire
<i>Womweene</i>	Yourself
<i>Ee</i>	Ee
<i>Imbalu wokanile</i>	You asked for <i>imbalu</i>
<i>Imbalu muliro</i>	<i>Imbalu</i> is fire

Songs sang when boys are taken for pen-surgery are led by "courageous" men. The Bagisu believe that when courageous people are near the candidate, he gets the courage and also stands firmly during the pen-surgery ritual. And yet, he

³⁶ The melody of this song is the same as the one in Figure 8. It talks on how tough *imbalu* is and relates it to fire. At the time when candidates are taken to the surgery- theatre, more text is added to communicate to the candidate how impossible it is for him to dodge *imbalu*.

needs to be told about the kind of men the Bugisu society treasures: courageous, tough and aggressive people. As such, the *shishiwoyo* song, communicates how it is impossible to escape *imbalu*. The boy is told that *imbalu* is part of the Bagisu and he is just fulfilling his responsibility as a Mugisu. And yet, *imbalu* is war, something which leads to death if one does not stand firmly. Crying or falling down when being circumcised is an act the boy should guard against. In addition, names of the brave are evoked through songs and the candidate must affirm his own readiness to follow suit. He is not even allowed to look back as it is interpreted as fear.

As the candidate is taken for the pen-surgery, women are not allowed to be near him. Women are associated with bad luck, fear and emotions. Vincent Matanda told me that the Bagisu can never leave women to be near the boy because women may be overwhelmed by emotion and burst into tears (interview, 2009). Women are only expected to wait from home and come out when the boy successfully finishes the ritual. They are expected to dance and praise him, but not being near when he is being taken for pen-surgery.

As the party goes to the clan leader's home for the pen-surgery ritual, it follows the clockwise direction, imitating the movement of the sun which rises in the east and sets in the west. Weanga explained that "to move from east to west follows the normal direction of life. *Imbalu* is part of the life of the Bagisu and whoever takes part in it must not forget to follow the normal direction" (interview, 2009). Like Weanga, Wekoye stressed, that "you can not follow the left while doing things" (interview, January 3rd, 2009). As Wekoye explained, the left hand side, also known as *lubeeka lunyeletsi*, is associated with bad luck. Similarly, when I was growing up, my father used to rebuke me for using the left hand while eating. He emphasised that anything to do with the left side, direction or hand is associated with bad omen (*bisilaani*). Therefore, in its movement, the *imbalu* party must avoid emerging from the left or western direction as this tantamounts to exposing the boy to bad omen including the inability to have children.

If there is more than one candidate, before reaching the courtyard, they are arranged in accordance to the level of seniority which is determined from the age or relationship of the boys' parents. Normally, among the candidates to be circumcised in the same courtyard, there may be those who are uncles, sons or

grandsons to others. As Reuben Wamaniala stressed, you must circumcise a boy from the most senior lineage before those from junior lineages (interview, December 28th, 2009). A child cannot go before his father or uncle. He comes after the father for the latter is supposed to clear the way for the former (*ibid.*).

5.4.7 *Khukhwinjila imbalu*: “Entering” Manhood

Khukhwinjila imbalu literally means “entering” *imbalu*. It denotes the ritual of cutting the foreskin from the boy’s penis. *Khukhwinjila imbalu* takes place either in the courtyard of the boy’s father or that of the clan leader. In order to prepare the space for pen-surgery, the elders lay a sack on the ground and spread soil dust on top of it as illustrated in Figure 21. The aim of preparing this space in this way is to prevent blood from spilling to the ground from where malicious people may pick it and harm the candidate. After the surgery, the soil where the boy’s blood dropped is carried away by his closest relatives and hidden. It is believed that people with ill feelings about the boy may pick this soil and among other things, make him impotent or “fear women”.

Figure 21: *Imbalu* “Surgery-Theatre”



Photo by the researcher during field work in 2008

When the boy reaches the courtyard, he jumps in the air two or three times before “landing” firmly on the sack where the dry soil is spread. The circumciser’s assistant, called *umunutsi*, pulls the boy’s fore skin of the penis and “puts dust [from a crushed brick] to remove any dirt collected under the foreskin and to increase the gripping power” (Khamalwa, 2004: 93). The circumciser (*umushebi*) comes forward and cuts the foreskin as elders approve in unison that *wakhwoneka, wakhwoneka, wakhwoneka* (he has destroyed you! Destroyed you! Destroyed you!). If the boy wants, he may jump in the air for the second time to show his courage³⁷ before the circumciser makes what the Bagisu call *kumulundula* (the inner incision).

As the circumciser takes his position to make this incision, elders warn the boy to be careful with his “behind” (*inyuma*). They shout *ulinda inyuma, nyuma, nyuma* (keep your behind! Behind! Behind!). In fact, the inner incision is so

³⁷ In north Bugisu, when the boy’s foreskin is cut, he is taken around the village to dance again before he comes to stand again. As he dances, there is always someone to pour water on the wound and scratch it. This practice is intended to show people that one is very courageous.

man like us”; 2) “in this clan, we never fear *imbalu*”; and 3) “we now see that you can manage a woman”. Throughout the jumps, there are ululations and singing. The music performed after the operation is intended to celebrate victory. During this occasion, songs are mainly led by women who sing praises to the boy³⁹. Among the songs sang after pen-surgery is the song entitled “*khanyunyi khamusuru khalule*” (The wild bird has hatched) whose text is illustrated in Figure 23.

Figure 23: *Khanyunyi Khamusuru Khalule* (The Wild Bird Has Hatched)



The literal translation of the text of the song in Figure 23 is as follows:

<i>Khanyunyi khamusuru khalule</i>	the wild bird has hatched
<i>Ee ee</i>	ee ee
<i>Khalule</i>	has hatched
<i>Ee</i>	ee
<i>Khalule</i>	has hatched
<i>Ee ee</i>	ee ee
<i>Umwana wo papa wamalile</i>	my father’s son has finished
<i>Ee ee</i>	ee ee
<i>Wamalile</i>	has finished
<i>Ee</i>	ee
<i>Wamalile</i>	has finished
<i>Ee ee</i>	ee ee
<i>Jiboole wo papa wamalile</i>	my elder brother has finished
<i>Ee ee</i>	ee ee

³⁹ Indeed, one can find correlation between *imbalu* circumcision and war rituals. Wanakoolo, a second World War veteran told me that before going for war, it is men to lead the war song since men have war experience. However, after the war, women are the ones to welcome combatants back home (interview, 2009).

<i>Wamalile</i>	has finished
<i>Ee</i>	ee
<i>Wamalile</i>	has finished
<i>Ee ee</i>	ee ee

As earlier mentioned, *imbalu* enables a boy to “enter” manhood. The use of the term “hatching” as illustrated in the above song symbolizes the boy’s change of status to a new identity, of a “man”. In fact, as Johnson Kanyanya stressed, *imbalu* is a platform where the boy “hatches” into manhood (interview, January 18th, 2009). Furthermore, *imbalu* is considered as a “debt” among the Bagisu. Society looks forward to any “mature” male to pay this debt. As such, the use of the phrase “has finished” demonstrates that the boy has finally paid the debt of the Bagisu in a voluntary manner. For someone to be circumcised by force is not only shameful to the boy but, also to his family and clan as a whole.

Among the Bagisu, it is believed that women cannot stand on their own, they need men in order to make their lives “complete”. This view explains why women who do not stay under a man’s roof are not considered “complete” women. As such, in *imbalu* circumcision rituals, women only come to fore after the boy has completed surgery successfully. They lead songs after pen-surgery to thank candidates for the successful victory. Since *imbalu* is a prelude to marriage, women take the lead after pen-surgery to show the boy that “see, we are ready for marriage. We are ready for you” (Robert Kuloba, interview January 12th, 2009).

However, when the boy falls down, he is left to men to hold for the circumciser to finish the surgery. Women stand at a distance and some of them run to the house to comfort the boy’s mother. In fact, the boy’s mother is expected to be in very great pain if her son does not finish the *imbalu* ritual successfully. Whether he stands firmly or is held down, the initiate is given a chair to sit on. He is given a sweet brew of fermented millet meal and yeast called *bushu* to refresh him from the fatigue of the day. He is taken to a special hut called *mukombe* to heal his wound. It is from this hut that the circumciser performs the purification ritual as will be discussed later in this chapter.

5.5 Cultural Reintegration

Cultural reintegration is the period after the performance of a rite of passage. In order to be reintegrated in society after pen-surgery, the boy performs a number of rituals as will be discussed in the following sections. In addition, after the pen-surgery, the boy “enters” another gender and is given the name *umufulu*, which denotes the person who has just been initiated. He is taken to a special hut called *mukombe* to be confined till he performs the hatching ritual (*khukhuyalula*). Symbolically, the initiate is in an ambiguous state for he is neither what he was before nor the person he wanted to be. Many informants stressed that the gender of the initiate is like that of the woman since he shares the same features as women. For instance, he wears a skirt- an attire the Bagisu designate for women and he bleeds like a menstruating woman. And yet, he also has the attributes of men- has the male reproductive organ as well as maintains the name he was given during the ritual of naming.

Since he is not fully defined, society secludes the initiate from the defined realms to *mukombe*, a place symbolising death. The Bagisu believe that when someone dies, he goes to the world of the dead, known as *imakombe*. In the same way, the newly initiated boy is considered ritually dead and must be confined to a place where he cannot freely interact with “living” people. He has to perform a number of rituals such as purification, “walking the paths” and be “hatched” into a “full” man before he is reintegrated into society (see also Turner, 1973: 109). In the sub sections that follow, I discuss the rituals which the boy performs while in seclusion and how these rituals relate with the Bagisu gender ideology.

5.5.1 Purification Ritual: “Defining” Manhood

After performing all the rituals that lead to the pen-surgery, the initiate is considered ritually unclean. Wamayosi told me that rituals performed before pen-surgery make the candidate to “fellowship” with many spirits, some of which are dangerous and can affect him during seclusion (interview, January 4th, 2009). As such, he must perform the ritual of purification, also known as *khusabisa*, so as to become clean. Apart from cleansing the initiate, the purification ritual acts as a

stage for the circumciser, whom Wangusa calls “man maker” (1987: 64) to “tutor” the initiate about the qualities of “real” manhood among the Bagisu. Because the circumciser is the one who gives “birth” to the boy this second time, he takes on the identity of the “father”. Like a father, the circumciser must tell the initiate how to behave now that he is a new person: joining the society of “men”. Before discussing how the purification ritual is a stage for defining manhood among the Bagisu, I present a description of this ritual.

In the performance of the purification ritual, the circumciser pours beer⁴⁰ on the hands of the initiate to signify the “washing away” of the bad omen associated with boyhood. He then brings out the knife with which he performed the surgery as well as a machete, axe, hoe, spear and fire with which to make the admonitions. Although I have witnessed a number of purification rituals since childhood, the ritual which my circumciser performed to “purify” me during my own circumcision is very significant here. On the day preceeding pen-surgery in December 1996, the circumciser, one Charles Walimbwa came to “purify” me and Figure 22 below is the illustration of the excerpts of the admonitions he administered.

Figure 24: Circumciser’s Admonitions

First, the circumciser brought out his knife and presented it to me and said:

<i>Isese Walimbwah, kuka wowo</i>	I, Walimbwah, your grand father
<i>Nakhulele mu ngubo ye shisani</i>	I have put you in the robe of manhood
<i>Kuno kumubono kumukhale</i>	This is the ancient knife
<i>Kwolya shisoni showo</i>	It ate your great grand father
<i>Kwalya kuka wowo</i>	Ate your grand father
<i>Kwalya papa wowo</i>	Ate your father
<i>Boona kwa khulya</i>	It has eaten you
<i>Ulele umukhasi usaale babana</i>	Bring a woman and produce children
<i>Kumubono kuno kukobole ku bashebe</i>	So that this knife comes to cut them
<i>Busani khuyila umukhasi</i>	Manhood is getting married.

⁴⁰ This beer may be any local brew. However, most informants told me that beer for purifying the initiate is specially made by his father on the day the boy is circumcised.

He then brought a hoe and asked me to touch saying:

<i>Shino shisili</i>	This is a hoe
<i>Busani khuamba shisili</i>	Manhood is holding a hoe
<i>Uambe shisili ulime biryo</i>	Get the hoe and grow food
<i>Ulise babana, umukhasi ni banashikuka</i>	Feed children, the wife and clansmen
<i>Busani nibwo khulya ni babanu</i>	Manhood is eating with people
<i>Ingueleme shisili shino</i>	I did not give you this hoe
<i>Eni unjilile basho ta</i>	that you rob others
<i>Obwo lime busani ta</i>	That is not manhood.

After the machete had been brought, the circumciser asked me to touch and said:

<i>I panga eno</i>	This is a machete
<i>Lime utanya basho ta</i>	Not for cutting others
<i>Oba unjilile banu shilo ta</i>	Nor are you to attack people at night
<i>I panga eno utanye kusala</i>	With this machete, cut the tree
<i>Wombekhele inzu</i>	For building the house
<i>Umusani akha waba in nzu</i>	A man must have a house
<i>Obwo ni bwo busani</i>	That is manhood.

While handing over the axe, the circumciser stressed:

<i>Eno iyaywa</i>	This is an axe
<i>Umusani asaka tsingu</i>	A man splits firewood
<i>Warema kyimisala</i>	Cuts trees
<i>Wombekhela inzu</i>	To build a house
<i>Iyaywa eno ukhalemela basho ta</i>	With this axe, do not cut other people
<i>Obwo lime busani ta</i>	That is not manhood

He brought a spear and intoned that:

<i>Lino lifumo</i>	This is a spear
<i>Umusani utitia busolo</i>	As a man, protect yourself
<i>Watitia bashowo</i>	Defend others
<i>Ukhenjilila babanu ta</i>	Do not use this spear to rob other people
<i>Obwo lime busani ta</i>	That is not manhood

Lastly, he brought a piece of wood with fire, handed it to me and said:

<i>Kuno kumulilo</i>	This is fire
<i>Lime urambise woshe bashowo ta</i>	Not to be used to burn other people
<i>Umusani ulele umukhasi</i>	Find a woman
<i>Akhutekhele biryo</i>	To cook for you
<i>Usaale shikuka</i>	Produce and contribute to the clan
<i>Obwo ni bwo busani butufu</i>	That is real manhood

Considering the above excerpts, “real” manhood among the Bagisu is not merely the cutting of the foreskin from the boy’s penis. *Imbalu* circumcision rituals only participate in an elaborate process of defining the identities and roles of men among the Bagisu. “Real” manhood is only attained after marriage and child birth. Many informants emphasized to me that if someone is circumcised and has no wife, that person is as good as being dead. George Wekoye, for example, stressed that someone who fails to marry and produce children is a liability to the clan because he does not contribute to the continuity of the clan.

Because marriage and producing children are highly valued, people with no children are publically scorned. For example, a person without children is not allowed to stand near *imbalu* candidates. Wekoye told me that barren people are not supposed to be near *imbalu* candidates because they may bring bad omen to the candidates (interview, January 29th, 2009). In fact, the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals forms a stage for those who have children to celebrate. To

show that gender construction is an ongoing process, people with male children have more prestige in society than those who have produced only girls. Boys are favoured because they are considered as the heirs of the home and girls as people who will grow and get married somewhere. Boys are hoped to contribute to the continuity of the patriarchal clan system of the Bagisu.

Further, as earlier stressed, “real” manhood is eating with other people of society. This concretises the Kigisu proverb that “*bulebe inda*”, meaning “relation is the belly”. This proverb means that what shows that someone is your relative is when he or she gives you something to eat. Further, the Bagisu have another saying that: the path ends at the relative’s home (*inzila yakama wo mulebe*), signifying that as soon as you reach the relative’s home, you do not worry about hunger. After all, he will immediately give you what to eat. Therefore, during purification, initiates are told that as men, they are expected to host people to their homes and give them food. To emphasise the above requirement of manhood, the circumciser presents the hoe, machet and axe to the initiate. These tools symbolise hard work, one of the tenets of manhood. Similarly, Chinua Achebe has also stressed that hard work is among the qualities for measuring manhood in African cultures. Presenting the picture of pre-colonial Africa in an Igbo society in Nigeria, Achebe writes that “having enough in [one’s] barn to feed [clansmen and] the ancestors with regular sacrifices” (1965: 37) is what makes a man.

As also mentioned earlier in Chapter Four, the Bagisu also define manhood in terms of one’s ability to construct a house. As such, during the purification ritual, the circumciser re-echoes this requirement to the initiate and concretises it by handing a machet over to the initiate with which to cut trees. The Bagisu believe that the words of the circumciser carry more strength than any of the ritual executors since he gives birth to the initiate the second time. The purification ritual is given such great significance to the extent that when a man misbehaves in society, his age-sets boldly tell him to seek for another purification ritual with his circumciser. Of course, this is mockery for a man is only purified once.

Further, the initiate is told by the circumciser that “real” manhood is defending oneself, the household and the society as a whole. He is handed a spear and told to be on the standby for any aggression. The spear is also a tool of political power among the Bagisu. In fact, during the installation of clan leaders,

the spear is one of the instruments handed over to the chief. It symbolizes the power to defend and protect the land of the Bagisu.

As the initiate is now in limbo⁴¹, he needs a guide to instruct him on what to do. As Turner stresses, these instructors exert total authority over initiates and the latter must display total submission (1973: 97). For the case of the Bagisu, it is normally the initiate's elder brother or even one of the paternal uncles who instructs him. They instruct him on how to apply the medicine, how to clean the wound and relate with other people. Further, they tell the initiate stories about great men in the past as well as what is expected of him now that he is a man. In addition, instructors caution the initiate about his movements. Among the most serious cautions I received during my convalescence was to avoid company with female friends and walking at night. My uncle used to stress that interaction with women makes the penis to erect, an act which leads to the opening up of the wound. When the wound opens up, fresh bleeding is experienced and this slows down the healing process. About moving at night, my uncle said that this act exposes initiates to night dancers who, when encountered touch and scratch the wound. Apart from the initiate's uncle or elder brother, the initiate is also given a young boy known as *umukyesa*. He is normally in his early teens and his responsibility is to run errands for the initiate. *Umkyesa* is supposed to be humble and one who acts faster when is sent. He may also cook for the initiate, boil water for cleaning his wound, among other duties.

5.5.2 *Khujenda tsinzila*: Site for Knowing Short Cuts

Khujenda tsinzila, which literally means "walking the paths", is the ritual performed to "show" initiates short-cuts to and from the home compound. This ritual is performed three days after pen-surgery and involves a group of initiates from the same clan being taken around the village by the clan leader to "know" the paths on which to walk since they are now "men". In fact, it is as if when they were boys, the initiates used some routes "illegally" and now they are given the

⁴¹ I use the concept of limbo to denote the fact that after pen-surgery, the initiate enters an indeterminate state where he may not be able to know what to do. As a matter of fact, after pen-surgery, the initiate enters a state he has never experienced and therefore needs guidance.

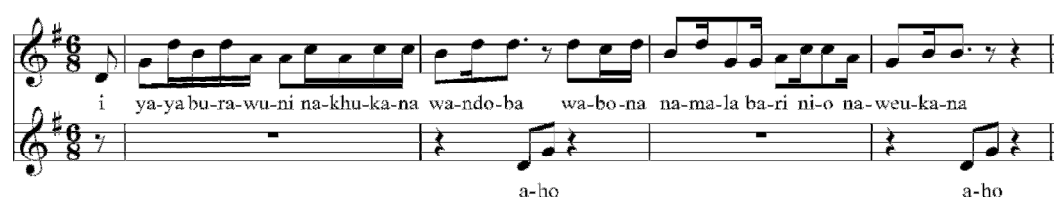
authority to use them. According to Elisaphani Mabala, the newly initiated are considered new creatures in society who must be directed on which ways to pass and which ones to avoid (interview, March 5th, 2009). Khamalwa captures the symbolism embedded in “walking village paths” when he writes that “[*bafulu*] (newly initiated) [are] shown all the minor paths leading out of the homestead, symbolising that [they] could now use short cuts [to the home] ... compound. Uncircumcised boys [are] not allowed to use short cuts [to go out or come] into the compound, but [have] to come and go only through the main entrance” (2004: 96).

As they perform this ritual, initiates carry long sticks whose barks have been peeled off. Informants stressed that initiates peel off the bark of the sticks to imitate the fact that their skins have been “peeled off” during pen-surgery. Meanwhile, the clan elder, carrying a gourd of local beer (*busera*), leads the way as he blows the beer to remove any evil spirits which may be on the way.

As they move, initiates sing songs of victory as well as rebuke their counterparts who postponed *imbalu*. The song “*umusinde umukonela munda jojojo jo lolololololo*” (the Boy Who Postponed *Imbalu* is Now Having a Running Stomach) is among the songs performed by initiates while moving the paths. In this song, initiates portray themselves as men who showed courage during pen-surgery. They also abuse their peers who cried or fell down during the course of the surgery. In their songs, initiates also sing that the Bagisu are a “race” of circumcised men. As such, those who can not cope with *Kigisu* ways such as performing *imbalu* circumcision rituals should seek refuge among the “boys” (the ethnic groups which do not circumcise).

Another song sang during “walking the paths” is “*Yaya Burawuni*” (My Brown Sister) whose melody and text is illustrated in Figure 25.

Figure 25: *Yaya Burawuni* (My Brown Sister)



I yaya burawuni nakhukana wandoba

My brown sister, I loved you
but you declined

Waboona namala bari nio nawe ukana

Now that I have finished it, you
bring yourself.

In the song illustrated in Figure 25, initiates inform the girls they loved before being circumcised but turned their suggestions down about their new identity as “men”. In fact, initiates tell their lovers that “you see, we are now men. You despised us when we were still boys. Why are you bringing yourselves to us?” (Robert Kuloba, interview January 12th, 2009). During the performance of the walking the paths’ ritual, initiates stress that they are now “men” who can handle the duties of marriage. In fact, initiates sing about their lovers to come and marry them. The role of leading songs during “walking the paths” is vested with the initiates themselves. Informants told me that men lead themselves and as such, from the time of the purification ritual, all the songs sang are led by the initiates themselves while their escorts take the chorus. As they move, initiates are given gifts in terms of eggs, money and chicken by their relatives and friends.

5.5.3 *Khukhuyalula*: “Man” Hatching from Seclusion

Khukhuyalula literally means hatching. It is a ritual performed on the eve of the performance of *inemba* dance and involves the burning of the dry banana leaves on which the newly initiated young men slept during seclusion. According to Bumali Namanda, also a clan leader⁴², the hatching ceremony is performed to “dispose off” all the filth associated with boyhood as well as “hatch” the initiate to the new society. On the day of “hatching”, each initiate’s hair is shaved off by the paternal aunt who shaved it during circumcision.

⁴² Clan leaders among the Bagisu are charged with a lot of duties including arbitration in case of family conflicts. During *imbalu* circumcision rituals, it is at the home of clan leaders that candidates sleep. Further, if the candidate is not circumcised at his father’s home, he is taken to the clan leader’s home for pen-surgery.

Afterwards, candidates meet on the village playground and begin running along the “paths” they were shown after they had gone to seclusion.

They visit the homes of their kinsmen for gifts as they sing and dance.

During my own initiation into manhood, together with my counterparts, we sang the song “*businde khwawona*” (we have chased away boyhood) while performing the hatching ritual whose text is illustrated in Figure 26.

Figure 26: *Businde Khwawoona* (We Have Chased Boy hood)

<i>Businde khwawoona</i>	we have chased boy hood
<i>I yaya Bamasata ifefe khwawoona</i>	our brothers from Bumasata, we have chased it
<i>Oyoyo uwokoona ifefe khwawoona</i>	For that one who postponed, for us we have chased it

In fact, during fieldwork, I heard initiates sing that they had chased away boyhood and all its filthy, projecting themselves as men who are ready to take on societal obligations such as marriage.

Informants told me that as initiates run and collect gifts, they are not accompanied by elders since they were “shown the paths” on which to “walk” when they were in seclusion. Even as they perform the music, initiates take over the role of “leading” themselves as men are expected to do. Wanyera wondered how “men” should be led all the time (interview, January 18th, 2009). According to Wanyera, initiates are left alone to “try it out” (*beketsomo*) to establish whether they can stand alone as men in society. The musical performances portray a celebratory mood because initiates have emerged out of convalescence fully healed and healthy men.

After collecting gifts, initiates return to the playground and share their gifts after which each departs for his father’s home. At around four o’clock in the morning, each initiate burns the dry banana leaves (*kamasanza*) on which he slept (see also Khamalwa 2004: 102). They choose this time of the day in order to avoid ill-hearted people from picking the ashes from the burnt material. It is believed that people harbouring ill-feelings against the initiate may “make” him

impotent or even “fear” women. In fact, ashes from the burnt dry leaves are carefully collected and hidden in a place where malicious people cannot access (*ibid.*). In the section which follows, I discuss the performance of *inemba* dance and its associated symbolization.

5.5.4 *Inemba* Dance: “Cloth” of Manhood

Inemba is a ritual as well as dance performed to mark the climax of the musicking and dancing *imbalu* ritual. This dance involves the newly circumcised boys of related lineages coming together to be “commissioned” as men. Participants move from their homes to assembling places from where they all run to the performance venue. As will be illustrated later in this section, initiates sing songs portraying them as triumph people in society and these songs are responded to by people escorting the initiates. They approach the performance venue from a higher ground and dance as they move from east to west. *Inemba* dance is performed in an open place with enough space for initiates of related lineages to come together and dance. Further, the dance is performed in the dry season when people have not planted their crops to minimise the destruction which might occur as people perform the dance. In Bududa District, *inemba* is performed in the month of February when the dry spell is on. *Inemba* takes place for three days to give initiates ample time to socialise with their peers and share experiences about *imbalu*. According to Khamalwa, “each and every newly initiated individual is supposed to attend [*inemba*] dance at least once. If one cannot attend in person [,] a proxy is paid to attend on one’s behalf” (2004: 103).

Preparations for *inemba* dance performances begin at twelve noon. Relatives of the initiate gather at his father’s house to drink local beer which has been prepared to welcome the initiate back to the society. At around 4:00 O’clock in the evening, the initiate performs the ritual of being “clothed into the new robe”. An elder who is kind, wealthy and has produced children, especially males, is chosen to put the skin (*isumbati*- plural *tsisumbati*) on the initiate. As he gives the initiate the skin, he re-echoes the admonitions which the circumciser administered during purification. He then puts around the neck of the initiate a long garland of *libombwe* (plural *kamabombwe*), a fast thriving creeper believed to be

with good luck. Then, the elder gives the initiate a gift to welcome him back to the society. Meanwhile, people gathering around follow suit and present their gifts to the initiate. Whoever has a gift first puts *libombwe* around the initiate's neck and hands to him the gift. In fact, the more creepers (*kamabombwe*) around his neck as he performs *inemba* dance the more gifts the initiate is believed to have gotten from his relatives and friends.

When the reminding drum is sounded at 4:00 O'clock in the evening, the initiates run to the assembling places to meet their peers from other clans so as to go to the performance venue of *inemba* together. However, few meters before reaching this venue, initiates perform the ritual of "tightening their skins" (*khubwaa tsingubo-tsisumbati*). Elders from different clans bring their initiates together and ask them to kneel down in two parallel lines- facing each other. Each initiate unties his skin, folds and throws it to the one kneeling opposite him. In the course of exchanging these skins, elders tell initiates that it is important for men in society to have unity. Phares Masata, one of the custodians of *inemba* dance in Bugisu, explained to me that among the features of "real" manhood is the ability to have unity and share resources with others (interview, February 3rd, 2009). In fact, these features form the major theme of the elders' recitations while performing the ritual of tightening skins. Figure 27 is one of the elders' recitation during the ritual of tightening skins that Masata recited to me.

Figure 27: Elder' Recitation During the Ritual of Tightening Skins

Umusani umutufu akholakana ni basheewe mubulayi. Nga umusani akana khuzya khubujeni, asaba imbale oba isati khukhwama isi uwoshe. Anyala waloma ari 'ise nakwara ingubo ye mbusi no imbuka ngali. Inyetokho iyoowo iye ngafu nase imbonekhokho lundi'. Ukhaloba khumuyeeta ta. Obwo nibwo busani butuufu. Ari boona muri basani mulengana. Muri bamakoki. Ukhayila umwana wo makoki wowo ta. Oyo ari umwana wowo. Angaba umukhasi wo makoki wowo, eyo imbikho (interview, February 3rd, 2009).

A “real” man should have good relationships with others in society. When a man wants to go on a visit, he borrows a shirt or trouser from a friend. He can say ‘I have been using this “shirt”, made from the he-goat for so long. Assist me with this one made from the bull so that I look different’. Do not hesitate to assist him. That is real manhood. Now, you are equal men. You are age-sets (*bamakooki*). Do not take your friend’s daughter for marriage. She is more of your own daughter. Even your friend’s wife should be a “taboo” to you.

The tightening of the initiates’ skins takes place at around 4:30⁴³ in the evening and afterwards, initiates run to the *inemba* performance venue reaching there from the eastern direction. As mentioned earlier, the Bagisu believe that normal life moves in a clockwise direction just as the sun rises from the east and sets in the west. George Wekoye told me that to move in an anti clockwise direction is associated with bad luck. According to Wekoye, the Bagisu avert bad luck when they are out for a journey by spitting to the right to evoke ancestors for their protection (interview, January 29th, 2009)(see also Khamalwa, 2004: 91).

Like *isonja* dance, *inemba* is also staged in an open area. The drums are raised on two poles in order to make the sound reach distant places and the dancers move round the drums. The basic motif in *inemba* dance is displayed by putting one’s feet apart and somehow bending the back. The performer then sways his body from right to left as his hands move to the same direction. The other motif is when performers bend and pass the skins in-between their legs. The skin is first lifted to the left, then to the right shoulders and thrown in- between the legs. The female performers, who primarily come to accompany the initiates, dance as they lift their legs.

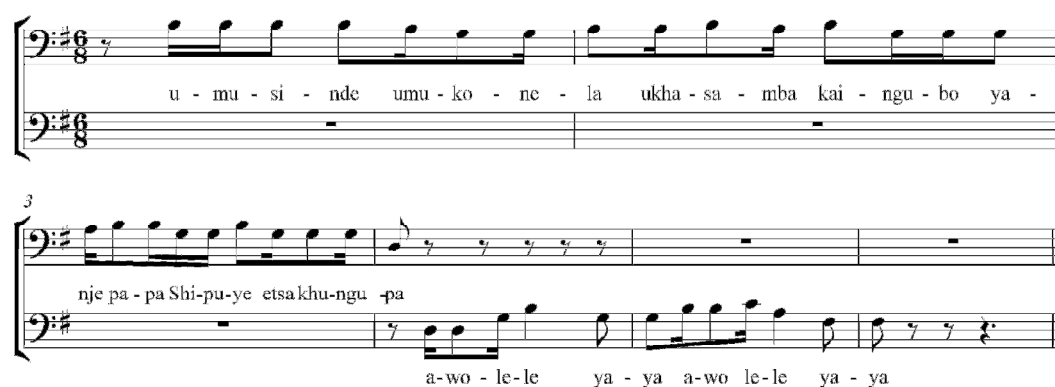
Furthermore, as females spread out their arms, they slightly bend to the left and then to the right. Sometimes, they spread their chests forward as they display their breasts. All the motifs of *inemba* dance as discussed above relate to the theme of sexuality. According to Robert Kuloba, initiates lift up their legs to show girls that they are healed and can therefore engage in sexual intercourse with them. In addition, Kuloba stressed that when initiates see girls whom they

⁴³ As mentioned earlier, the Bagisu perform most social functions in evening hours (between 3:00 to 4:00 O’clock) and since *inemba* dance brings people together, it is considered a social evening.

consider not to be beautiful, they push their skins to the left and right of their bodies to symbolize that they are not interested in such ladies. Similarly, by lifting up their legs, female dancers “tell” initiates that we are ready to be married as wives (interview, January 12th, 2009).

Unlike *isonja* dance, *inemba* dance is a stage for confirming manhood. Initiates show their men identity through leading songs as they perform the dance. Since they are now men, society considers the initiates as strong and tough people who can share in men’s space. As they dance, initiates sing songs of victory, despising their colleagues who feared, cried, fell down during the operation or those who postponed their circumcision. They sing and dance with happiness to show spectators that they are victorious “men” who are ready to handle the obligations of men. Women merely respond to the songs led by the initiates. Further, they dance as a way of showing the initiates that they are ready to be taken as marriage partners. Indeed, *inemba* dance forms an avenue during which young girls and initiates may acquire future marriage partners. During the performance of *inemba* dance, the most common song is entitled *umusinde umukonela* (the boy who keeps on postponing *imbalu*). This song is illustrated in Figure 28.

Figure 28: *Umusinde Umukonela* Song



In this song, the initiate takes the lead part while his counterparts answer. The initiate ridicules his colleagues who postponed *imbalu* and calls them *bokoonela* (sing. *umukonela*), literally meaning “those who slept”. As *imbalu* welcomes boys into the council of elders, the initiates use the song in Figure 28 to

tell those who did not get circumcised not to come near them and step on their mighty clothes, the name used to denote the skins initiates wear during the performance of *inemba* dance.

Inemba dance forms a stage for *imbalu* initiates to be re-integrated into the society as “full” members. George Wekoye told me that the performance of *inemba* dance enables the “new man” to receive “full” authority from his clansmen (interview, January 29th, 2009). Wekoye stressed that this authority is symbolised by the skin of a young bull or he- goat given to the initiate as the traditional wear⁴⁴. In fact, when the Bagisu say: “*khura babana mungubo ngale*”, “putting initiates in the traditional wear”, it means performing *inemba* dance. In his theoretical views on meanings in rituals, Maurice Bloch (1989) argues that the meaning in rituals is embedded in the symbols used in the performance of rituals. In other words, to understand what the ritual signifies, one needs to investigate what the symbols communicate. Among the questions I set to examine meaning in *inemba* dance include: what does “putting the initiate in the traditional wear” signify? Does it mean that people who are circumcised but did not perform *inemba* dance do not qualify to wear the bull’s or goat’s skin? These questions were a springboard to the understanding of *inemba* as a stage for putting initiates into the “cloth of manhood”. Indeed, many informants told me that some *imbalu* candidates go to look for employment or return back to school as soon as they get healed. As such, they may not be present when *inemba* dance is performed.

According to Masata, skins are the “traditional” clothes for Bagisu men and whoever “enters” manhood is officially dressed in a skin (interview, February 3rd, 2009). Further, Wamayosi, the custodian of the reminding drum stressed that to be “clothed in the robe of manhood” demonstrates that one can sit with elders and discuss with them (interview, January 4th, 2009). Further, Samuel Waneroba argued that *inemba* is a confirmation that one should marry, begin his own home and be at the same footing with other clansmen (interview, March 2nd, 2009). To demonstrate their power, men wear skins at important meetings or functions including the performance of *imbalu* rituals. This explains why initiates

⁴⁴ Robert Kuloba told me that since *imbalu* is performed to initiate the boy into manhood, animals for sacrifices as well as skins to be worn while performing these rituals must be made from bulls and he-goats (interview, January 12th, 2009). Further, it should be noted that despite the fact that rams are commonly used in offering sacrifices during *imbalu* rituals, their skins are not preserved as traditional wear. I did not establish why rams’ skins are not worn among the Bagisu.

performing *inemba* dance sing to warn “boys” against stepping on their mighty cloth, “*ingubo*” since they declined to be circumcised so as to qualify to wear skins. In the section which follows, I discuss how the shapes, rhythms and pitches of the drums which accompany *inemba* dance participate in performing gender ideologies among the Bagisu. I present the long drum (*inemba*) and its medium counterpart as performing the man and woman bodies as understood by the Bagisu.

5.5. 5 *Indonyi* and *Inemba*: Woman and Man Drums

Inemba dance is accompanied by two drums and these are *inemba* and *indonyi*. *Inemba* is a long drum of about six to seven feet long. The upper end of this drum is covered while the lower end is open. The upper part of *inemba* drum is what is played. *Indonyi* is a medium size drum with both ends covered with the skin. However, the upper end of the *indonyi* drum is wider than the bottom one and just like *inemba* drum, the drummer plays the upper end of the *indonyi* drum. Apart from providing the rhythm and defining *inemba* dance, these drums demonstrate the general significance of the drum to the life of a Mugisu.

During fieldwork, informants explained to me that the shapes as well as the pitches and rhythms played on *inemba* and *indonyi* drums signify the man and woman identities among the Bagisu. Despite the fact that musical sounds in themselves do not communicate meaning, the interpretations of the Bagisu about the rhythms and pitches of the above drums portray the man and woman identities among the Bagisu. In addition, the shapes of *inemba* and *indonyi* drums depict the dominance of men over women, women as sexual objects as well as the structure of male and female bodies. One of the informants explained the symbolism of *inemba* and *indonyi* drums as follows:

Indonyi ibililila nabi nga barikho bakhuba inemba. Likoona lyeewe lili angaji khufura ingoma ingali. Nga umanyile, nga umusani ni mukhasi bari mubulili, umukhasi aba angaji. Alila nabi khufura umusani. Nga bari khubyawe, umusani afujilisa busa byeesi umukhasi ari khuloma. Shishinu shishindi, nga warekyelesile ingoma ifiti, ikanikha khu bye khukhukata.

Iloma eri "kumuli kwo mwoko kulikisa kwasuta Kitutu Bumakuma kwa mushisa lumia Bumatanda" Ne ngoma ngali iloma shishinu shitwela shonyeene eri: mushilima, mushilima, mushilima. Ari mushilima mweesi uri khuwulila mwo shimanyisa mukari mwo mukhasi. Nga uzya uri, uboona ma isi uri khuzya ta. Ushebulila busa uliyo (interview, January 25th, 2009).

The small drum dominates during the performance of *inemba* dance. Its pitches are higher than those of the long drum. As you know, when a man and woman are in bed, it is the woman who dominates. She “cries” more than the man. And as this is done, the man just confirms what the woman says. Another thing, when you listen to the small drum, it talks about sex. It says “*kumuli kwo mwoko kulikisa kwasuta Kitutu Bumakuma kwa mushisa lumia Bumatanda.*” [this literally means that the “cassava tuber is stiff, it carried Kitutu from the hill of Bumakuma and threw him in the valleys of Bumatanda]. The long drum just says one word “*mukulima, mukulima, mukulima*” [literally meaning “in the darkness”]. This darkness you are hearing about signifies the inside of a woman’s vagina. When you go there, you actually do not see where you are going. You only find yourself there.

Robert Kuloba, a member of the committee responsible for organizing *inemba* dance in Bulucheke Subcounty, discussed the symbolism in *inemba* and *indonyi* drums from the point of view of their shapes and pitches (interview, January 12th, 2009). To Kuloba, *inemba* drum resembles the man’s penis while *indonyi* is as decorated as the woman’s body. In relating the shape of the long drum to the man’s penis, Kuloba argued that this drum is made to stand just like an erect penis. *Inemba* drum is made to stand and face upwards symbolising that a normal man should have a penis which is always “up”. Further, Kuloba argued that the upper end of *inemba* drum resembles the “head” of the penis. More so, the demarcation of this “head” from the trunk of the drum is done by pegs called *tsimbibila* (singular, *lubibila*) and such demarcation is also seen on the man’s penis. Kuloba also told me that the long drum is “rough” and painted black to resemble the rough nature of the man’s body. While healing the wound after the

operation, initiates are encouraged to smear their penises with soot so as to make them black. The idea of “darkening” the penis black may explain Kuloba’s view that the black colour of *inemba* drum relates to the black colour of the penis. On the other hand, the medium drum appears smooth and decorated just like the “smooth bodies” of women.

Further, the materials from which these two drums are made communicate the identity of men and women among the Bagisu. Phares Masata, an elder charged with the custodianship of *inemba* dance told me that the long drum is covered with a skin of a wild animal called *imburu*, a monitor lizard (interview, February 3rd, 2009). According to Masata, *imburu* is a tough animal and it strikes its victim only once and kills it. Masata also argued that the head of *imburu* resembles the man’s penis. As such, *inemba* drum is made to denote that a “real” man must be “tough” and “wild”. Figure 29 shows the *inemba* drum (*inemba*).

Figure 29: *Inemba*, Man Drum Accompanying *Inemba* Dance



Photo by the researcher during field work in 2008

Unlike the *inemba* drum, the cow’s skin is used in the making of the medium drum (*indonyi*). Many informants told me that the shape of the medium

drum resonates with the woman body. Comparing the shape of the medium drum (*indonyi*) with the woman, Masata told me that this drum is made out of the cow's skins to portray the woman's calm nature (interview, February 3rd, 2009). According to Masata, unlike the monitor lizard which is "tough", cows are calm animals. In addition, the medium drum has no restrictions, anyone can touch it as opposed to *inemba* drum. Sulaiman Mawosya, a custodian of *inemba* dance told me that the medium drum can even be played by learners and Figure 30 is an illustration of the medium drum (*indonyi*).

Figure 30: *Indonyi*, Woman Drum Accompanying *Inemba* Dance



Photo by the researcher during field work in 2008

Despite the fact that the medium drum (*indonyi*) is high pitched, the size of the long drum (*inemba*) is more articulated in *inemba* dance performances. Kuloba stressed that the *inemba* is the dominant drum in the performance of *inemba* dance just like men are dominant in the affairs of the home among the Bagisu. To Kuloba, the high pitch of the medium drum symbolizes the quarrelsome nature of women. Kuloba stressed that:

Ari khakona khafiti khatima nabi khokho kheesi khulanga khuri khe luteete. Akho nikho kho mukhasi. Kale khane akho khapampurukha khazya akhunu. Ne sani nyeene ikhumulila muwene eri khuuuu. Pasi iyo niye umusani. Shekhabili, tsingoma etsi kyila khuloma khuri eyi sani, eyi ngasi, imbonekha nyeene iye ngoma isani. Ujiboona nyeene ngoma ngali. Ilimo ni busiro ate nga bajisuta basani bakali. Ne ngoma ifiti, iyoyo iye shikhasi, isi khuloma khuri ifiti yo, iye shikhasi eyo angaba ulolokho ryo wamanya busa ori mbo bakhasi bafana bari (interview, January 12th, 2009).

The high pitch that runs so fast is the one that is always crying. That is the woman's voice. Now that one flies and goes somewhere. But the real man speaks in a deep voice like *khuuuu*. That is the man. Secondly, what distinguishes between the man and woman drums is the appearance of the man drum. You just see the long drum. It is heavy and is carried by many men. But the small drum is a woman one. That small one, that woman one, you just see and know that women look like this.

As the above informants demonstrate, the symbolisms embedded in *inemba* and *indonyi* drums participate in constructing women and men identities among the Bagisu. More specifically, the *inemba* ritual and dance participate in concretizing manhood among the Bagisu.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that *imbalu* circumcision rituals are a process pervaded with music and dance, a discussion which has confirmed the musicking and dancing *imbalu* ritual as an integral process. I have also articulated how musicking and dancing *imbalu* is a gendered performance. The gendering process is performed through the roles the Bagisu assign to men and women in the performance of *imbalu* rituals, music and dance. Further, the symbolisms embedded in instruments as well as dance motifs, formations and themes perform the Bagisu gender ideology. Furthermore, the rituals, musics and dances perform the identities associated with men and women among the Bagisu. As illustrated in this chapter, the Bagisu regard women as weak, emotional and subjective people. As such, they are assigned roles which conform to the above identities. On the contrary, since men are considered to be strong, assertive, aggressive and

objective, they are assigned the role of playing instruments, leading songs and dances.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

In this study, I have examined how musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals is a stage for performing gender roles, identities and relations among the Bagisu of eastern Uganda. I have demonstrated that *imbalu* music is not merely the sound which can be captured on a recorder, but a process involving creation, performance and consumption of music; a process I have called “musicking”. I have also looked at the *imbalu* ritual as a process from the time the boy declares his candidature to the time he performs *inemba*, a dance which marks the climax of *imbalu* circumcision rituals. To articulate how gender and musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals interact, I discussed the song texts, instrumentation, dance motifs, formations, costuming and the themes embedded in dance motifs and formations as gendered.

This study is grounded in an ethnomusicology theory which posits a reciprocal relationship between music and culture by stressing that while music and dance define culture, culture informs the music and dance performed. In relation to *imbalu* circumcision rituals, I have argued that whereas *imbalu* circumcision music and dance may participate in defining the gender ideology of the Bagisu, gender informs the music and dances performed in *imbalu* circumcision rituals. I have also discussed the *imbalu* music and dance in relation to ethnomusicological theories which discuss the integration of music and dance as well as the mediation of ritual meaning through music and dance. By stressing that music and dance genres share names, scholars have emphasized that among the Bagisu, one cannot make a distinction between music and dance. Indeed, the Bagisu refer to the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals as “*khushina imbalu*”, “dancing *imbalu*”. Specifically, I have demonstrated how the various stages of the *imbalu* ritual cycle are mediated through music and dance and how *imbalu* music and dance define and perform the Bagisu gender ideology.

Basing on the research data, I have articulated that gender is a bio-social construction, which begins at birth. He have argued that by using sex as a “raw

material”, the Bagisu construct gender categories which are informed by the cultural, social, political, and economic structures. I have demonstrated that gender categories among the Bagisu are constructed, hierarchical and performed. Furthermore, this study discussed rituals as a religious performance, which is passed on from one generation to another.

Because there is inadequate literature on *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dance, I have reviewed related studies to have a point of departure for my discussion in Chapter Two. I have discussed scholars’ views in relation to content, context, methodologies and the trend of scholarship on rituals, music, dance and gender. More specifically, I have reviewed literature in relation to the following themes: 1) Gender in Uganda; 2) Rituals, Music and Dance; 3) *Imbalu* Rituals, Music and Dance and 4) Music, Dance, and Gender. Because most scholars have approached *imbalu* rituals from the anthropological perspective, this study is one of the ethnomusicological contributions on *imbalu* circumcision rituals among the Bagisu.

To gather data of this study, I employed a qualitative research design whose details are discussed in Chapter Three. Further, this study is ethnographic in nature. As such, I interacted with informants through use of snowball, stratified random and purposive sampling techniques. Among other informants, I interacted with ritual elders, circumcisers, custodians of *imbalu* ritual drums, song leaders and dancers to gather data. Specifically, I used the following tools of research during fieldwork: 1) Participant observation; 2) Interviews; 3) Photography, audio and visual recording; 4) Personal experience; and 5) Library research.

In addition, Chapter Three discussed how I analysed data, during and after fieldwork. To cross-check whether I had gathered data covering all the themes of my topic, I carried out in-field data analysis. Furthermore, the out-of field analysis involved transcriptions of interviews, data coding and thematisation. Among the most salient ethical codes I observed were: 1); concealing the identity of informants who requested anonymity; 2) requesting for informants’ permission before any recordings or photos were taken; and 3) recognizing the contribution of the informants to this study by acknowledging them.

In Chapter Four, I have discussed the contextual background which informs musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals. I examined the connection between the theoretical origin of the Bagisu as an ethnic group and

imbalu rituals. I have also examined how Bugisu environment has influenced the performance of *imbalu* circumcision rituals by determining when, where and how these rituals are performed. Due to the nature of the climate for example, *imbalu* rituals among the Bagisu are performed only in August and December, the months of harvests. To enhance an understanding on the symbolization in *imbalu* as discussed in Chapter Five, in Chapter Four, I discussed *imbalu* as a religious performance through the analysis of the covenants made, procedures followed and the evocation of spirits. Further, because gender interacts with the musicking and dancing *imbalu*, this chapter discusses the conceptualization of gender by considering the gendering process, roles, identities and relations of “men” and “women” among the Bagisu.

Chapter Five is a discussion of gendering in *imbalu* rituals, music and dance. This chapter is divided into three sections with the first section discussing *imbalu* rituals, musics and dances before what I have called pen-surgery; the ritual which involves the cutting of the foreskin from the penis. Under this phase, I examined the reminding rituals (*khushebusa*) and discussed how they “remind” boys about the need to become men. I also discussed *isonja* dance as a site for testing manhood through the way candidates dance as well as the messages embedded in the songs sang during the performance of *isonja* dance. I also demonstrated that *imbalu* candidates visit their relatives as a way of searching for manhood (*khuwenza busani*). Music and dance in this phase of *imbalu* are used as a stage to communicate the boy’s intentions of becoming a “man”.

The second section is what I have called the pen-surgery stage and includes rituals of brewing beer (*khukoya busera*) done by the boy; a role which is preserved for only men. Other rituals in the pen-surgery stage include smearing (*khuakha kamamela*) which is a rite through which male traits are enforced, cutting the boy’s hair (*khubeka litsune*) by the paternal aunt and visiting cultural sites. There is also the ritual of visiting maternal clans to affirm one’s relationship with the maternal relatives, visiting the sacred swamp as way of coming into “fellowship” with the ancestral spirits of *imbalu*. My discussion on this section is concluded with pen-surgery, a ritual where the boy’s foreskin of the penis is cut. As a matter of fact, the pen-surgery ritual signifies “entering” manhood.

As I have demonstrated, one cannot separate music and dance from *imbalu* rituals; the ritual informs the music and dance and music and dance define these

rituals. The last section of this chapter is the cultural reintegration stage; when the candidate is reunited with the community after pen-surgery. This stage involves the rituals of purification where manhood is defined, “walking” the village paths (*khujenda tsinzila*), “hatching” ritual (man “hatching” from seclusion), and the performance of *inemba*, which is both a dance and convocal ritual. Indeed, *inemba* dance is the “cloth” of manhood since it is during the performance of this dance that initiates are officially clothed in the skin.

As demonstrated throughout the last section of Chapter Five, the initiates portray themselves as triumph “men” who have accomplished the cultural debt of the Bagisu. Music and dance form a platform for performing the identity of these new men. It is articulated that gender pervades *imbalu* circumcision rituals, music and dances through symbolization of the instruments, song texts, dance motifs, formations and themes imbedded in *inemba* dance motifs.

6.2 Conclusions

This study established that *imbalu* circumcision rituals are a foundation on which the Bagisu construct their identity. As this study reveals, the Bagisu identify themselves as a “race” of “men” (*basani*) as opposed to the uncircumcising tribes who are regarded as “boys” (*basinde*). Further, through *imbalu* circumcision rituals, the old generation passes over responsibilities of “men” to the young generation. Because of the peoples’ hold on *imbalu*, it may be impossible for these rituals to be abolished.

Further, this study confirmed the hypothesis that musicking and dancing *imbalu* circumcision rituals are a platform for performing gender roles, identities and relations among the Bagisu. Indeed, gender pervades in the song texts, symbolisms in drum pitches and shapes as well as dance motifs, formations, costuming and themes embedded in the dance motifs and formations. Embedded in *imbalu* music and dance are traits the Bagisu use to define men and women. Through dressing in animal skins, being smeared with yeast, and carrying heavy drums among other items, men portray themselves as stronger beings than women. In addition, men lead songs as well as preside over *imbalu* dances

because they consider themselves the controllers of the Bagisu society and everything that occurs there including *imbalu* rituals.

This study revealed that there is a reciprocal relationship between gender on the one hand and music and dance accompanying *imbalu* rituals on the other hand. Whereas *imbalu* music and dance may define the gender of the Bagisu, gender informs the music and dances performed in *imbalu* rituals. In addition, much as costumes, songs texts, performance practice, dance formations and motifs enact and affirm gender roles, identities and relations among the Bagisu, some women and men use *imbalu* music and dance as platforms to contest roles and identities society assigns to them.

Gender is performed and just like other performances, it is not fixed. It keeps on changing depending on the performance context. This view concretises the argument that gender categories are only specific to particular places, contexts and times. Because gender roles, identities and relations are not fixed, men and women constantly negotiate their positions in society. More so, gender is a process which begins with the biological determination of sex and goes on until someone becomes an ancestor, after death. As demonstrated by this study, gender hierarchies among the Bagisu start from the newly born child through adolescence, manhood, elderhood to ancestorhood. This process is performed through the musicking and dancing *imbalu*-- articulating roles, identities and relations between men and women.

6.3 Recommendations

Though a number of scholars have written about *imbalu* rituals, these rituals provide many other avenues where scholars can conduct more research. Among the controversial issues about male circumcision is whether it prevents or accelerates the spread of HIV/AIDS. Future scholars should investigate how *imbalu* rituals can accelerate or reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS by considering the whole process of the ritual and not just the pen-surgery ritual. The HIV/AIDS activists only refer to the pen-surgery ritual in their arguments for circumcision and yet *imbalu* involves numerous rituals and musics and dances.

Further, there is need to investigate the varieties which exist in *imbalu* rituals in the various parts of Bugisu. The present researcher only studied *imbalu* as it is performed in Bududa and Mbale Districts, southern and central Bugisu only. Future researchers can examine what accounts for the diversion in the performance of *imbalu* music and dances in Bugisu.

The Bagisu believe that *imbalu* originated from the Kalenjins of western Kenya, the place where Nabarwa, the woman who introduced *imbalu* came from. As the legends discussed in this dissertation suggest, Nabarwa was also circumcised. As such, there is need for a study to ascertain this allegation. Future scholars should carry out research to examine how circumcision rituals among these two communities are performed. Moreover, since Nabarwa, a woman was circumcised and yet the Bagisu do not perform female circumcision, such a study may be significant in explicating why the Bagisu do not circumcise women. The question of establishing whether the Bagisu and Kalenjins speak the same language dialect is significant in understanding circumcision rituals in these two communities.

Further, *imbalu* is considered as drama and yet since this study was beyond the scope of *imbalu* as drama, future scholars can investigate this area. Scholars may look at the performance of *imbalu* rituals, music and dance and examine the dramatic aspect in them. As a matter of fact, scholars should investigate how the dramatic aspect of *imbalu* performs gender among the Bagisu.

Lastly, *imbalu* music and dances have transcended their original contexts and are performed in inter-schools' music, dance and drama competitions, political rallies, and disco halls. Yet, *imbalu* musics and dances are considered to be sacred performances, a view which brings to the fore the question as to why these musics and dances are secularized. As such, future researchers need to investigate the secularisation of *imbalu* music and dances. Among the questions scholars should investigate include ways of how gender is re-performed or redefined in these contexts.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Glossary

<i>Bamasaba</i>	another name for the Bagisu
<i>Basani</i>	men, circumcised males
<i>Basinde</i>	boys, who are not yet circumcised
<i>Bugisu</i>	the region of the Bagisu and it comprises the Districts of Mbale, Sironko, Manafwa and Bududa
<i>Gisu</i>	a generic term meaning the Bagisu people, their culture or their language
<i>Imbalu</i>	music, dances and all the rituals performed while initiating boys into manhood among the Bagisu
<i>Kadodi</i>	both a drum set and dance genre accompany <i>imbalu</i> Rituals
<i>Khotsa</i>	the maternal uncle. He is the brother of the candidate's mother
<i>Khushina</i>	dancing
<i>Khushina Imbalu</i>	dancing <i>imbalu</i> , a concept used to denote that <i>imbalu</i> rituals are highly integrated with music and dance
<i>Khasanisani</i>	another title for describing a man who does not live to the expectations of the Bagisu
<i>Khukhwinjila imbalu</i>	literally denoting “entering” <i>imbalu</i> . It denotes the fact that <i>imbalu</i> is the gateway to manhood
<i>Kumubono</i>	the general term used to denote the knife
<i>Kumusambwa</i>	the spirit
<i>Kumusambwa</i>	
<i>kwa nanyembe</i>	the spirit of circumcising. It possesses and bestows one the power to circumcise

<i>Inemba</i>	A dance performed to mark the climax of <i>imbalu</i> Rituals. <i>Inemba</i> is also a long drum used to accompany <i>inemba</i> dance
<i>Isonja</i>	the initial dance performed to begin <i>imbalu</i> rituals among the Bagisu
<i>Inyembe</i>	the knife used to circumcise <i>imbalu</i> candidates
<i>Lugisu</i>	the language spoken by the Bagisu
<i>Lumasaba</i>	another name for the language spoken by the Bagisu
<i>Lutalo</i>	war and going through <i>imbalu</i> is likened to someone preparing for war
<i>Senje</i>	the paternal aunt of the candidate. She is the sister of the candidate's father
<i>Umusani burwa</i>	title used to denote a “real” man in the context of the Bagisu
<i>Umusani Mateleesi</i>	man who does not fulfil men's roles as prescribed by the Gisu society
<i>Umushebi</i>	A circumciser

APPENDIX 2: Research Interview Guide

a) Initiates who were circumcised in 2008

1. What motivated you to demand for *imbalu*?
2. Did you go to the hospital or you were circumcised at home?
3. Can you narrate to me the activities that you went through from the beginning of the circumcision year up to the time you were circumcised?
4. Can you sing some of the songs you performed during *imbalu*?
5. How did you learn the songs you performed in *imbalu*?
6. What messages were you communicating through your songs?
7. Narrate to me the activities that happened on the day you were circumcised?
8. Tell me what the elders told you during the smearing ritual?
9. What did the elders tell you on the day of circumcision?
10. How did you feel before and immediately after the operation?
11. What do you plan to do now that you are a circumcised person?

b) Circumcisers (*Bashebi*)

1. Tell me the specific roles you play in *imbalu* circumcision rituals?
2. How did you acquire the work of circumcising boys?
3. Who taught you this work and why?
4. Can you tell me how you carry out the operation?
5. How do you feel before and after circumcising the boy?
6. What happens to candidates who fall down during the course of the operation?
7. What happens if the boy you are circumcising touches you?
8. What happens if the boy urinates on you or defecates?
9. How do you perform the purification ritual?
10. What happens during this ritual?
11. Can you say some of the admonitions you say to the initiates during purification?
12. Why do you choose the hoe, machete, spear, wood with fire, an axe and the knife you use to circumcise the boy for the performance of the purification ritual?
13. What is the meaning behind the above items?
14. What happens if someone misses the purification ritual?

15. How do you purify boys who cry, touch you, urinate or defecate during the operation?
16. Do you ever get to meet and talk to the boys you circumcise?
17. What do you tell them?

c) Song leaders

1. What is the importance of songs in *imbalu* rituals?
2. Who chooses the people who lead songs in *imbalu* rituals?
3. Can you tell some of the features of the people who are supposed to lead songs in *imbalu*?
4. How do you learn the songs you sing to the *imbalu* candidates?
5. What are the major issues you address in the songs you sing to the *imbalu* candidates?
6. Can you sing any of the songs you sing to candidates when they are performing *isonja* dance?
7. What messages does the song you sing in 4 above communicate?
8. Can you sing any of the songs you sing when candidates are visiting their relatives?
9. Why do you sing different songs at different stages of *imbalu*?
10. Can you one of the songs you sing when candidates are taken to the maternal clans?
11. Which songs do you perform when candidates are being taken for pen-surgery?
12. Can you sing one of these songs?
13. Who leads songs when *imbalu* initiates are “walking the village paths” and why?
14. Who leads songs when initiates are performing the “hatching” ritual and why?
15. Do you remember one of the songs you sang during the performance of the “hatching” ritual?
16. Who leads songs during the performance of *inemba* dance?
17. Which songs do you sing when candidates are performing *inemba* dance?
18. Can you sing one of these songs?
19. What messages are communicated through *inemba* songs?

d) Custodians of *inemba* drums and dance

1. During which time of the year is *inemba* performed and why?
2. Who performs this dance?
3. Why is *inemba* performed?
4. Can you describe to me the process (stages) of *inemba* dance?
5. What do people wear when performing *inemba* dance?
6. Why do initiates wear animal skins?
7. From which animals are these skins made?
8. Why are the animals you have mentioned chosen?
9. Can you tell me the rhythms played on *inemba* drum?
10. What do they communicate?
11. What does the small drum say?
12. What happens if the newly circumcised boy does not perform *inemba* dance?
13. Can you tell me the taboos associated with the *inemba* drum?

e) Other *imbalu* ritual executors (yeast man and Clan leader)

1. What is *imbalu*?
2. Why do the Bagisu perform *imbalu* rituals?
3. Can you describe to me the process of *imbalu* rituals?
4. What are the main rituals performed between the months of January and April?
5. Which rituals are performed between May and July?
6. What are the rituals performed during the month of August?
7. Which rituals are performed after pen-surgery?
8. Now, can you describe to me how the smearing ritual is done?
9. Which items are used during the performance of this ritual?
10. Why do they use yeast?
11. What do you tell candidates during the smearing ritual?
12. Who is supposed to be in charge of the smearing ritual?
13. Why is the nature of the person described in 12 above chosen?

f) Church leaders, Politicians, teachers and community educators

1. What do you say about the performance of *imbalu* rituals?
2. What role do you think imbalu rituals play in society?
3. What happens to the Bagisu who dodge *imbalu*?
4. How should *imbalu* be performed?
5. How should a circumcised person behave?
6. As a church leader, what do you say about the performance of *imbalu* rituals?

APPENDIX 3: Events Attended

Date	Event	Participants	Venue	Researcher's Role
Dec 22nd, 2008	<i>Kadodi</i> Dance Performance	Drummers, <i>imbalu</i> candidates, elders, children, men and women	Kikholo trading Centre (Bukigai Sub County)	Participant Observer
Dec 23rd, 2008	Circumcision of candidates	<i>Kadodi</i> Band members, <i>imbalu</i> candidates elders, men, women and children	Bushiyei Parish (Bulucheke Sub County)	Led songs and danced with candidates as they were taken for pen-surgery
Dec 27th, 2008	<i>Kadodi</i> Dance Performance	Drummers, <i>imbalu</i> candidates, men, women and children	Bunamubi trading centre	Participant Observer
Dec 28th, 2008	Purification ritual	Circumciser and initiates parents	Bumasata Parish	Observer
Dec 29th, 2008	Smearing of candidates with yeast	Elder in charge of yeast, clan leader, clansmen, women and children	Bushiyei Parish	Participant Observer
Dec 30th, 2008	<i>Kadodi</i> Dance Performance	<i>Kadodi</i> Band members, <i>imbalu</i> candidates, elders, men, women and children	Kikholo trading centre	Dancer, led songs and observed what was going on
Dec 31st, 2008	Circumcision of candidates	Circumciser, candidates, elders, men, women and	Bunamubi parish (Bukigai Sub	Participant Observer

		children	County)	
Jan 5th, 2009	Organised a <i>Kadodi</i> rehearsal	<i>Kadodi</i> Band members	Bumasata Parish (Bulucheke Sub County)	Playing the smallest drum. Asking questions and making notes.
Feb 20th, 2009	<i>Inemba</i> Dance Performance	<i>Inemba</i> drummers, elders, members of Bulucheke <i>inemba</i> organising committee, security personnel, business people, <i>imbalu</i> initiates, their parents, men, women and children	Bumasata Parish	Participant Observer
Feb 22nd, 2009	<i>Inemba</i> Dance Performance	<i>Imbalu</i> initiates, <i>inemba</i> dance drummers, security personnel, business people, men, women and children.	Buchunya Parish (Bushika Sub County)	Participant Observer

APPENDIX 4: List of Informants

Name of Informant	Date of Research	Position/Status of Informant	Place of Research
Bikala John	Feb 20 th , 2009	Clan Leader	Bituwa <i>inemba</i> Performance Venue
Fungo Wilson	June 20 th , 2009	<i>Imbalu</i> Candidate, 2008	Bumasata Parish (Bulucheke Sub County)
Kamukama Boas	Feb 20 th , 2009	<i>Imbalu</i> Candidate, 2008	Bituwa <i>inemba</i> Performance Venue
Kanyanya Johnson	Jan 18 th , 2010	Primary School Teacher	Bumasata Parish (Bulucheke Sub County)
Kuloba Robert	Jan 12 th , 2009	<i>Uwe kumwendo</i> (Gourd bearer)	Bumasata Parish (Bulucheke Sub County)
Kuloba Wilson	April 29 th , 2009	Secondary School Teacher	Bituwa Village
Kutosi George	Feb 27 th , 2009	<i>Kadodi</i> Player	Mbale town
Kutosi Paul	Feb 20 th , 2009	Dancer	Bituwa Village
Maare Patrick	June 20 th , 2009	<i>Imbalu</i> Candidate, 2008	Bumasata Parish
Mabala Elisaphani	March 5 th , 2009	<i>Uwakha kamamela</i> (smears candidates with yeast)	Bumwalye Parish
Magomu Willy	May 30 th , 2009	Business man selling CDs and tapes	Mbale town
Majeme Malachi		Parish Chief	Bumasata Parish

Makayi Stephen	June 16 th , 2009	Member, Bugisu Cultural Board	Mbale town
Makulo John	Jan 25 th , 2009	Musician	Bumasata Parish
Makulo Samuel	Dec 30 th , 2008	<i>Kadodi</i> Band Leader	Bumabiye (Bulucheke Sub County)
Masaba Idi	May 30 th , 2009	Musician/ Circumciser	Mbale town
Masata Phares Masanga	Feb 3 rd , 2009	Organizer of <i>inemba</i> dance in Bumasata Parish	Bituwa Village
Mashipwe Charles	Jan 24 th , 2010	Primary School Headteacher	Bumwalye Parish
Masibo Harriet	March 2 nd , 2009	Community educator	Mbale town
Matanda Bosco Masaya	March 10 th , 2009	Primary School Headteacher	Bumasata Parish
Matanda Isaac	Jan 10 th , 2009	Secondary School Teacher (was also a <i>kadodi</i> player)	Bumasata Parish
Matanda Vincent	March 10 th , 2009	Pentecostal church leader	Bumasata Parish
Matanda Yekoyasa	March 13 th , 2009	Primary School Teacher	Bituwa
Mataya Dadeo	Feb 2 nd , 2009	Musician	Bumwalye
Matseketse David	May 9 th , 2009	Medical personnel	Mbale town
Mawoya Sulaimani	Feb 20 th , 2009	Player of <i>inemba</i> drum	Bituwa <i>inemba</i> Performance Venue
Muduwa Juliet	Feb 27 th , 2009	Dancer and Primary School Teacher	Mbale town
Mukhwana	Jan 4 th , 2009	<i>Uwe kumwendo</i>	Buwali Parish

Andrew		(custodian of the gourd)	(Bubiita Sub County)
Mukhwana Benayo	Feb 10 th , 2009	Religious Leader	Bituwa Village
Murekyere Charles	Dec 28 th , 2008	<i>Ukyesa basinde</i> (escorts candidates to cultural sites and maternal clans)	Bituwa Village
Mutunga Gabriel	Dec 28 th , 2008	<i>Ukyesa basinde</i> (Escorts candidates)	Bituwa Village
Nabulwala Betty Kitongo	Jan 17 th , 2009	Local Councilor	Bumwalye Parish
Nabulwala Jenipher	Jan 4 th , 2009	Musician and Dancer	Buwali (Bubiita Sub County)
Nabutuwa Mary	Jan 4 th , 2009	Musician and Dancer	Buwali (Bubiita Sub County)
Nakasala Eric	March 2 nd , 2009	Student	Mbale town
Nakhokho Stephen	Dec 28 th , 2008	Anglican Church Leader	Bumwalye Parish (Bulucheke Sub County)
Namanda Ben	Feb 25 th , 2009	<i>Inemba</i> drum player	Buchunya Parish (Bushika Sub County)
Namanda Bumali	March 5 th , 2009	<i>Umumiisi</i> (Clan Leader)	Bumwalye Parish
Namono Jenipher	May 24 th , 2009	House wife	Wabigalo, Kampala
Namwano Aidah	March 12 th , 2009	Primary School Headteacher	Bushiya Parish (Bulucheke Sub County)
Namwano Doreen	April 12 th , 2009	Student	Makerere University

Namwolya Fred	June 15 th , 2009	Musician	Bumasata Parish
Nanjeshe Aidah	May 24 th , 2009	House wife	Mbale town
Nandutu Esther	Feb 20 th , 2009	Dancer	Bituwa
Napaya Fred	May 20 th , 2009	Community Educator	Wabigalo, Kampala
Neumbe Aidah	March 13 th , 2009	Primary School Teacher	Bituwa
Wabuna Difasi	May 7 th , 2009	Business man	Kampala
Wabuyela John	June 4 th , 2009	<i>Uwakha kamamela</i> (Yeast man)	Bumutoto, Mbale
Walela David	Feb 2 nd , 2009	Religious Leader	Bumwalye Primary School
Walimbwa Yosia	June 4 th , 2009	Circumciser	Bumutoto, Mbale
Wakamala Julius	March 12 th , 2009	<i>Uwakha kamamela</i> (Yeast Man)	Bumasata Parish
Wakiberu Wilson	Feb 20 th , 2009	Chairman, Bulucheke <i>Inemba</i> Cultural Committee	Bituwa <i>inemba</i> Performance Venue
Wakinya Wilson	June 15 th , 2009	Community Educator	Buchunya Parish (Bushika Sub County)
Wamaniala Reuben	Dec 28 th , 2008	<i>Uwakha Kamamela</i> (smears candidates with yeast)	Bituwa Village
Wamayosi Phillip	Jan 4 th , 2009	Clan Leader, <i>Uwe kumwendo</i> (Gourd bearer) and Custodian of the reminding drum	Buwali Parish (Bubiita Sub County)
Wanakolo Yakobo	June 20 th , 2009	<i>Uwekumwendo</i> (Gourd bearer)	Bumwalye Parish
Waneroba Samuel	March 2 nd , 2009	Primary School Teacher	Mbale town

Wanendeya Anthony	May 10 th , 2009	Community Educator	Mbale town
Wanyera Stephen	Jan 18 th , 2009	<i>Ukyesa basinde</i> (escorts candidates)	Bumasata Parish
Wanzoya Hamidu	May 30 th , 2009	Circumciser	Mbale town
Watsulatsu Samuel	Feb 27 th , 2009	Member, Bugisu Cultural Board	Mbale town
Wanzunula Nathan	Dec 20 th , 2008	Clan leader	Bumasata Parish
Weanga George	Jan 3 rd , 2009	Anglican Church Leader	Buchunya (Bushika Sub County)
Webisa Yoram	June 21 st , 2009	Church Leader	Mbale town
Wekoye George	Jan 29 th , 2009	<i>Uwekumwendo</i> (Custodian of the Gourd)	Bumasata Parish
Wesonga Michael	Jan 25 th , 2009	Custodian of <i>isonja</i> dance	Bumasata Parish

APPENDIX 5: Letter of Introduction from Makerere University

MAKERERE

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Department of Music Dance and Drama

15 December 2008

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

RE: DOMINIC MAKWA

Dominic Makwa is a student of Makerere University. He is on a Masters Programme in the Department of Music Dance and Drama Makerere University.

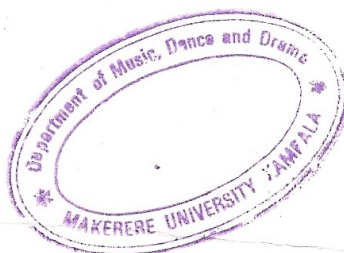
He is doing research on the topic: *Musicking and Dancing Imbalu Ritual (Khushina Imbalu): Performing Gender among the Bagisu of Eastern Uganda.*

I will be grateful if you can render him the necessary assistance he needs.

Yours sincerely

M. Mirembe Ntangaare

Dr. Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare
Head of Department



In future correspondence please quote the reference number above

APPENDIX 6: A Sample of Informant Consent Form

Thank you for accepting to share with me your ideas and experiences on *imbalu* circumcision rituals. The information you have given me is geared toward writing a dissertation which is part of the requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Arts in Music (Ethnomusicology) of Makerere University. By signing this form, you give me permission to use this information (interviews, photographs, songs and dances) in my dissertation. Being an academic work, my dissertation may be published in future and therefore be read by other people. As an informant, you will deserve the right to access and read my book. However, there are no monetary compensations now or in any future time.

I, _____ hereby

(Please print your name in capital letters)

allow Dominic D.B Makwa to use the data (interviews, photographs, songs and dances) he has collected from me on _____ for his dissertation entitled: **Musicking and Dancing *Imbalu* Circumcision Rituals (*Khushina Imbalu*): Performing Gender among the Bagisu of eastern Uganda.**

I authorize Makwa to edit, copy, use and re-use these materials in whole or part for public presentations and publications.

I understand that I will not receive monetary compensation now or at any future time for the rights I have granted herein.

Signature _____ Date _____

Permanent Address _____

Telephone Number _____