

**APPROPRIATION OF KIPSIGIS IDIOM IN SELECTED GOSPEL SONGS OF  
JOEL ARAP KIMETTO**

**JOHN CHERUIYOT KORIR**

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## DECLARATION

This project is my original work and it has not been submitted for examination in another university:

Candidate: John Cheruiyot Korir

Sign: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This project has been submitted with our approval as University supervisors:

First Supervisor: Prof. Monica Mweseli

Sign: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Supervisor: Dr. Joseph Muleka

Sign: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

To my parents Wesley and Sarah Kipkorir,

You taught us the value of hard work.

To my wife Nancy,

Your love and patience inspired me.

To our daughters Faith and Joy,

Your faith in me brought us joy in hard times.

To our son Patrick Jnr,

You couldn't have arrived at a better time.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Culture is the central factor in life of societies. One way through which culture is preserved and disseminated for posterity is through music. While it may be argued that music in general plays this critical role, gospel music in Africa was designed to promulgate western culture through the church. This created tensions between the two cultures and the African converts faced a crisis of identity. This study has examined this constellation in a critical appraisal of Joel Arap Kimetto's gospel songs whose music borrows Kipsigis idioms that were central in the community's cultural practices. In this study, I have focused my inquiry on the nature and functions of Kipsigis traditional idiom in the contemporary gospel music and how the artist's strategy of appropriating the idiom diffuses tensions between the Kipsigis culture and Christianity. From the observations obtained from the two scenarios, I have reflected on the intersection of the two cultures and evaluated the apparent harmony and tension of the traditional idiom appropriated to a Christian space. I have analyzed 21 of his popular songs that exhibit these characteristics and concluded that Kimetto utilizes the new Christian space to propagate both Christian and non-Christian agenda.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The use of African traditional idiom in contemporary gospel music 'instills an appreciation of the positive elements in traditional African thought, and exposes the falsity of Western society's claim to be better or more functional than African society'. (Mweseli: 8). African culture and tradition is a rich deposit of idiomatic expressions that are loaded in meaning with ambiguities that only the speakers of that language understand. The use of these idioms in the African oral tradition addressed a wide range of social, political and economic issues. African society, predominantly oral, (p) reserved and restituted its values, customs and history through its idiom. This idiom, encapsulating values, customs and history, was best remembered and safely stored in form of song and/or narrative.

Many studies in gospel music have focused mainly on African secular music (songs) as the main appropriator of the African idiom and little attention has been given to Kenyan gospel music in general and Kipsigis in particular. Studies that have attempted appropriation in gospel music have focused on the influence of western culture on African music. It is on this basis that this study aimed to investigate how Joel Kimetto's songs appropriate Kipsigis traditional idiom in their creation and performances.

The advent of Christianity in Africa was to provide an entry point for the Imperial domination in the continent. To achieve this, the existing social, economic and



governance structures that held the communities together were dismantled to pave way for colonial formal administrative structures. The traditional religious worship, song being a component, was one of the targets of the imperialist through its agents, the missionaries (Flolu in Sida studies 2004). In most African communities, the song was, and still is used as a means of preserving and transmitting values as well as to project the community's world view. This study therefore seeks to evaluate contemporary Kalenjin songs produced and performed by Joel Kimetto and their appropriation of the cultural idioms in the Christian context. His songs, in my view, have a dual function; to evangelize the Kalenjin nation and more importantly, to reconstitute the culture of the community. Romanus Egudu, in a paper titled *Defense of culture in the poetry of Christopher Okigbo*, argues:

One of the worst effects of colonialism and colonial evangelization in West Africa is the suppression of the indigenous West African culture in general and the indigenous religious worship in particular. The effects of the early Christian Missionaries were directed at estranging the natives from their indigenous religion and 'planting' in the imported Christian religion. (14)

Most African cosmological views suffered relegation and insubordination when Christianity positioned itself at a privileged position before, during, and long after colonialism. The Christian form of worship pushed the African religious form to the periphery, terming it evil. In the process, indigenous worship song was discouraged and its place taken by Christian hymns while churches replaced traditional religious shrines. The mode of worship also changed significantly where traditional dances and tunes were

condemned as evil. While traditional religious music demanded dancing, hymns were sung with no or little controlled movements. The instruments were not spared either, neither were the props. The new Christian songs were slow paced and with totally foreign beats and rhythms that were alien to the African converts. This is affirmed by D C. Obadike in the preface to *Things Fall Apart* when he says:

The role of Christian missionaries in the conquest of Africa is sometimes underestimated. Missionaries were the first foreigners to venture inland in fairly large numbers, and their accounts of what they found helped stimulate imperial ambitions...Yet if necessary, missionaries were prepared to destroy the entire system of Igbo customs and beliefs in order to convert the people to Christianity. (xli)

In most African communities, the customs and beliefs formed the basic fabric of the culture of the people. By targeting the customs of the people, the missionaries knew that they would easily subdue them and thus make domination easy. Among the Kipsigis, a sub-tribe of the Kalenjin community, the predominant missionary organizations were the African Inland Mission (AIM) and the Roman Catholic Church. These missions succeeded in dismantling the Kalenjin religious worship and shrines. Indeed the current site where Tenwek Mission Hospital in Bomet County stands was one of the shrines used by the community (Respondent 3). The African Gospel Mission dispossessed the locals their shrine and made it their mission center. This campaign went further to 'retire African musical instruments from active performance and reduced them to silent

inhabitants of private and museum collections under the category of material culture’ (Masolo, 355)

The fusion of the two religious elements which are supposed to be in opposition, achieved through appropriation of Kipsigis idiom in Kimetto’s songs was the focus of this study.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Gospel music is a huge industry that commands a huge following in Africa and in Kenya in particular. Gospel musicians influence their audiences through their music. The study of their songs offers an insight into the creativity of artists on one hand and how they shape society on the other.

As observed by Albrecht (Davidson, *et al*), literature plays an important social function in society. He opines that literature reflects impacts and controls society. The song as a genre of literature entertains and in the process reflect and impact on society because of “its ability to draw attention to the word as and by affecting the body emotionally” (Annette Kierkegaard, 2004.) The song can therefore be viewed as an effective mode of controlling the human emotions and influencing the actions of individuals for predetermined desired goals. Gospel music targets the emotions of the listeners and influences their thinking and actions.

In discussing *Tradition and Modernity in Music*, Stig-Magnus Thorsen argues that music has its own way of thinking and communicating and that “it is a reflection of changes in society” (9). Thorsen further observes that African traditional instruments that were once regarded as primitive, “means a great deal today in the interaction between tradition, spirituality and current politics” (10).

Investigating the traditional idiom in gospel songs is compelling when the community in question is known to have initially resisted Christian religion. This is because the community viewed Christianity as an enemy to their culture and one that advocated for another ‘God’ not known to them. The traces of traditional idiom in the Christian music composed and performed by Joel Arap Kimetto raises pertinent questions that this study interrogated.

In that respect, this study sought to answer the following questions.

- Which Kipsigis idioms does Kimetto appropriate in his songs?
- How has Kimetto appropriated Kipsigis idioms in his songs?
- What are the results of such appropriation?

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

- a. To identify Kipsigis idioms that Kimetto has appropriated in his songs.
- b. To establish how Kimetto’s songs appropriate Kipsigis idiom.
- c. To evaluate the results of such appropriation.

#### **1.4 Hypotheses**

- Kimetto's gospel songs appropriate Kipsigis idioms.
- Kimetto's songs acculturate Christian music through appropriation of Kipsigis idiom.
- The appropriation creates harmony between Christianity and Kipsigis culture.

#### **1.5 Justification**

Song is an important component of oral literature that embodies the value system and the world view of a community. This study is justified to provide an insight into the aesthetics in Kipsigis culture as employed in gospel songs and at the same time add to theoretical arguments on the acculturation of gospel songs.

This study aimed at understanding the Kipsigis community through Kimetto's songs and how the community's culture is in harmony with the Christian tradition. It carried out critical analysis of the songs and introduced them for future investigation. While attempts have been made in the study of gospel songs and their literariness, most of the studies undertaken have focused more on the appropriation of the western style in local (African) gospel music. More so, no attempt has been made on this particular artist.

Kimetto's songs appeal to a wide range of audiences irrespective of age or gender. Kimetto's performances are appreciated both in Christian church settings and other social settings like weddings, pass out parades for initiates, burial ceremonies as well as political rallies. He is celebrated across the Kalenjin community in Kenya and widely

quoted in formal and informal gatherings. He is invited to perform in different places in Kenya and the Diasporas. The contemporary style used by other artists which has a lot of influence from western music and instrumentation has not pushed him offstage. Kimetto's cultural flavor gives his songs the uniqueness and originality that is almost impossible to challenge. In essence, he has created his own space in gospel music among the Kalenjin that can be termed canonical. No wonder he has remained unchallenged in the last two and a half decades.

This study was therefore justified on the following grounds: firstly, from the literature review, while studies have been conducted on other artists, there is no comprehensive study of Kimetto's songs. Secondly, literature review confirmed that studies conducted on artists have focused on appropriation of gospel music in political spaces and the appropriation of western style in Kenyan gospel songs with little attention given to the traditional idiom in contemporary gospel songs. Lastly, Kimetto utilizes the Christian space to reconstitute and preserve Kipsigis values, tradition and culture. This study shall therefore contribute to appreciation of aesthetic cultural elements in contemporary gospel music evident in their creation and performances. It shall also open discussion on the relationship between African culture and western European culture encapsulated in Christian religion.

### **1.6 Definition of terms**

**Appropriation** shall be used to refer to the adaptation of idioms, tunes and styles of a community in another context that is otherwise different from that community.

**Idiom** is the use of words peculiar to a given language; the language or dialect of a given people, region or class (Mweseli 186). In this study, I will use the term to refer to all that use of language including imagery as used by the people speaking Kipsigis dialect within the Kalenjin nation.

**Kalenjin** is a term used to refer to the family of tribes in the Rift Valley region of Kenya. Simatei observes that there are instances of mutual linguistic and cultural incomprehensibility but agrees that there is “pan- ethnic Kalenjin consciousness” (11). According to JoseahArap Sang, the current Kalenjin Council of Elders chairman, the sub-tribes stand at ten, namely, Kipsigis, Nandi, Tugen, Keiyo, Marakwet, Sabaot, Pokot, Ogiek, Sengwer and Terikek.

“**Nation**” in the context of this study will refer to the geographical location that brings together the various Kalenjin dialects as explained in the definition above. The Kalenjin uses the term “*bororiet*” to refer to their collective identity defined by their geographical location as well as their shared idioms.

### **1.7 Scope and Limitations**

Due to constraint of time, it was not possible to study all of Kimetto’s songs since he has a collection of over 200 songs recorded in 19 albums. This study therefore focused on 21 songs which were selected based on their relevance to the objectives. Since this study has performance component, I attended three live performances for the purpose of evaluating the context as well as establish the audiences’ appraisal of the songs. Attending live performances also gave me an opportunity to interview the audience as well as members of the artist singing troupe.

## 1.8 Literature Review

I reviewed the following works with a view of establishing how insightful studies in this field have treated songs in general and from Kenya in particular. The ideas from these studies validate the argument that firstly, music can be used as a repository of communal values and at the same time a means of worship in the religious context. Secondly, the studies portray the role of the artist as essential in shaping the identity of a people, ridiculing vices and inculcating virtues in society. Thirdly music can be used to protest an ideology and philosophy that is deemed oppressive to the subject society. Although studies have been carried out in this area, the focus has been more on the influence of western culture on African songs as opposed to how African idiom embedded in the African culture has aided the understanding of western religion in Africa.

In *A Study Okot p' Bitek's poetry*, Monica Mweseli analyzes Okot's independence from western form of style and the vision that his imagination takes. According to Mweseli, Okot uses proverbs, images and symbols taken from East African oral literature. This, she argues, helps in retaining the original meaning of African ideas. When original oral tradition is applied in the contemporary text, the oral form becomes the pretext that bears the text.

Damaris Parsitau, in her study titled "*Sounds of Change and Reform: Appropriation of Gospel Music in Political Discourses in Kenya*" highlights the role that Gospel music play in addressing a wide range of issues in society. She says:



Gospel music is not only heavily appropriated in political discourses but is also used to address a host of other issues in society. Gospel artists in Kenya address a host of social, political, economic and religious issues such as HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse, corruption, ethnic clashes, drug abuse, poverty, bad governance and economic hardships and attempt to provide solutions to these issues in their music (69).

Gospel music provides an entry point into the discussions of contemporary as well as socio-political processes and discourses. The earlier Christian conservative nature where the church was not supposed to concern itself with “the things of the world” is no longer tenable and its role in social, political and economic construct of society cannot be overlooked. In general sense song and dance whether gospel or secular is a dynamic and highly charged force that affects the aspects of life such as democracy, economic growth and empowerment. However, while change is welcome it does not necessarily mean that it should be an excuse for sweeping everything on its way, including shaking the very foundation of society. It is our honest view that as society embraces change it should strive to preserve the positive and seminal elements that define and shape that society. It is this delicate balance that Kimetto seems to be grappling with.

While studying Joseph Kamaru’s songs, Kariuki Gakuo identifies a connection between alienation and socio-economic issues. He argues that the popular song has risen out of “the dictates of modern life and rapidly changing social reality” (102):

Popular song is an important means through which society through its verbal artists, documents the dynamics of the social change and comes to grips with the challenges facing it. In addition, with the evolution of African society from an ethnic based traditionalism to modern day metropolitanism, much of the context of traditional performance has been lost, and it is in this light that the popular song plays an important role, as far as verbal art is concerned, in molding and expressing the consciousness of the society (102).

The artist, according to Gakuo, bears in mind the ever dynamic state of society and thus becomes that society's mouthpiece in highlighting the vices that accompany those changes. The consciousness of the artist is molded by the society and thus speaks for that society. The modern artist is faced with the transitional challenge from what Gakuo calls the 'ethnic based traditionalism' to the modern day 'metropolitanism'. It is the context that changes but not the idiom per say. It is safe to argue that an artist who pays fidelity to society shall strive to retain the very core ideals of that society irrespective of the change in performance context. Perhaps I should put it that the African artist should remain true to his/her "Africaness" even when there is no African looking or listening.

Ngugi wa Thiongo's argument in *Homecoming* on the artist's fidelity to society underscores the central role that he/she plays in representing that society accurately.

Ngugi argues:

The writer (artist) responds, with his total personality to a social environment which changes all the time. Being a kind of sensitive needle, he registers, with varying degrees of accuracy and success the conflicts and tensions in his changing society ... for the writer himself lives in and is shaped by, history. (47)

Ngugi's argument emphasizes the central role of the artist in representation of his/her society. This representation helps in shaping the identity of the people in that society. In such a representation, there are accompanying conflicts and tensions which the artist lays bare and roots for solutions within the existing structures of that society. An artist does not create a context that builds conflict and tension without awakening its consciousness. Ngugi's assertion that the artist captures the conflicts and tensions in changing society is well articulated by Kimetto in one of his songs, *Wolowoli* (Change). To him the changing trends have brought about tensions and conflicts that can only be resolved if every member remained faithful to the established societal norms.

In *The Oral Artist*, Wanjku Mukami Kabira posits that "every artist should, in essence, be studied within the context of his community, and in relation to the historical development of society which has created him" (3). The artist is a creation of the society in which he lives and therefore he must pay fidelity to it. Kimetto's use of Kipsigis oral tradition in propagating Christianity is by itself striving to remain faithful to his culture while at the same time embracing another religion.

As stated earlier, Christianity was an imperialist instrument of colonization. Having dismantled the African religion and replaced it with Christianity, the imperialists relegated African religion to the periphery and equated it to idol worship. Chinua Achebe, in *African writers on African Writing* says that “one independent country in the African continent today is committed to the belief that the rule of white people is synonymous to civilization and the rule of black people is the negation of Christianity and civilization.” (It is saddening that this attitude still pervades and rules in the consciousness of the (oral) artist to date. Ngugi in *Homecoming*, reiterates:

Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape and direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in particular society. The relationship between creative literature and these other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern life has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations, slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Our culture over the last hundred years has developed against the same stunting, dwarfing background (47).

An artist, an African for that matter, should use the available space as a platform to highlight this subversion and in the process correct the image painted of him/her. Gospel music space should not perpetuate neo-colonialism today but rather purpose to correct the “evil” tag branded on African religion and, by extension, the African image of the past.

Dismas A.Masolo in “Presenting the Past and Remembering the Present: Social Features of Popular Music in Kenya,” takes a postcolonial view of the Kenyan popular songs as a

fusion of the traditional African ideas and the contemporary ones providing a picture of the average Kenya identity - duality. Masolo sees the popular artist as a revitalizer of traditional values through the means of constant and invigorating retrieval of the almost forgotten cultural and historical ideas. In his study, Masolo has set out with the assumption that colonialism and Christian missionaries suppressed the development and consumption of African music consigning them to primitivism. Mosolo argues:

For a long time, the anthropological imagination of static cultures retired the African musical instruments from active performance and reduced them to silent inhabitants of private and museum collections under the category of 'material culture' (355).

In the early Christian church worship, the use of traditional instruments was regarded as evil. The traditional props and costume was not spared this branding either. From some performances I have witnessed, Kimetto probably deals with this issue by deliberately using the traditional props and instruments. In one of his songs (*Isun Inye*) the lead instrument is *Chepkesem*, a Kalenjin six stringed instrument. He personally plays the instrument clad in traditional regalia. This indeed is a statement that the African traditional instruments can be used to praise the Christian God.

Mugo, in '*Relationship between African and African American Literature*' states that the genre that has been used most effectively in the literature of combat among the African has been the song. She further says that since the song has been the driving force behind the marching armies of liberation, it has consequently led to emergence of dynamic

literature. The dynamic literature, she argues, has “in it, images, symbols and words that connote a new aesthetic of determination and struggle” (91). The artistry employed by the artist in form of images, symbols and words is my central focus in Kimetto’s songs which he uses to protest superiority of Western culture and religion over that of the African. It is safe to argue here that the song has, and still plays a central role in the struggle for liberation of the mind and thought of the African from all manner of colonialism and neocolonialism.

Kariuki Gakuo carried out a study on James Kamaru’s songs from a post-colonial perspective and concludes: “... we therefore see an artist committed to the use of the song as a weapon of protest against the forces that dehumanize man and deny him his claim to humanity” (130). Gakuo argues that Kamaru uses his songs as a medium of highlighting the oppressive forces in society. Although Kimetto does not out rightly voice this position, it is easily construed that by remaining true to his culture, he speaks even more loudly in silence. The deliberate use of idioms derived from the rich Kalenjin culture is a mockery to the sustained brainwash and spirited campaign by early imperialists in an attempt to kill the African religion. Through the appropriation of the Kalenjin Culture in his songs, he seems to prove that African religion is indeed no different from other religions of the world and more particularly Christianity.

Joyce Nyairo, in her discussion of Kenyan Gospel soundtracks, says:

... regardless of whether gospel music is defined by structure or content it is a genre that cannot be understood outside the complex matrix of transcultural links between Africa, Europe and America – colonial and

contemporary. As an interminably hybrid form, modern gospel music in Kenya appropriates the sonic and lyrical texture of a variety of genres – from European choral Performance to American RnB, hip hop and even Congolese soukous. (71)

Nyairo argues that gospel music appropriates from a variety of genres, mostly and commonly from without or “the other”. This has been motivated by the need to remain relevant and appealing to the audience as well as the ‘economy of charismatic faith’ (71). Nyairo agrees that there is the colonial factor in the creation of gospel music. She however adds another dimension that Kenyan gospel music does not only appropriate from the west and Europe, but also traverse the African continent. Emmy Koskey, for instance, appropriates the South African Zulu style in her songs blending it with the Kalenjin discourse which results in a hybrid of some kind. To the contrary, Kimetto appropriates from within his community’s lyrical and sonic texture. He becomes relevant to both the Christian constituency within his community at the same time appealing to the non-Christian audience in the same community.

### **1.9. Theoretical Framework**

This study was eclectic. It employed three theories; Post-colonial theory, sociological theory and ethnopoetics. Performance theory was also useful for analyzing the performances in their natural contexts. I chose post-colonial approach on the understanding that idioms are often used to mock the exclusive claims of a given canon and as Ashcroft, Griffins and Tiffin argue, language is both “political and cultural

phenomenon” (2). This framework guided this study in analyzing Kimetto’s songs which appropriate the Kalenjin culture to critique and mimic western religion. Post-colonial theory argues that the growth of English language and the growth of the Empire proceeded from a single ideological climate and was utilized as a tool of propaganda by the colonial administrators and missionaries. This propaganda, as argued by Gauri Viswanathan, “support them in maintaining control of the natives” (Viswanathan 1987:17). Among leading proponents of this theory is Gayatri Chakravorty who sees postcolonialism as a set of cultural strategies centered in history.

Charles E. Bressler argues that “post-colonial literature and its theorists investigates what happens when two cultures clash and when one of them, with its accessory ideology, empowers and deems itself superior to the other” (236). Bressler further opines that the colonizers justified their cruel treatment of the colonized by invoking European religious beliefs. I found Bressler’s position helpful in guiding this study in finding out what happens when Kalenjin culture represented in the songs of the artist and the Western European culture represented in its agent, Christianity, clash.

Sociological literary theory posits that literature is interpreted from its social function of storing, interpreting and transmitting the values of that society. Literature is a mirror of the society that produces it. On the other hand, Society is the foundation upon which literature is created (Ngugi, 1972). Literature and society therefore are inseparable and indeed interdependent. Many scholars who subscribe to sociological theory argue that literature uses words to express the society’s aspirations, hopes and fears.



Rosenblatt observes that literature goes beyond mirroring society and argues that “literature is itself an integral part of a culture and has its own complex relationship to the rest of the cultural setting” (Davidson, *et al* 1978). This position is echoed by Albrecht (Davidson, *et al*) when he observes that literature could be viewed in three dimensions; reflection, impact and social control. It is from this perspective that literature aims at not only reflecting society, but also impacting and controlling it.

Muleka (2007) concurs with Albrecht and further expounds that literature can be tri-dimensional; first as a reflection of society’s world view, secondly as a representation of that society’s values and lastly control on the way people behave in that society. Sociological theory was helpful in analyzing the content the context and the significance of the idioms used in the gospel songs of Joel Arap Kimetto as well as his thematic concerns during composition and rendition.

Full meaning may not be derived by analyzing content and context alone. Meaning is also derived from the choice and coinage of words, their arrangement and the layers of meaning that accrue from their usage: diction, coinage, syntax and polysemy and ambiguity of words. This calls for the appreciation of the poetic structure and aesthetics of the songs. In this regard, ethnopoetics was a very useful tool since it focuses on the poetic structuring of oral art. Leading proponents of this theory are Dell Hymes and Dennis Tedlock. Dell Hymes strand is based on the idea that works of verbal art are subtle organizations of lines and verses and that the lines and verses are organized in

ways that are not only poetic but also a kind of rhetoric of action (sic) “in that they embody an implicit cultural scheme for the organization of experience as well as the organization of reports on that experience”. (Antonnen, 1)

The Hymes strand focuses on the stylistic and grammatical features in order to find the formal poetic structure of a text and the underlying rhetoric form in the text. It also employs a structural method and mainly bases on written texts. Dennis Tedlock strand places emphasis on the oral nature of texts and the dependence of the organization of texts upon lines. In the presentation each line is put forth in such a way as to render its fullest available charge of texture: rhythm, nuance, phrasing, metaphors factors which may depend on the relation to other lines, parallelism, redundancy, grouping... (Tedlock 1993). The approach stresses that aural qualities in performance –variation in speech, volume, vowel length- are central to the organization of speech and ‘convey to the listener a sense of the relative importance of propositions and their connections with each other, which are essential aspects of meaning’ (Mills, 29).

Tedlock advocates for fieldwork insisting that all the material studied must have been collected and transcribed by the researcher studying it who should then present and interpret the text as it was heard during performance. Tedlock thus recognizes the role of paralinguistic and suprasegmental features in interpretation of real meaning of an oral performance. Tedlock suggests that the text be arranged into lines according to the pauses in the aural performance. Each pause indicates the end of a line and the beginning of another. Meanwhile the text should be transcribed as it was heard during performance.

Tedlock strand helps in recording of the texts for analysis and in the analysis of the words used in the poem and their arrangement as the key to unraveling the meanings in the idioms applied.

## **1.10 Methodology**

### **1.10.1 Introduction**

This section explains the methodology that was used in the field study. Many researchers attempted to define what methodology is in oral literature. Peter and Kothari among others have debated over the years on what oral literature methodology is or is not. While Peter gives a generalized definition of research methodology as "...almost nothing more than research methods," (Peter, p.890), Kothari opines that "research methodology is the larger design of which research methods just forms a part," (Kothari, p.12). Research methodology therefore is a framework of structuring a study in order to achieve the intended objectives. In our study therefore, methodology was taken as the methods and techniques we used to achieve the outlined tasks, the framework of the entire research process and the entire research experience.

### **1.10.2 Types of Data**

This study involved the collection of both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was gotten from review of both published and unpublished documents which included books, articles, dissertations and journals. Library research as well as repeated visits to the artist's studio were also helpful.

We collected the primary data from the field. We visited various music stores and bought all the recorded music of the artist. We also visited the artist recording studio where we engaged him together with the members of his troupe called The Great Commission Singers. We also attended three outdoor live performances which were staged in three different contexts. These visits enabled us to actively participate in live performances as well as conduct personal interviews.

### **1.10.2 Sources of Data and Their Sampling**

This study targeted the songs composed and performed by Joel Arap Kimetto. Since he has composed and performed over 200 songs recorded in a total of 19 albums, purposive sampling was used to select relevant songs. We then listened and watched Kimetto's songs recorded in audio tapes, VCDs and CDS then sampled out 21 songs based on relevance.

We transcribed and translated the songs into English while striving for accuracy in order to retain originality. To achieve this objective, we employed two transcription and translation assistants from Kimetto's speech community. Due to lexical, phonological, syntactic and pragmatic technicalities present in English-Kipsigis translation, we paraphrased the translation to make up for the losses. Since the study employed ethnopoetics as one of its theoretical approaches, it required us to meaningfully engage and interact with the audience and the performers after participation and directly observation. We therefore attended live performances where we interviewed the artist and

members of his singing troupe, The Great Commission Singers. The interviews were not structured but we had guiding questions and notebooks.

### **1.11 Chapter Summaries**

In this study we have highlighted Kimetto's appropriation of the Kipsigis idiom as presented in his songs. In order to remain within the scope of the study, we broke the study into six chapters, each chapter dealing with specific objective. Chapter one, which we have already covered highlights the objectives, hypothesis and significance of the study. Theoretical framework that guided this study has also been discussed where Postcolonial, Sociological and Ethnopoetic theories proved helpful. Postcolonial helped in analyzing the results of the clash between Christianity and Kipsigis culture and tradition as presented in the idioms used by Kimetto in his songs. Sociological theory helped in investigating the social function of poetry, Kimetto's gospel songs being the focus. The theory helped in grounding (oral) literature's function to store, interpret and transmit values in society. Lastly, ethnopoetics inquired poetic structure and aesthetics that Kimetto's gospel songs use since meaning is not acquired from analyzing content and context alone.

Chapter two deals with the growth and development of Kimetto as an artist and progression in his career. Biographical account of the artist is captured which later informs some of the messages in his songs. His contribution to the development of other artists is also highlighted.

Chapter three analyzes idioms appropriated by Kimetto in his songs. Chesaina, (1991) observes that the Kipsigis, being a part of the wider Kalenjin community has a rich oral culture categorized in four broad genres namely songs, proverbs, riddles, and narratives. Our working definition of idiom was derived from Mweseli's view that an idiom is the "use of words peculiar to a given language; a language or dialect of a people, dialect or class"(8). We broadened this definition to include all idiomatic expressions and meanings carried in form of proverbs and narratives. Idioms also referred to deliberate use of language with an intention of carrying different layers of meanings. We identified a wide range of Kipsigis idioms that the artist uses in his songs.

In chapter five, we illustrate how the Kipsigis idioms used in the Gospel songs of Joel Kimetto are used to create harmony between Kipsigis culture on one hand and Christianity on the other. The tensions that arise incidentally are mutually diffused through juxtaposition of the Kipsigis idiom and the Christian biblical principles.

Chapter six contains the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations for further studies. The chapter links the study with the objectives and hypothesis outlined in chapter one illustrating how they are achieved.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE MAKING OF THE ARTIST JOEL ARAP KIMETTO

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides Kimetto's biographical background tracing historical development of his career from a humble beginning rising to his current iconic status; one who is respected and idolized across the Kalenjin nation. His ability to influence his community by utilizing the Christian space to create knowledge for the community (Thomas Steinberg, 846) has contributed to the harmonization of the Kalenjin culture and Christianity.

While studying the songs by Kipchamba Arap Topotuk, Daudi K. Rotich in unpublished thesis titled "The Intersection Between Communal and Individual Consciousness in Selected Songs of Kipchamba arap Tobotuk" observes that Kipchamba's songs have a lot of semblances with other music from other regions of the world. As Gerhard Kubik argues, musical culture in Africa has always been syncretistic after exposure to other cultures through the spread of music throughout the continent (13). Some of Kimetto's songs have borrowed from Tanzanian Church Choirs like the AIC Mwanza town choir and Makongoro choir. He has also borrowed a lot from Kipchamba Arap Topotuk, Kipchamba having been his mentor. During colonial and postcolonial period improvisation of culture was imperative (Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold, 2); the past of an individual becomes a sort of what Hanks calls the "pre-text... and prepares the ground for, or justifies the production / interpretation of a text" (96). Kimetto's experience with colonialism as a child prepared him for his musical career later.

Kimetto was born in 1955 in Bomet County at a time when schools were very few and were mainly run by missionaries. The name in his national identity card is Joel Kimetto. However, Kimetto has an adopted name *Kipwitat* that he says was given to him in memory of his grandfather. He adopted it because it was more descriptive and communally symbolic in the sense that it, linguistically, means a brave one. Due to his Christian affiliation, he used his baptismal name Joel after a minor prophet in the Bible. The musician is a selfless man who sacrifices a lot for the community and believes in passing on knowledge on the Kalenjin culture through Christian songs. Kimetto learnt and borrowed a lot from the late Kipchamba Arap Topotuk, who is a celebrated secular musician in Kalenjin community. His expertise in the use of the guitar can be traced to the Rumba music from Congo, which, as Rotich argues, greatly influenced Kipchamba's Music. As Kubik observes "Modern Kenyan music largely developed from rumba" (103).

Kubik, further, observes that 1945 -1950 was a critical moment in the development of East African popular music because of two reasons: first, the World War 2 had just ended, and Africans who had participated in the world had come with new cultures, one being that of rumba. (92). The other reason is about adoption of modernity in Africa - Mass media had been expanded; transistor radio had become popular in Africa; Western musical instruments, especially the guitar had been introduced; and cosmopolitanism had begun (87). The observation has been echoed by Stephen H. Martin who opines that "the in-roads of European instruments – guitar and the brass band, western hymnody, new media for African choral creation, Latin American rhythms" (40). In spite of the fact that Kimetto uses western instruments in his performances, he retains the traditional beat and



melody in most of his songs. Indeed the instruments are only used to accentuate the traditional tunes.

Kimetto's adaptation and appropriation of Kipsigis idioms and style in the creation and performance of his songs produces a unique discourse not common in the contemporary gospel songs. However, Kimetto is aware of the fact that he cannot ignore Christianity to root for a pure indigenous religion but instead, he invents a 'new tradition' which is a blend of the two binaries in order to remain relevant. This echoes Jason Shelton's position in an article, *Thoughts of Music and cultural Appropriation* on the origin of Jazz music, where he argues:

The popularly accepted theory is that Jazz stemmed from a simple combination of African rhythms and European harmony. African music supplied the strong underlying beat (absent in most European music), the use of polyrhythms, and the idea of playing the melody separate from or above the beat. European music provided formal dance rhythms. Combined, these rhythms give Jazz its characteristic swing. Likewise, the harmonies and musical ideas of both continents are present, the blue notes derived from the pentatonic scale, "call and response" and unconventional instrumental timbres of African music together with "conventional" harmonies and, most important, the formal structure of European music.

(1)

Shelton underscores the value of combining two musical elements to come up with one unified genre that is appreciated by both sources. The intersection between African religion and Christianity ought to have brought about some harmony with the (in)fusion of the former into existing structures of the latter rather than sacrificing African worship by branding it idol worship and primitive. However, whenever one assumes a privileged position over the other, as it was the case in the clash between the two religions, inherent tensions are bound to occur. Cognizant of the change in society, an artist ought to adopt accordingly in order to remain relevant. Kimetto strives to remain relevant by consciously and cautiously importing the traditional idiom and appropriating it in the Christian religious space. The appropriation highlights possible harmonies on one hand and tensions on the other, which he seems to delicately strive to foreground and diffuse respectively.

In one of his songs *Tilil Kipsengwet* (Heaven is holly), he begins with the Kalenjin traditional folk song opening formula:

OiyeLaleiyoOiye,	<i>Oiye Laleiyo Oiye,</i>
Leleiyo Laleyio Oyie!	<i>Leleiyo Laleyio Oyie!</i>
Tilil Kipsengwet Oiye,	<i>Heaven is holy Oiye</i>
Machei Sigunet oiye.	<i>It needs repentance Oiye (Song 14)</i>

Anybody outside the Kalenjin speech community listening to this opening would not suspect that it is a gospel song but would rather conclude that it is one of the folk dances usually performed during Kipsigis initiation ceremonies. In fact it is not the lyrics alone

that foreground the traditional idiom, but also the dance style that goes with the song distinct to Kipsigis female initiation dance. Kimetto appropriates the otherwise “evil” dance style used during initiation ceremonies in the description of a Christian concept of heaven which is supposed to be regarded as holy. As we shall illustrate in chapter five, the song was sang at night in an open arena by fresh female initiates. Night in Christian religion is symbolic of evil and sin, yet the artist appropriates the tune and dance deliberately seemingly to mock the western religion.



Kimetto in full regalia (extreme right) leads the performance of the dance *Oiye Laleyo Oiye* in the public arena at Kapkatet Stadium on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2013 at night.

Kimetto is also well travelled. With the coming of the settlers in the Eastern part of the Kipsigis land, young men were abandoning herding to work in the settler farms. When he went to work in one of settler farms, it is said that luck came his way when he landed on a farm belonging to a white settler who had a guitar. He was so keen with the way the

settler played his guitar and asked him to teach him how to play. Unfortunately, Kimetto lost two of his right hand fingers while working in the farm. This did not discourage him from learning how to play. He left the settler and went back home to join Kipchamba Arap Toputuk who then was an established musician although he had not recorded. Kimetto accompanied Kipchamba wherever he was invited to perform where he perfected his skills. Kimetto later converted into a Christian and started composing Christian songs in traditional tunes.

Kimetto also travelled widely after he started singing Gospel music. He is known throughout Kalenjin nation and has a huge following, most of who are the elderly and middle age to whom he greatly appeals. He tries to appeal to the young generation through one of his songs Rat Torosta (tie your nappy) whose style is hip hop. His interaction with a wide range of audience and experiences forms the reservoir of his songs. In one of his songs mocking old age, *YaYosin* (Old age is bad), he quotes most of the Kalenjin dialects' reference to old age; from Pokot to Sabaot to the North and Tugen and Kipsigis to the South.

Kimetto made first musical entry in 1979 by composing his first songs in his first album called *Ya Meet ne Mamwayaaksei* (Death is so bad that it is difficult to talk about). In this song he describes the cruelty of death. He however gives hope to the listener that in the face of death, there is resurrection. He developed a working relation with the then nearest producer Chandarana Records Ltd in Kericho, who was his producer until he established his own recording studio. One of the reasons he gives that motivated him to establish his

own recording company was that Chandarana exploited earlier musicians who were ignorant of their intellectual rights. He says that he has nurtured other musicians through his producing studio.

Kimetto's productions cover a wide range of topics. He considers himself a moralist whose inspiration is the rich Kipsigis culture from where he derives his themes. Apart from philosophical explanation of the mystery like death, which he dedicates two songs, *Ya meet ne mamwayaksei* (Death is so bad that it is difficult to say), and *Miten Ngetiet* (There is resurrection), he covers contemporary themes like corruption, HIV and Aids and generational gap in the songs *Kimyet* (ugali), *Rat Torosta* (tie your nappy) and *Wolowoli* (change) respectively. Indeed the song *Wolowoli* was launched in the mid nineties when the young people wore buggy trousers while women wore oversize shorts which were neither shorts nor skirts. The versatile nature of his songs captures the issues of a particular time in history and thus become the consciousness of the community.

Other songs are derived from oral narratives of the Kipsigis. They include a song like *Ingeete Kimereng Mindo* (a dik dik can wake up an antelope). This is based on a story where a dik dik, a small animal were friends with the antelope. The dik dik kept teasing the antelope who was busy chewing the cud after eating to its full. The antelope initially ignored the cheeky small animal but after sometime the antelope was agitated and jumped to its knees and chased the dik dik around the plains. This made a hunter to notice the antelope and shot it dead. Kimetto uses this narrative to warn people to be careful with small things which can give rise to big issues and eventually lead to disaster.

Another song that is generated from the oral narrative is *Uro ee Uro*, which is derived from a story of an old woman who had a she goat, the only property she owned. After a long wait, the goat conceived. The old woman was so excited and could not wait for the goat to deliver. When the goat finally delivered, the kid was a female which added to her excitement. However the celebration was short lived since the mother refused to accept the kid and in fact refused it to suckle. The poor old woman sang the song *Uro ee Uro*, beseeching the mother to accept the kid. At the end she accepted the plea and allowed its kid to suckle. Kimetto wonders that if animals could listen to its owner and obey, why then do human beings fail to heed their maker.

One respondent, Mr. Maiywa explained the meaning of *Kirate Setyo*. He says that it is derived from a narrative of a family of hyenas who roamed around homesteads looking for human corpses deposited in the cowshed. The hyenas had their leader who had to be the first to scratch the corpse before the rest could feast on it. In one of these escapades, they came across a human being on a heap of manure in the cowshed. The rest of the hyenas asked their leader to scratch the “corpse”. When he tried to scratch, the man jumped and hit the hyena dead leaving the other hyenas shocked and paralyzed. Kimetto borrows the idiom *Kirate Setyo ne kirat Kimaget* (You will be shocked the way the hyena was and appropriates it in the context of describing the shock that comes with seeing what people do contemporarily.

Kimetto’s productions have taken him to different places all over the Rift Valley and the Diaspora where his songs captivate and inspire many people. In a number of occasions he

has been invited to cultural, economic and religious forums in the U.S, Canada and Europe. These travels have become the major source of inspiration in his subsequent songs. The travels led him to compose a song that introduces himself to the audience and the reason for their visit. *Kagibwan Olingwong* (We have Come to Your Place) is an introductory song whenever he travels outside the Kipsigis region where he is well known. He says that he composed the song to be used as a curtain raiser in his performances.



Kimetto (extreme left) on one of his tours to the United States in June 2013. With him are other Kipsigis musicians.

He has sung on the need to use available time constructively for personal development in the song *Obaisien Saiaiek Komie* (Use time properly). The songs are constantly played in

Kalenjin broadcasting stations like KASS, CHAMKE, Radio injili and KBC. The first songs to popularize him included the following: *Wolowoli* (change), *Mechili* (you shall not escape), *Ichile Mat* (You will face the fire). Others include *Sigiriet* (Donkey) and *Uro ee Uro*.

Kimetto is not known for active politics, and he categorically states that his songs are religious and social in nature. He says that corrupt leaders cannot appreciate his songs since he highlights the vice in his song *Osoya* (Bribe). Prominent politicians from the region who have tried to patronize his songs for political mileage have failed because they fall victims of the very messages in the songs. Nevertheless, Kimetto's songs have captured the attention of leading political leaders from the Rift Valley including Kenyan retired president Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi who appears in one of his productions. Kimetto was invited to different functions graced by the then president in the mid to late nineties. In fact in 1996 Moi donated a van and state of the art equipment which he used to set up his recording studio. Kimetto enjoys a celebrity status among his people, a position he has consistently held for over three decades. It is common to hear people quoting him extensively in both formal and non-formal conversations.





Retired president Daniel Toroitich arap Moi joins Kimetto's troupe in dancing to the inviting tune, *Uro Uroat* his Kabarak home in Nakuru Kenya.

Joel Kimetto has also contributed immensely to the growth of other Gospel artists within the Kalenjin nation in general and Kipsigis in particular. Both old and young upcoming artists pay a lot of tribute to Kimetto to whom they credit for their growth in the industry. One such artist we interviewed had this to say.

Chesimet: Joel Kimetto made me discover my talent in singing. One day I visited his studio and he asked me to take the microphone and speak to it. That was it. He told me that my voice was very good and that I was a singer. From then, I have never looked back. We are age mates and I admired the style and content in his songs because it reminds me of the old days when we were young. Our fathers taught us values and ethics that made us responsible. But nowadays, the young people don't want to listen to the instructions of the old people. (Respondent 4)

Chesimet is one of the scions of Kimetto whose style and themes bear semblance to Kimetto's. He is of the same age group with Kimetto and although they grew in different areas, they seem to agree on many issues affecting their people. In one of his songs, *Obot Chemingin* (The mother of *Chemingin*) he criticizes women and girls who wear tight revealing trousers which he says is disrespectful in the Kipsigis culture. This is the same topic tackled by Kimetto in his song *Wolowoli* (Change). He admires the style used by Kimetto and agrees that the songs cut across Christianity and Kipsigis culture.

Another artist influenced by Kimetto is Emmy Koskei, a female artist who sings in the Tugen sub dialect of the Kalenjin. She pays a lot of respect to Kimetto and cites him as the motivation for her to compose and sing and yet she belongs to a much young generation that would ideally be embracing the western European style. In an exclusive interview with Carol Odera of the True love Magazine of October 2010, Emmy cites Kimetto as having indirectly molded her. She says that her characteristic love for African style in performance was informed by Kimetto. The use of Kalenjin traditional outfit as well as idiom in her songs is indirectly linked to her association with Kimetto.

Joel Arap Kimetto's songs address a number of issues. He uses the Christian space to articulate and accentuate the values of his community. He uses his traditional cultural experience to voice the dying Kipsigis culture within the context of Christian religion. His sound understanding of Kipsigis religion and culture as well as Christian religion enables him to (re)concile the two in his songs. The result of this fusion brings harmony between the two cultures instead of tensions created earlier by missionaries.

**Chitab Kalenjin** (The Kalenjin Man) was produced in 2011 together with **Maiywek** (Alcohol). The two songs speak to the Kalenjin consciousness as an attempt to remind them to be proactive in development activities and avoid laziness and excessive consumption of alcohol. The songs open up Kimetto's focus to address the wider Kalenjin community as opposed to narrowing down to his Kipsigis dialect. When asked why he composed the songs, Kimetto says that he was disturbed at the rate at which the Kalenjin young men were consuming alcohol and not working as hard as the youth from surrounding communities were. He particularly noted that the Kalenjin were slow in reacting to issues and yet the world was moving very fast. The Kalenjin, he said angrily, had been named "*nyomutyo*" (sluggards) by their neighboring communities.

Kimetto: I am greatly disturbed by this generation. They call themselves *dot com* generation yet what they do is worse than what *analog* generation does. I know that you have travelled a lot and you will agree with me that our young people are idle and you will find them sited along the road counting vehicles from morning to evening. When they get back home, they expect to be served lunch then go back to the road to count vehicles again as if they have been employed to do that. If they recognize you they will stop you and ask you for ten or twenty shillings for a glass of *changaa* or *busaa* then the next thing you hear is them singing saying, "I am a bull going to my land!" This is what made me compose these songs to urge the young

people to work hard and stop consuming alcohol.

(Respondent 1)

Another elder and Kipsigis leader Joseah Sang agrees with Kimetto. Sang is a retired permanent secretary and the current chairman of the Kalenjin Council of Elders, popularly known as *Moit*. He explains the genesis and meaning of the name Miot as follows.

Miot is a word formed from joining two words, *mi* and *iyotet* meaning there is procreation or birth. This was a term that can be traced back to the children of Israel in the time of Moses. When they disobeyed God, they died in their numbers and none of those who sinned got to the Promised Land. Those who survived kept greeting themselves saying that there is rebirth or procreation this was meant to encourage themselves and to allay the fear that they were going to be extinct. To cut the long story short, the Kalenjins are the remnants of the Israelites from Egypt who later got assimilated by the tribe of Juda to the extent that they almost lost their identity. They later regrouped themselves and gave themselves the name Miot and they detoured and headed south where they followed the Rift Valley until they settled in the current Rift Valley region in Kenya. Moit therefore is a collective identity of the Kalenjin community. Remember Kalenjin is a much recent

term that has more political and ethnic connotation and that the reason why we traced back our identity to Miot. (Respondent 5)

Sang says that it is unfortunate that the Kalenjin as a people had been so much dependent on the retired president Daniel T. Moi. He observes that in as much as the Kalenjin as a community need to celebrate their leaders, they have individual responsibilities and obligation to work and provide for them.

Sang: Kimetto is a great friend of mine. There are two people I truly respect and moved by their messages to our people. First of all is the late Kipchamba. He was a true messenger to the Kalenjin people and it is unfortunate that he had to die that early. However I am happy that he had someone to carry on from where he left. Kimetto's songs inspire and speak to the Kalenjin people on contemporary issues from the rich Kipsigis cultural perspective. Kimetto is gifted such that he is able to marry the Kipsigis culture with Christianity. His rich knowledge of the Kipsigis tradition is seen in his songs yet he is a gospel musician. One of his latest songs talks to the Kalenjin man and asks a question that I also often ask. Where are we headed as a community? Do we still expect handouts from our leaders or isn't it time that we worked hard. Remember we have no excuse to be poor yet God has blessed us with fertile land and rain throughout the year. (Respondent 5)

Kimetto sang the song **Chitab Kalenjin** at a time when Kenya was preparing for a general election the following year. At this time, the political atmosphere was highly charged and bearing in mind that the previous election (2007) had degenerated into violence, Kimetto seems to be speaking to the young people to focus more on their individual progress as opposed to pegging their progress on individual politicians. The song becomes a clarion call to the Kalenjin to wake up to the reality that they hold the key to their own destiny, first as individuals and secondly as a community. The idiom he uses specifically addresses the Kalenjin and he seems not to want the 'other' to hear what he is telling his own people.

The song **Maiywek** (Alcohol), Kimetto says, came to his mind out of what his own experience as a young man. He narrates that he first came to Kericho town to seek employment in the tea estates at the age of fifteen. Here he calls that his mother gave him ten shillings for his bus fare from the far end of the current Bomet County, bordering the Maasai. He used six shillings as bus fare and was left with three shillings. Together with friends, they went to a night club popularly known as *Musibar* (corrupted version of Municipal Bar). Out of his ignorance, he started buying his friends beer and by morning, he had no fare to take him to the tea estates. His friends laughed at him and he had to walk another twenty kilometers to his work place. It is this personal experience that led him to compose the song. That is the reason he says that a drunkard talks a lot and boasts of things that he does not have. He says that things could even be worse today had the retired president Daniel Arap Moi not closed all *Musibars* through a presidential decree soon after he ascended to power in 1978. He says that Moi knew that the Kalenjin people

would not progress until they stopped excessive consumption of alcohol. The song uses the Kalenjin socio-economical and historical construct encapsulated in the rich Kipsigis idiom to foreground contemporary issues that affect the community.

## **2.2 Summary**

In this chapter, we have highlighted the life of Joel Arap Kimetto as an artist. As observed, he developed his career from a humble background with some experiences echoed in his songs. He particularly says that he detests alcohol out of his personal experience as a young man. He has also been greatly influenced by the late Kipchamba Arap Topotuk, who was a Kalenjin popular artist who transcended the Kalenjin communal consciousness (Rotich, 2011).

Kimetto's musical career has also inspired other musicians including Emmy Koskey, a leading Kalenjin female artist who sings in the Tugen dialect of the Kalenjin community. However, he warns the upcoming artist that they may not survive in the industry if their focus is fame and quest for money. In that respect, the chapter highlighted the construction of the artist Joel Arap Kimetto and the influence of his works on other artists within and outside his Kipsigis community.

## CHAPTER THREE

### IDIOMS IN KIMETTO'S SONGS

#### **3.1. Introduction**

Performative aspect of the songs was relevant to our study because, as John Blacking opines, performing music is like speaking a verbal language, and that participating in the process of speaking that language constitutes a process of knowing it (9). In this chapter, our discussion has been centered around Turner's idea that "full meaning emerges from the union of the script with actors and audience at a given moment on a group's ongoing social process" (24). The lyrics recorded by Kimetto are in full life when they are performed, and it was in the live performances that it emerged that every aspect of a song - music, lyrics, lengths, and interpretation - is quite unstable in a communal performative setting. This is because performance is not only aesthetic, but socially functional. The functions we attended were three: The first was during the closure of a youth awareness week at Kericho Teachers' College on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2013, a cultural event that was organized by the Kipsigis council of elders at Kapkatet stadium on Saturday May 18<sup>th</sup> 2013 and a wedding ceremony on 7<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 held at A.I.C Kericho town church. The choice of the three was based on the understanding that performance is dependent on context.

The dichotomy which this chapter has engaged in is that of secularism and religiosity. Christians and non-Christians alike attended these functions. There is a raging debate that has emerged questioning whether Kimetto's songs can be defined as secular or gospel.



The question narrows to whether the criterion should be centered on the message in the song, or the religious affiliation of the artist. This study has taken the latter, especially what the artist predominantly professes in his songs, and where the songs have been predominantly played. The other challenge, in secularism versus religiosity divide, emanates from two issues. One is that the community in question is African where religion is not a calling but a way of life. The other issue regards schisms in Christianity where the zealous ones are in conflict with the accommodating ones.

The dichotomy is ever present in quotidian life, and art becomes a way of harmonizing them. Art is here seen as, what Byron Miller calls, “a communicative act” where individuals consciously or unconsciously reach common understanding (2). What captures the way harmonizing knowledge is formed, in an active artist-audience performative interaction, is Turner’s idea of liminality. Turner has defined liminality as “a psychological, neurological, or metaphysical subjective state, conscious or conscious, of being at the “threshold” - or of being between two different existential planes (Arpad Sko1czai, 155). This chapter operates on this idea that performance settles tensions, and that a cultural performance has a dialectical and reflexive impact on the quotidian life (Turner, 24). In the chapter, we have begun with an observatory description of the preparatory process, and a description of the performance itself. The rest of the chapter covers the idiomatic indices and how they aid in the delivery of intended messages.

### **3.2 Fieldwork Preparation**

I went to the field on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2013. This was a week after the artist arrived from a two month long tour to the United States. Kericho Teachers' College was hosting Kericho Youth Center for a week long youth awareness campaign dubbed *Jipange*. Lastly, I attended a wedding ceremony which Kimetto happened to have been an invited guest singer. Having talked with the artist and the members of Great Commission Singers team on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May in his studio, I was convinced that the events were going to be relevant to my work. First, it provided an opportunity to attend live performances of the selected songs played out to an audience that predominantly consisted of members of his community. Secondly, the setting gave an opportunity to engage in a focused interview with fans and to observe their appreciation of the creativity of the artist in appropriating the idioms in the songs.

The three events became the most effective forums for conducting the fieldwork because of the following reasons: First, inductive interference would be reduced because this was an opportunity to we would find the performance event staged in a natural setting, an ongoing social event (Turner, 24) without a feeling among the performers and the audience that they were doing a make-believe performance for us. I was going to find them in a natural place and space and, thus, I would find the most credible information. Second, I expected to meet the artist in person and those fans who profoundly value his songs. Thirdly, the events were also going to provide an interesting trajectory of fusion of Christianity and secularity because of the staging of the songs during a cultural event.

I designed the fieldwork to be both interactive and observatory. The interactive moment hinged a probing schedule that sought to capture the intersection of Kipsigis tradition and Christian religion in selected songs of Kimetto. The probing schedule derived its questions from the objectives of this study. The first was to find out, in the opinion of the respondent, whether Kimetto's songs carry Kipsigis idioms. Second was to obtain what the audience think inspired the artist to compose the songs. Third was their feeling on whether the community has benefited from the songs, and even whether the songs have had negative impact on the whole or section of the community.

The observatory moment was hinged on a watch list that sought to capture the interplay of the interaction between Kipsigis tradition and Christianity. The first tip in the watch list was to study the context of the performances. This was to determine if the different contexts of performances had any effect on the (re)creation of the songs. Second was to critique on the preparation by the artist paying special attention to the vocalists, rehearsal space and time, directorship and division of roles. Third was to critique on the non-verbal cues: costumes, gestures, movements and the general production. Fourth investigate the "free-floating nature of music, which is, to listen critically to the lyrics, closely comparing to the original ones, to critique on the adlibs, omission and re-creation." Subsequently, I was going to be interested on the "discernible effects of affect" on the audience (Vladmir J. Konecni, 699). Last was to critique on the nature of the audience and their impact on the performance of the selected songs, and their interpretation of the songs, based on the idea that the audience hold special philosophical, emotional and cultural demands" (Mai Palmberg and Annemette Kierkegaard, 8).

### **3.3. Observation**

The first performance was set at pavilion in the field at Kericho Teachers' College. The invited guests sat at the VIP section on seats arranged on the stairs. The other attendants sat in tents mounted facing the pavilion and at the sides creating an open arena at the center. There were close to two thousand audience in attendance, majority of who were college students. In the audience were also men, women and children from the community and neighboring primary schools. My research assistants and I were spread in the midst of the audience, being able to meet the quests, the performers and the fans. In attendance were two other local gospel musicians, Gladys Korir and Eric Terer. The two are young upcoming artists who acted as curtain raisers for Kimetto's performance and later joined him in the arena.

The performance of the songs was based both on the recorded lyrics and the adlibs. There were moments when the performance was aided by a CD player to keep the singers in the lyric tract. The theme song of the event *Kichigili* (scrutinize), which was meant to emphasize on the need to know one's H.I.V status, was the last to be performed and as an introduction of the speeches from the guest speakers. The speakers kept on referring to the song in the course of their speeches. Indeed, the Keynote speaker, Mrs. Monica Mbelese who does not come from the artist's speech community said that she understood the message through the performance of the artist. The performance portrayed both traditional and modern singing styles.

The second performance was in Kapkatet Stadium. The stadium is a significant site to the Kipsigis community. It has been the center for hosting religious and political events since it is virtually at the center of Kipsigis geographical area. Major political declarations have been made in the stadium and it has attracted many leading national political leadership. The event on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2013 was cultural in nature and was organized to open the stadium after major renovations and secondly in commemoration of the late senior chief, Kipsang Arap Tengecha who is said to have mobilized his people to construct the stadium using their bare hands.

The event was divided into the morning formal session where the setting was an ordinary official public function and the afternoon was an informal cultural session where different Kipsigis cultural activities were exhibited. The afternoon session went into late night where different activities were showcased. Many artists, both secular and gospel were in attendance. While other songs could simply pass as secular or gospel, the organizers found it difficult to categorize Kimetto's songs since they bore characteristics for both. When Kimetto started his performance, his older fans danced with traditional Kipsigis graceful vertical swaying of their bodies especially around the neck while the youth brought in modern styles of rapid dance styles which are erotically centered on the waist. It seems that the modern accompaniments, which were more prominent than the traditional ones, made it possible for the modern singing and dancing styles to operate with the traditional styles. The traditional drum was, for example replaced by the modern set of drums where the drum player adopted the modern beats. In performing the song

**Uro uro**, Kimetto used a *Chepkesem* a Kipsigis five stringed instrument, drums and jingles.

### **3.4 Style as a Means of Appropriation**

This section discusses the nature of Kimetto's songs sang and performed in Kipsigis dialect of the Kalenjin people. However, it shall limit itself to style. We illustrate how the artist uses authentic Kipsigis idiom in the context of Christian songs. In our study, style evaluates the characteristics of songs in terms of pre-dominance of certain words, sentence structures and use of pattern segments that create rhythm and rhyme while expressing the theme. In *Stylistics*, Henry Indangasi says that form and content are opposites that interpenetrate but form a unity.

The creative artist enjoys the freedom not enjoyed by other users of language. The freedom to manipulate language by borrowing those features belonging to non-literary use. The variation of poetic language is evident in Kimetto's songs. Geoffrey Leech in *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* discusses poetic language as a style that deviates from the observed rules of language. Kimetto's creativity is seen in the way he manipulates language deviating from the normal usage in foregrounding his themes. His mastery of Kipsigis language on one hand and knowledge of Christian religion on the other gives him a platform to explore issues affecting the community from both perspectives. He is able to do this by appropriating the Kipsigis idiom in the otherwise opposing Christian space.

Indangasi discusses the relation problem of form and content in literary language. He looks at style as occurrence of linguistic elements; linguistic choice that is idiosyncratic or individual. Kimetto's songs in our study reveal that they have their unique style primarily as a result of elements of language variation through figurative and stylistic devices.

Kipury, postulates that the poets and orators make liberal use of figures of speech in their songs and narrations. Finnegan agrees when she argues that African languages include their large and remarkable such vocabularies that are highly picturesque and imaginative and are used for artistic purposes to humor and enjoyment expressed to the satirical, meditative or resigned comment on the circumstances of life. It is in these figures of speech that Kimetto employs to infuse the Kipsigis idiom in the Christian songs. These are the elements we shall explore in this chapter.

Joel Kimetto employs a lot of imagery in his songs. This is evident in most of his songs. The imagery he uses is from the rich Kipsigis tradition where one's ability to understand sayings, proverbs and expressions was a measure of wisdom. We examined the idiomatic forms that Kimetto sources from Kipsigis tradition and uses them in the Christian space. The use of proverbs is one of the methods Kimetto employs to relay his message. Kimetto has managed to use many proverbs in his songs more than any other artist in Kipsigis apart from Kipchamba Arap Topotuk. He is able to interplay expressions, sayings and idioms in such a way that harmony is created at the end.

The use of a proverb in the song **Isun Inye** that says ‘You may not stop birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from building a nest on it’ carries with it the message that one should not pay attention to what other people say about him since he has no control over their utterances. This proverb is used to encourage people not to pay attention to what others say about them but instead focus on their own goals in life. Indeed the artist goes on to say that no one can stop others from talking about them but they have the ability to ignore them by not allowing their words to affect their lives. He says that you cannot stop your neighbors from talking about you or your countrymen from saying something about you but you can stop their words from ruining your life.

While this proverb was used in the Kipsigis tradition to minimize conflict among the members of the community, Kimetto uses the same to advise the Christian converts to be accommodative to criticism from the members of society. He argues that criticism is positive and it can only affect you if there is some truth in what is said. In the interview with the artist, he said that when one becomes successful in what he or she does, there are those members in society who feel jealous and talk ill of them. He said that when he became successful in his music career, his distracters talked a lot about him claiming that he had neglected his family. He said that the talk did not stop him from carrying on with his career but instead, it inspired him to even work harder.

Another proverb he uses in this song is in stanza five where he says “**If rats trouble you my friend, don’t burn your granary.**” In the Kipsigis traditional homestead, there was a granary where food harvested was kept. The food items included sorghum, millet,



pumpkins and later maize. In many occasions rats invaded the granary and they became a nuisance. It is only a fool who would want to kill the rats by burning down the granary.

The song goes:

<i>Ndo iimin murek we weei</i>	If rats trouble you my friend
<i>Mebel choget</i>	Don't burn your granary.
<i>Chang ortinwek che kebaren</i>	There are so many ways of killing them
<i>Imuchi ibai paget</i>	You can keep a cat
<i>Asi koonun</i>	For it to chase them.
<i>Anan ial motegoit</i>	You can use a trap
<i>Asi konomun</i>	To catch them for you.
<i>Imuch agot ial Rat and Rat</i>	You can even buy Rat and Rat
<i>Asi koborun</i>	To kill them for you.

Kimetto applies this proverb in the contemporary life within the Christian religious context. He advises parents on how to handle their children when they trouble them. He says:

<i>Ndo iimin lagok we mama</i>	If your children trouble you my mother
<i>Ko meimnge</i>	Don't stress yourself.
<i>Ndo iimin lagok</i>	If your child troubles you,
<i>Ko mebarge</i>	Don't kill yourself.
<i>Mi ortinwek chechang che ketoreten</i>	There are so many ways of helping him
<i>Kas amwaun</i>	Listen to me. (song 1)

Parenting is a social challenge facing many parents. With the advent of modern lifestyle, parents find it difficult to talk and agree with their children. Peer pressure and drug abuse are contemporary issues that affect the youth. Kimetto addresses these challenges in this song and advises parents to bring their children close (*Isun inye*) even when they look disobedient and not listening to their advices. He asks them not to end up killing themselves since there are many ways of helping the disobedient children. He compares this with the various alternatives of killing rats instead of burning the granary. He suggests a number of ways of reaching to the youths including asking the peers (friends) to talk them. He proceeds to say that one can even ask the elders to counsel them or better still, ask the pastors to talk to them. Kimetto suggests a procedure of resolving conflict between the parents and the youth right from the peers all the way to the pastor through the elders. He merges the traditional and cultural practices and conflict resolution procedures with the Christian religious approach. By so doing, he bridges the Kipsigis traditional institutional conflict resolution framework with the contemporary Christian one thus bringing harmony as opposed to earlier perceived tension.

In **Banda Chepkoigoch**, the proverb used is alluded to the pace of a tortoise. The proverb ‘You ought to go the tortoise pace’ calls for people to go slowly in matters of Christian faith. This is in the background of emerging Christian movements and denominations away from the traditional mainstream churches. Kimetto advises the ‘true’ Christians to follow Christ slowly and not be dissuaded by the emerging religions. He particularly cautions the youth against rushing to adopt new ways substituting the slow but sure pace in life that guarantees one to get to his/her destination. The song goes:

<i>Kigile tenden oret</i>	It is said that the road is narrow
<i>Nebo sobon</i>	To life
<i>Kigile tenden iman</i>	It is said, it is truly narrow
<i>Ago chabai</i>	And slippery,
<i>Kibendi banda chepkoigoch</i>	You go the tortoise pace (Song 3)

Another close proverb used interchangeably in the same song is *Kibendi Macheikel*, (Go in silent footsteps). This proverb denotes politeness and absence of arrogance. The people who used to go slowly on issues are said to have conquered even the toughest situations in life. One elder, Daniel Arap Maiywa said that the Kipsigis were cautioned to go slow on matters that were of great concern in the community. These issues included raids to the neighboring Kisii and Maasai communities. He said that in one of these raids the youth defied the advice of the elders and raided the Kisii neighbors and they were killed in their numbers. He says:

There was a great famine in Kipsigis land and crops failed and animals died. There arose wide spread hunger that left the people frail and destitute. Meanwhile, the neighboring Kisii community had bountiful harvest as a result of abundance of rain in the highlands. The Kipsigis young warriors decided to organize a raid to their neighbors. However the elders warned against them and told them that the timing was wrong. Instead of paying attention to the advice of the elders, they agreed to sneak at night and carry out the raid by themselves. The result of the raid was a massacre where all of them were killed and their corpses fed to dogs. To

date, the Kalenjin refer to the *Mogori* massacre, *Mogori* being the place of the great war between the Kisii and the Kipsigis. It is from this incident that the Kipsigis coined the proverb *Kibendi banda Chepkoigoch*. (Respondent 2).

In **Ya Yosin** (old age is bad) the artist uses the saying that old age cannot be speared. This implies that old age is a natural phenomenon that human beings have no control over. If human beings had power over ageing, they could have speared it in other words kill it to remain young forever. The artist uploads the same saying and puts it in the Christian context and gives hope to human beings that they shall never grow old in the next life. The song therefore marries the Kipsigis traditional believe in life after death with the Christian promise of eternal life in heaven after physical death.

In **Kirote Setyo**, the proverb ‘You shall marvel the hyena way’ is derived from a narrative of a group of hyenas who roamed villages looking for human corpses. The group had its leader who always scratched the corpse before the rest would eat it. One day they found a body lying on a hip of manure in the cattle shed. The body however had a club under its head. The rest of the hyenas asked their leader to scratch the corpse for them. On scratching the body, the man sprang into life and hit the hyena dead. The rest of the hyenas could not run, but were left marveling at what they had just witnessed. It was too shocking for them that a corpse would kill their leader and thus the proverb, ‘You marvel the hyena way.’ The song is a call for the people to avoid adopting foreign culture that is shocking and not in harmony with the Kipsigis customs. The song castigates all

members in society who blindly take foreign customs without being sensitive to the values of the community.

In the song **Maiywek** (Alcohol) the proverb *Don't add water into the pot when you know that the flour is to be borrowed* means that you need not to rely on others so much to the extent that you keep borrowing. And even if borrowed, one should not dictate the amount to be given. This proverb is derived from the Kipsigis practice where when a house hold had no flour, the mother would put water in a pot on fire and dash to the neighbor to borrow a little flour. Occasionally, the husband would add water into the pot so that they could have a bigger share of the meal. The proverb then is a warning to the lazy men who are known for eating more yet they do very little. The same men are also known for drinking, ending up becoming poor and begging all their lives.

The argument is further supported by another proverb in the same song that says 'Poverty talks loudly'. This proverb is used to mock those who drink in society meaning that they are good at empty talks with very little to show. The artist juxtaposes this with the Christian biblical position as recorded in Proverbs. He says:

<i>Kalewenaik tiptem ak somok</i>	Proverbs chapter twenty three
<i>Inamen koitet tiptem</i>	Start from verse twenty
<i>Asikas kit ne mwae</i>	Then you shall hear what it says
<i>Motebi ak yeeikab maiywek</i>	Don't stay with those who take alcohol
<i>Amun igu banan ne bogiti</i>	Because drunkards become poor

*Inyoru ko mi ach ingor*

You will find them naked ( Song 15)

Another device that the artist employs is repetition. Repetition of words and sentences create rhythm which gives aesthetic flavor to the songs. However, repetition of words, phrases and whole stanzas have different effects on the audience. In some instances the device is deliberately used to structure the poem into a conversation between the artist and the audience. Repetition is also used for emphasis and it aids in memorization. In the song **Isun Inye**, the first line is repeated albeit with very little alteration, principally semantics. The stanza reads:

*Ngonduni kinetege kila*

In this world we learn daily

*Magigesu ngomnot*

You can't exhaust knowledge.

*Ngwonduni kinetege kipkoi*

In this world we learn continuously

*Magitore ng'omnot*

You can't exhaust knowledge.

(Song 1).

Although there is variation in the second line, here “learn daily” is replaced with “learn continuously” meaning is retained. Kimetto demonstrates his mastery of the Kipsigis language through variation of words and phrases without changing the intended meaning. He goes on to use two shades of words *Magitore* and *Magigesu* which both means inexhaustible. The saying *Magigesu ngomnot* or *Magitore ngomnot* is a Kipsigis idiom meaning that nobody can claim to have monopoly of knowledge or claim to know everything. This was an expression used to warn members of the community who bragged to have known everything. The song specifically targets parents who think that they know everything concerning their children only to be shocked by what their children

do. During the interview with the artist, he shared with us his personal experience with his children when they were in school. In fact he said that the song was a testimony of one of his own son who almost dropped out of school due to peer pressure and challenges associated with the youth. He said that he had to talk to him and it took a lot of patience and prayers. He uses the song to encourage other parents to be patient with their children when they display unacceptable behavior.

In the song **Wolowoli**, (change), the repetition of the word change serves as an introduction to the message in the song. The repetition and chanting of the word *wolowoli* creates rhythm and adds to the flavor and enjoyment of the song. The onomatopoeic sound creates cohesion and captures the imagination of the listener. Repetition of the word severally at the beginning also creates suspense since the listener is left to wonder what change the song could be talking about. This heightens the curiosity of the listener who would want to get to the conclusion of the song.

The song **Banda Chepkoigoch** repeats the idiom *Kibendi banda Chepkoigoch* (You go the tortoise pace) and *Kibendi banda Kwombomutyo* (You go slowly by slowly) to emphasize the importance of taking precaution when dealing with matters of great importance in the community. The phrase is used repeatedly throughout the song as a refrain which transforms the song into a musical utterance. It also provides the rhythm which aids performance.

**Kirate Setyo** is another song that employs repetition extensively. The idiom *Kiratesetyo* (You marvel) is repeated in the second part of the song. This clinches the message of the song whose background is built in the first part. The expression resonates throughout the song and equally gives the song the rhythm required.

Repetition is also used in the song *Kokobeng* (Dilema). The first part of the song is mostly entirely a chant of the word *Kokobeng*. The main protagonist who is the soloist chants severally before the rest of the performers join in. The song starts:

<i>Woi koko beng oh kokobeng oh</i>	Woi it is dilema
<i>Woi kokobeng oh nevo man</i>	Dilema in the true sense
<i>Woi kokobeng oh tupchosiek</i>	It is dilemma my brothers
<i>Woi kokobengengkiytugul</i>	It is hard for every body
<i>Woi kokobeng oh kokobeng oh</i>	Woi dilemma dilema
<i>Woi kokobeng oh nevo man</i>	Woi dilemma in true sense
<i>Woi kokobengkokobeng kokobeng</i>	Woi dilemma, dilemma, dilema
<i>Woi kokoben ji kimugulmet oh.</i>	Woi ot is dilemma for human race

(Song 7).

Another song that employs repetition is **Miten Ngetyet** (There is resurrection) where *Miten Ngetyet* becomes the refrain in the second part of the song. After creating the context of the message in the first part where it describes death as cruel and a mystery that nobody understands, it changes in mood and tone when it talks of resurrection which is emphasized through repetition of the phrase *Miten Ngetyet*. The rhythm and the speed



drastically changes with repetition of the phrase. It is used to erase the fears of death introduced as cruel in the first section.

**Uro Uro's** first twelve lines is just a repetition of the term *Uro. Uro* as the artist, would say, was a song sang to a she goat who had given birth and refused its kid. The song was highly repetitive because of the stubborn nature of the goats. The song begins:

SOL: *Uroeeuro*

ALL: *Urouro*

SOL: *Uroee uro*

ALL: *Urouro*

SOL: *Uroee uro*

ALL: *Urouro*

SOL: *Uroee uro*

ALL: *Urouro*

SOL: *Uroeeuro*

ALL: *Urouro*

SOL: *Uroeeuro*

ALL: *Urouro* (Song 10).

The artist employs repetition in this song to create suspense. The listener is left waiting to hear what the song is all about. The suspense heightens curiosity and at the same time sets the rhythm of the song. In one of the performances, the song starts when the audience is sited and passive but by the time the song gets to the fourth line, the audience join in either clapping or nodding their heads following the rhythm of the song. Repetition

therefore serves as an invitation to the audience to join in the performance. When the soloist gets to thirteenth line, he gives a background of his song with an explanation of its origin. He says:

<i>Kitien chi bo keny</i>	The old sang
<i>Uro uro</i>	Urouro
<i>Kitein kosichi artenyin</i>	Singing to beseech his goat
<i>Uro uro</i>	Urouro
<i>Eiye kitieni chi bo keny</i>	Yes the old sang
<i>Uro uro</i>	Urouro
<i>Artet ne katai arwenyin</i>	A goat that refused its kid
<i>Uro uro</i>	Uro uro (Song 10).

It is at this point that the suspense is broken and some kind of relief is achieved. The audience's imagination is also focused on the goat and begins to join in the singing more vigorously. This repetition simplifies the role of the audience and since it is a simple chant of a short word, anybody can sing easily irrespective of age or one's prior knowledge or understanding of the language.

Kimetto's songs are highly figurative through employment of similes that are derived from the Kipsigis oral tradition. The songs manage to apply these figures within the context of Christian religion which in itself creates harmony. He achieves this by making comparisons through references to common features from the community as well as making comparisons using simple language in the then immediate Kipsigis environment.

A very common style that Kimetto's songs apply is the use of dialogue. This style allows the artist to easily interact with the audience. This interaction is best achieved if the song is structured in such a way that the audience is given specific role in the cause of performance. These roles include joining in the refrain which, as earlier discussed in this chapter, is very simple and short sentences, words or even onomatopoeic chants. The artist is aware that the audience would be bored and impatient if they are not given the simple parts and roles to play. The artist therefore assigns himself the 'hard' parts which require the artistic skill which the audience may not have. Dialogue as a stylistic device is used to make the audience appreciate specific features in the song as well as to evoke different feelings and emotions. This feature was common with the Kipsigis folk songs and dances where the audience were called upon to participate in answering to questions paused by the soloist which sometimes tests the attention of the audience. The parts given to the audience is the same parts sang by the rest of the members of the singing troupe. This, Kimetto says, is because at the point of composition, the real audience is absent and therefore he either imagines an audience or uses the members of his troupe to play that part.

In the song **Isun Inye**, the refrain is a response to a number of issues raised by the soloist where he tends to seek approval of his suggestion to the problem at hand.

SOLOIST

If your son troubles you my father

*Ndoiimin weringung baba*

What are you supposed to do?

*Komelen gwanysiayai nee?*

Don't say that he would rather die

*Don't say he would rather*

	<i>die</i>
ALL	ALL
Bring him close bring him close	<i>Isuninye Isun Inye</i>
There is still hope.	<i>Tago mitten Kamongunet</i>
Bring him close, bring him close	<i>Isun inye, Isuninye</i>
You parent bring him close	<i>Sigindonon Isun inye</i>
Bring him close as you pray	<i>Isun inye ak isae</i>
Bring him close, bring him close	<i>Isuninye, Isuninye (Song 1).</i>

The section for all is repeated throughout the song as an answer to the questions and issues raised by the soloist. The lines are simple to grasp and at the same time persistently urging the parents to take the lead in bringing their children close to them. The idiom *isun inye* is derived from a Kipsigis adage that says *Isun Kwanget kotokotwoon situn moil yeleeninyii* (Bend the bow when still wet so that it will not break when you pull it). Kipsigis were mainly pastoralists and they attached a lot of value to the cattle and the warriors went out raiding neighboring communities for cattle. Bows and arrows were the greatest assets of a graduate warrior who was trained on how to make them. Joseph Marindany an elder we interviewed says that young men were taken to the forest for a period of six months for circumcision and training on how to defend their community against their enemies. That is the reason they acquired the name *murenik* (Those who shield from the front) after the process. The song **Isun inye** borrows from this tradition and appropriates it in a Christian context. This appropriation makes the song

authentically communal and easily understood by the audience from the Kipsigis community.

**Banda Chepkoigoch** is another song that employs dialogue. The leader sings part of the idiom that is well known to the audience and pauses to allow the audience complete it. This clever way of creating dialogue does not only involve the audience for the sake of it, but it also tests their oral competence:

SOL: You go...	<i>Kibendi...</i>
ALL tortoise' pace	<i>Banda Chepkoigoch</i>
SOL: You go...	<i>Kibendi...</i>
All: a slow pace	<i>Banda kwombomutyo</i>
SOL: It is said...	<i>Kigile Kibendi ...</i>
All: The pace of life.	<i>Banda chepsoboni.(3).</i>

The song applies one idiom but in three shades; You go the tortoise' pace, You go slow pace and You go the pace of life. All the three expressions are used interchangeably among the Kipsigis and they bear the same meaning. It is only at the semantic level that the difference is noted but there is no difference at the level of meaning. The audience' ability to respond is a testimony of their fidelity to both their culture and the Christian religion. With the help of the audience, the artist is able to draw from the community's memory and transfer the same consciousness into the Christian space thus creating some harmony between the Kalenjin culture and Christian religion.

Personification is another style evident in Kimetto's songs. In the song **Betuteb Meet** (the day of death), death is personified as an enemy that comes and captures you without warning. In the second stanza, the song gives the impression that death is a living animal that has hands and grabs without warning.

In the whole world	<i>Eng ngwony komugul</i>
There I no enemy like death	<i>Komomi bunyot ne sire meet</i>
It come surprises you	<i>Iberberchinge kot kotalin</i>
And captures you chap!	<i>Kolenjin chap! (Song 8).</i>

Personifying death in the song serve to demystify it and at the same time let people understand that death is inevitable. The Kipsigis community and the Kalenjin at large feared death. Daniel Maiywa said that the Kipsigis used to drag the dead and throw the corpse away at night for the hyenas to eat. He says that nobody dared to visit a family that had lost a member. They were isolated and in some extreme cases banished from the community. It was believed that death was contagious. By personifying death Kimetto reads into the psych of the community and agrees with them that death is indeed an enemy that everyone should watch. However the song later assures the audience of life after death through resurrection.

In the song **Torosta**, the artist talks of something that has come to the world that eats all: men, women and children alike. The 'thing' referred to here is HIV and Aids. The Kipsigis community also feared HIV the same way they feared death. Kimetto

personifies the disease to sound like it is something that can be seen and fought like an animal. He capitalizes on the bravery of the community to allay fear that comes with H.I.V and AIDS. The artist gives the disease the eating attribute to highlight the seriousness of the scourge but with a human touch. He seems to be rhetorically asking them if they can face their human enemies with courage and manage to defeat them, then why fear an enemy that requires simple technique to conquer.

In the song **Maiywek**, poverty is said to talk a lot.

The Kalenjin say	<i>Mwae bikab Kalenjin kole</i>
Poverty talks a lot	<i>Kirwogin banan ( Song 15).</i>

Poverty is said to talk a lot is an idiom that was coined in the drinking gatherings. The kipsigis elders used to drink in special occasions and usually after work. But it was the poor who drank early in the morning and then shout throughout the villages. A well-established person after drinking would never shout or talk loudly. The poor used to beg by the door and served as messengers of the rich.

Allusion is another technique that the artist uses in his songs. Since the songs are gospel, the allusion is to specific events and specific groups of people in the society. He raids the community's consciousness and keeps reminding his audience of what the elders said and how they reacted to situations. **Isun Inye** (bring him close) alludes to a stubborn cow who refused to be milked. The owner had to use all manner of tricks to persuade it settle

calm. The tricks included giving it a brick of salt called *ngenda* which kept it busy as the owner milked. Another trick was caressing it between the hind legs just above the udder. If it was an ox who refused to pull a plough the owner whistled a song and chanted praises by its name. The names included *pois*, *tembo*, *psunyeny*, among others. A similar allusion is in the song **Uro ee Uro** where a goat owner sings to it in for it to accept its kid. The association reflects how the artist highly regards the Kipsigis culture and demonstrates how the values of the community apply in the Christian religion. The otherwise conflict that is supposed to arise from the clash between the Kipsigis culture and Christian religion is diffused.

The allusion is also made in reference to specific places and group of people in the song *Rat Torosta* (Tie your nappy). The artist talks of alludes to sayings from two other dialects of the Kalenjin Community, the Nandi and the Keiyo.

Onomatopoeia is the other strategy used by the artist to convey his message. *Wolowoli* is a phrase that denotes change. Its equivalent literal translation would be “he keeps on changing”. **Wolowoli** thus best suits the description of the act of changing all the time.

*Kichigiliis* another phrase that is onomatopoeic. The phrase means to scrutinize, and in this context looking keenly with the intention of making sure that nothing is left to chance. It connotes sieving with one’s eyes keenly observing in case of any particles. It is worth noting that the Kipsigis cultivated sorghum and millet the women would thresh and grind it into flour. The flour would then be sieved before using it for preparing porridge and *ugali*. This is evident in the following stanza of the song:



<i>Kichigili oh mama</i>	Scrutinize oh my mother
<i>Kichigili</i>	Scrutinize
<i>Kichigili oh baba</i>	Scrutinize my father
<i>Kichigili</i>	Scrutinize
<i>Kichigili korok wee</i>	Scrutinize first wee
<i>Kichigili</i>	Scrutinize
<i>Kichigili si kenai</i>	Scrutinize to know
<i>Kichigili</i>	Scrutinize. (Song 9).

### 3.5 Extra Linguistic Strategies

Finnegan (1970) observes that besides employing linguistic strategies, artists also employ nonverbal features in their performances and renditions. These features aid in the actualization of the songs and in the realization of meaning. The features include tonal variation, use of gestures and audience involvement.

Kimetto uses tonal variation to build his songs from a relatively enchanting tone to the climax towards the end. This is characteristic of African performances where the tone at the beginning is low and slow building up to the climax where it rises in pitch and speed. There is always ecstasy towards the end and always the song ends abruptly. This a characteristic that is evident in the song **Isun Inye** where the song begins as a chant for the first ten stanzas before breaking into a fast paced beat marking the beginning of the climax. It is at the climax that the title of the song is derived. The variation of tone from communicates the attitude of the artist towards the issue under discussion at different

stages. Tone also highlights the mood in the song. For instance at the beginning of the song **Isun Inye**, the difficulty of taming a difficult child who is disobedient and ends up taking drugs is highlighted. The artist consoles the parents and offers them ways in which they can restore the relationship with their children. The melancholic mood is realized through low tone and slow pace.

Dramatization during performance is also used to enhance meaning. Watching recorded version of the song **Rat Torosta**, the artist uses a he goat to illustrate how a skin was tied around its waist to control it from mating with female goats. This makes the audience understand the meaning of *torosta* (nappy) at the same time creating humor in the performance. During live performances where the real goat is absent, the artist demonstrates how the goat behaves with the skin nappy tied around its waist. He does this by putting his hands on his groin bending forward with his legs tightly crossed.

**Uro Uro** also employs dramatization during performance. The artist again uses a goat, a dog and a donkey to illustrate how animals responded to the commands from their masters. Whenever he mentions an animal, the image of the animal is presented. This is evident in the following lines of the song:

*Kot kigase artet tiendo*

If a goat would listen to a song

*Leiye kot kocham arwenyi*

Leiye to a point of accepting its kid

*Ago tiondo, Kotam nee lagokyok wee*

What is the problem with our  
children

<i>Tos Magase?</i>	Can't they listen?
<i>Kot kongen sigiriet Kiptayandenyin</i>	If a donkey knows its master
<i>Agot eito kongen chito nebae</i>	Even an ox knows its feeder
<i>Ko kinam nee chito</i>	What is wrong with man
<i>Si manam Kiptayandenyin?</i>	Not to know his master? (Song 10)

The animals mentioned are presented responding to their masters meekly. He uses this to challenge human beings to respond to their master who for this case God, whenever he commands them. The drama helps in bringing out the meaning of the message and makes the performance real.

Use of gesture is another feature common in the songs of Kimetto. **Kichigili** (scrutinize) is a song advising the youth to know their H.I.V status before getting into lifetime marriage commitment. When Kimetto was performing during Youth Week organized by Kericho Youth Center between 13<sup>th</sup> and 18th May 2013 at Kericho Teachers' College, he performed the song illustrating how one needed to attend Voluntary Counseling and Testing Centers (VCT) in order to know their status. His dramatic use of gestures in the presentation of the song captivated many members of the audience including those who did not speak Kipsigis language. He demonstrated how one is scrutinized before making lifetime commitment. By gesturing and pointing towards the VCT tents, he directed the audience to the counselors for testing.

Audience involvement is the other technique common in Kimetto's performances. In the same function mentioned above, the artist signaled his audience, majority of who were youths to join him in illustrating how to scrutinize. The members of the audience joined in singing the refrain *Kichigili* while gesturing in a manner like they were looking into a microscope. One of the performances was in Chemitan Academy School where the artist was invited during annual prize celebrations. He performed the song **Isun inye** and the parents involuntarily joined him in the performance because of the relevance of the message he was passing out. The song, as earlier discussed, is an advice to parents to be patient with their children as they face the challenges that come with teen age growth and development.

In conclusion, the chapter dealt with the performative aspect of Kimetto's songs. First, we discussed the tenets of performance and context being a component of oral literature. We argue that Kimetto's songs are actualized and better interpreted during performance. Meaning cannot be derived from content alone but rather in the context of performance. Secondly, we have illustrated how we planned for and carried out the fieldwork. This involved prior visit to the artist's studio in Kericho town where the details for the fieldwork were discussed.

Style is a means through which Kimetto appropriates Kipsigis idiom in his songs. As illustrated above, Kimetto has used a number of idioms from the Kipsigis cultural tradition in the context of gospel music. In order to make the idioms relevant to his subject, Kimetto uses both linguistic and extra linguistic strategies that harmonize the two

cultures. Having interrogated the artist and observed him perform in his natural context and analyzed the styles he uses in his songs, we shall now discuss the themes that Kimetto's songs address.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THEMES IN APPROPRIATION

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, we shall examine the themes tackled in Kimetto's songs and how he uses various idioms to bring out meaning.

**Wolowoli** tackles the theme of generational change and how it has influenced the way of life of the people. The old people have changed significantly both in the mode of dressing and behavior. The artist observes the old do not respect their age. The artist indirectly calls for the old people to accept their status and not compete with the young. He goes on to illustrate how the young generation use language that is not understood by the older generation. He says that they refer their parents by corrupted English version of the terms mother and father. Change in grooming styles is also highlighted. The protagonist in the song wonders how the young and the old change their hairstyles regularly in order to remain in fashion.

This is also highlighted in the song **Ya Yosin** (Old is Bad) where people tend to fear old age. The song prepares the audience for change expected with old age. Personal image and appearance is the main focus where the youthful and smooth looking face is quickly replaced by wrinkled and tough skin in old age. However, the idiom used by both men and women appreciates the beauty that comes with old age. The Kipsigis elders say that old age is a bull while women say that old age is a sign of how tough one is. The artist

transcends the Kalenjin nation by alluding to the Pokot who also refer to old age as “unspearable” meaning that it cannot be killed or stopped. It is worth noting that the Pokot is a pastoralist community and were engaged in periodic raids to their neighbors for cattle. This practice required young warriors to arm themselves and one of the crucial weapons was a spear. They therefore coined the idiom from their experience in using the spear during these raids to protect their community against their enemies. He goes on to warn his audience that old age has no respect to anybody no matter how pretty one looks. He says:

<i>Inyuru chi</i>	You will find one
<i>Ne kitinye iton</i>	Who once had an image
<i>Ne kigararan komingin</i>	How handsome he was when young
<i>Kogibonjirir</i>	Today he is full of wrinkles (Song 4).

**Kirate Setyo** highlights the shock that comes with change evident with the young generation as exhibited in the way they dress and act. The song is derived from a Kipsigis narrative of a troupe of hyenas that roamed villages looking for human corpses left by the cow shed. During one of these escapades, they came across a body on a heap of manure in the cattle shed. The custom of the hyenas was such that their leader was expected to scratch the corpse first to be sure that the man was dead. When it scratched, the man jumped and hit the hyena dead. The rest of the hyenas were shocked that they could not even run. Mr. Maiywa, respondent 2 narrates the story in detail. The artist appropriates this idiom in the song to express the kind of shock the old generation experiences when they see what the young generation does.

He says;

<i>Kirate setyo eng atebosiekwak</i>	You marvel at their character
<i>Kikwonge weei</i>	You get shocked
<i>Kirate setyo, Kirate nebo</i>	You marvel, indeed you do
<i>Kitongonyi, kirote setyo.</i>	You are left marveling
<i>Ninyoru tetenyon Birir kut ku ririan</i>	You meet our daughter red mouthed like a tick
<i>Ikwonge weei</i>	You get shocked
<i>Kitongonyi</i>	You marvel
<i>Kibagach bitenyuan si kosub nebo age</i>	She left her culture and followed another's'
<i>Kitongonyi, Kirate setyo.</i>	You are shocked, you marvel

(Song 5)

While the song castigates western culture as incompatible with the Kipsigis culture, the artist quickly agrees that Christianity plays a role in shaping the character of the individual. This is a statement that Kipsigis culture to a large extent agrees with Christian culture. This in essence creates harmony as opposed to tension between the two cultures.

**Banda Chepkoigoch** is another song that addresses generational change. The song cautions the young generation to go slow on issues. The tortoise is described as a slow but sure animal that focuses on its destination. The song is derived from Kipsigis sayings, *Kibendi banda chepkoigoch* (You go the tortoise pace) and *Kibendi banda machei*



*keel*(You go with silent feet). These sayings, the song says, were taught to them by the elders and the same has to be passed on to the young generation.

<i>Chepkoigoch kinetech boisekyok</i>	Tortoise, taught by our elders
<i>Banda chepkoigoch</i>	Tortoise pace
<i>Kole kibendi machei keel</i>	That we go in silent footsteps
<i>Banda kwombo mutyo</i>	Slow pace
<i>Kibendi</i>	We go
<i>Banda chepkoigoch</i>	Tortoise pace
<i>Chepkoigoch onetwech barnotikyok</i>	Tortoise, teach our youth
<i>Banda chepkoigoch</i>	Tortoise pace
<i>obagach atebetab ra</i>	To disregard today's ways
<i>Banda chepsoboni</i>	Pace of life (Song 3)

The artist appropriates these sayings in the Christian song and goes further to acknowledge the source of the idiom by referring to the elders as having taught them. He then suggests that the same should be passed on to the youth. Kimetto advocates for the passing on of cultural values that define his community from the old to the young generation through gospel songs.

Another theme tackled in Kimetto's songs is conflict resolution. The widening generational gap has strained relationship between the parents and their children. The song **Isun inye** is a plea to the parents to be patient with their children when they seem to be going astray. By appropriating the Kipsigis proverb *Ndo iimin murek, ko mebeel*

*choget* (When rats trouble, you need not to burn your granary), he illustrates that there are a number of ways of solving problems. In the interview with the artist, he admits that he composed the song out of his personal experience with his son who had dropped out from school and got involved in drug and substance abuse. He says that after trying many ways including corporal punishment to rehabilitate him, he resolved to talk to him. He says the son listened to his advice and currently works with USAID. To him this is a great achievement that he wished every parent would emulate.

**Ingete Kimereng Mindo** (A dik dik arouses an antelope) suggests how conflict could be avoided. The song blames gossip and rumor mongering as the major cause of conflict between individuals and communities. The song says that one is always held responsible and accountable for what he says. The song alludes to a kipsigis idiom that a small animal can arouse a big animal and eventually cause its death. Kimetto uses this idiom to warn that a conflict can arise from careless utterances. He says that carelessly uttered words can easily lead friends to fight. The conflicts are not only confined to friends but also families where couples are advised against revisiting old grudges since they become a source of constant misunderstanding that leads to conflict.

Conflict among the Kipsigis was a common occurrence. There was a clear conflict resolution mechanism that involved a council of elders. False or unsubstantiated accusations carried heavy penalties. Kiplangat Chebose attested to this in an interview with him. He says:

Chebose: Conflict resolution was a jurisdiction of the elders. The Kipsigis did not have an overall King or ruler. Justice was administered at the village level. The village was headed by *Boyobgok* who acted as both the administrator and chairman of the council of elders. Cases were conducted on a subway and each case was determined based on its seriousness. A case that involved rumor and gossip attracted stiffer penalty than that of causing physical injury. This is because our people believed that psychological injury was more serious than physical injury. (Respondent 6).

The penalty for causing bodily harm was at the least a cow. It therefore means that the penalty for gossip and rumor mongering required the accused to pay more which in this case is more than one cow. When asked why, Chebose says that the Kipsigis believed that rumors and gossip was a recipe for conflicts that could result in conflict, not only between two individuals but also between communities. The conflicts, he says, would lead to war that would claim many lives. This illustrates how serious this offence was and the reason for stiff penalty. Kimetto uses this background to build his theme on conflict prevention and resolution. He warns the members of his community against fanning conflict through rumor mongering and gossip. He says:

<i>Ingete Kimereng mindo</i>	A dik dik arouses an antelope
<i>Ingete Kipsegeseget boinet</i>	A warthog wakes up a rhino
<i>Sigai kemwa kounon</i>	This was said because
<i>Ingetege ngalek</i>	A word will ignite words
<i>Ngot imwa ngalek che yaachen wee</i>	If you say a bad word

*Kongete che yaachen*

It ignites bad words (Song 6).

Personal integrity is also addressed in the song. Gossip is cited as a practice that compromises on one's integrity. He uses a Kipsigis idiom that one can accidentally bite more than what he can chew but you cannot allow a word to accidentally escape from your mouth (*Kigile kichumunen kererut, ama kichumunen ngolyon*). When one gossips, he/she compromises on his/her integrity. He parallels with the bible where the tongue is said to be a small organ but can ignite a big fire. (James 3:5,6).

Parenting as a challenge is also addressed in this song. Bringing up children in the Kipsigis tradition was a communal responsibility for both men and women. Men were tasked with bringing up the boys while the girls were under the pupilage of the women. The boys were trained to become responsible men in society where their training took between three to six months in the forest. The training was more on practical tasks like hunting and defending the community from external aggression. The girls on the other hand were trained to become responsible wives and mothers. The song builds on this background to ask the parents to talk to their children and bring them up in a manner that they would become responsible members of society. He emphasizes the power of words and the impact that can have on an individual. This approach is also a biblical principal that the artist highlights in the song when he advices the children to obey their parents.

Drugs and substance abuse is a subject addressed in the songs in the songs **Isun inye** (Bring him close) and **Maiywek** (Alcohol). The artist cites bhang taking as a cause for indiscipline among the youth. The song foregrounds the pain and stress that parents go through when they find out that their children take drugs. He advises them to be patient and pray for them.

He says:

<i>Ndo iimin weringung baba</i>	If your son troubles you father
<i>Ndo wendi kot koe bangik</i>	If he gets to a point of taking bhang
<i>Amun yaachen betusiechu</i>	Because these days are bad
<i>Isun inye, Isun inye</i>	Bring him close as you pray (Song 1)

While the parent is urged to be patient, the child is also advised to obey the parent by listening to instructions given by their parents. The burden is not only placed on the shoulders of the parent the child is reminded that he/she has the responsibility over his/her own lives. They are further advised that they have the freedom to choose what is best for their lives.

<i>Magisose ngalek che mwae biik</i>	Don't ignore what people say
<i>Kas katigonet</i>	listen to instructions.
<i>Amat isas ngalek che mwae biik</i>	You don't ignore what people say
<i>Kas katigonet</i>	Listen to instructions
<i>Ago eng tilet itilinyegen</i>	But you decide alone
<i>Matin kotilun</i>	Don't allow them decide for you.
	(Song 1)

Alcoholism is the other theme addressed by the artist in his songs. During the interview, Kimetto narrated how young men from the community are addicted to alcohol to the extent that they are no longer economically productive. The brew taken in drinking dens is brought from the neighboring Gusii community. He says that the Gusii brewed highly concentrated brew commonly known as *ginara* which he says was specifically meant for export to the Kipsigis community. The objective, he says, was to cripple the economic muscle of their neighbors which would make them depend on them. This is what the artist says motivated him to compose the song on this topic.

Beer taking among the Kipsigis was permitted but on condition that it was taken after work. Drinking beer was also a preserve for those members who were successful in life. In the song **Maiywek** warns the members of the community against taking alcohol. He is particularly concerned with the poor members who, despite their already poor state, they make it worse by drinking irresponsibly. The song argues that poverty and alcohol are not compatible. The Kipsigis considered alcoholism as the root cause of poverty and the artist parallels it with the Christian teaching in the bible:

<i>Kalewenaik kurgat tiptem ak somok</i>	Proverbs chapter twenty three
<i>Taunen kurgatab tiptem sigas komie</i>	Start from verse twenty
<i>Amat otebi ak eikab divaik</i>	Don't stay with those who take wine
<i>Amun igu bononin kibogitini</i>	Because drunkards become poor

(Song 11)

The use of poverty and alcohol simultaneously is a deliberate effort by the artist to warn his community that alcoholism automatically leads to poverty.

The correlation between poverty and alcoholism is also highlighted in the song **Chitab Kalenjin** (Kalenjin Man). It is a call for the Kalenjin man to take up his rightful position as a provider of their families and community at large. He particularly calls on them to arise from their sleep and talk:

<i>Ongeguskong bikap Kalenjin</i>	Let us wake up Kalenjin people
<i>Maton keru</i>	Let us not sleep
<i>Ton keteb ngwony bikab Kalenjin</i>	Let us sit down Kalenjin people
<i>Kota Kengalal</i>	We need to talk
<i>Asi kimuuch kenyorun tugul</i>	So that we can all
<i>Kabeletabgei</i>	Compete
<i>Si kibelge ak bororiosiek</i>	Compete with communities
<i>Chemi emet</i>	In the world. ( Song 18)

Kimetto challenges members of his community to wake up to the reality that they are in competition for resources with other communities at both the micro and macro national levels. His concern he says was the rate at which the “other” were taking control of resources of the Kipsigis community. He says that he was disturbed that it seemed like nobody was concerned at the rate at which the young members of the community were becoming irresponsible:

Kimetto: I came to Kericho in 1970 seeking employment after I dropped out of school in class four. My mother could not raise my school fees although it was just six shillings per term. I was only 15 years old and the first place I landed was the famous *Musibar* (Municipal bar). I foolishly bought alcohol to everyone in the club only to find myself penniless at midnight. It was much later that I realized that the *Musibars* were run by our neighbors whose aim was to paralyze our young men and therefore conquer us economically. That is the day I decided never to drink again.

(Respondent 1)

It is evident that Kimetto uses his own personal experiences to educate and sensitize his community about the strategies that their competitors use to make them economically dependent.

The songs **Kichigili** and **Rat Torosta** address H.I.V and AIDS. When the scourge struck, the community never wanted to talk about it and those affected were isolated and stigmatized. This was worse in religious circles where those infected were treated as sinners. Kimetto uses his position as an artist to talk about the subject artistically. **Kichigili** appreciates the power of love between people of the opposite sexes. Incidentally, love was also a taboo subject among the Kipsigis. The community was at first skeptical talking about the subject love. The artist builds up a love narrative that wins approval and acceptance from the members of the reserved community. He starts by talking of love and how it is difficult to control matters of the heart. He mind attributes



the love between a man and woman to God. However he says that there are two types of love: one that is beneficial and another that is brings disaster:

<i>Eee angalalen chamnyetab kwondo</i>	Yes I am about love
<i>Ak murenik</i>	Between a woman and man
<i>Chamnyet Atari nengomagirib</i>	Dangerous love, that brings disaster
<i>Kagonu asenet</i>	Disaster
<i>Chamnyet nebo iman kagonu faida</i>	True love brings profit
<i>Tinye keljin wee</i>	It comes with good luck
<i>Chamnyet age kobo asara</i>	The other love is total lose
<i>Konu asenet wee...</i>	It brings disaster. (Song 9).

Love as mentioned earlier was taboo subject among the Kalenjin and Kimetto seems to parallel it with the occurrences in the Bible where Samson and Delila are in a dangerous relationship that ends disastrously.

Another story in the Bible is an account of the people of Shechem who were given conditions to circumcise their young men if they were to be allowed to marry Jacob's daughters (K.J.V Bible, Genesis 34). The song gets to the climax when it cautions the young people on how to choose a partner for marriage. He advices the young people to go for premarital testing and canceling. The term *Kichigili* (scrutiny) is used repeatedly to emphasize on the need to get tested before one gets married to contain the spread of H.I.V and AIDS. The song was composed in 1998 at a time when the subject was rarely

discussed in the community. Stigmatization and discrimination of infected persons made it a challenge for anyone to talk openly about the subject.

The other song talking about H.I.V and AIDS is **Rat Torosta** (Tie your nappy). *Torosta* is a piece of skin that was tied around the waist of a he goat in order to prevent it from mounting female goats. This practice was conducted purely for two reasons; first to control breeding when the owner did not want specific breed, and secondly if he did not want his breed to be shared out. The artist uses a number of symbols in relation to the subject.

Land is a precious resource among the Kipsigis community. The artist uses land as a symbol to represent a spouse and advises the male members to “zero graze since land today has become scarce”. Zero grazing is used to mean being faithful to one partner. The song says:

<i>Ole kitagomie emet</i>	When the world was still good
<i>Ago kitagoo emet</i>	And the world was still big
<i>Kiagete tuga kunenden</i>	The cows grazed freely
<i>Ra kokiminginit emet</i>	Today the world has shrunk
<i>Kigobai biik siro giresing</i>	People are practicing zero grazing.

(Song 12)

Since the Kipsigis were predominantly pastoralists, cattle and land are common resources that defined their success. Wealth was determined by the size of land one owned and the number of cows he had. The use of these symbols is effective and resonates well with the members of the community. Land in this context is used to refer to the number of partners an individual should have. Before the advent of H.I.V and AIDS scourge, polygamy was a common practice hence the ‘grazing’ space was expansive. Zero grazing refers to being faithful to one partner. The song takes the hip hope style and the artist performs with his sons. When we asked him why he chose a totally different style in the songs, he said that he targeted the youth because they were more vulnerable.

Vincent Bett, a friend to the artist says that Kimetto helped the community to open the discussion of HIV and AIDS through music:

Bett: As you may be aware, our people are conservative in nature and would hardly discuss H.I.V issues openly. In year 2002, I conducted a survey on the perception of H.I.V among the Kipsigis in three Districts namely Kericho, Bureti and Bomet. What I gathered was amazing that many of our people had ailing members who did not access medical attention due to fear of stigmatization and discrimination. (Respondent 7).

**Kichigili** is an expression used to mean thorough investigation leaving nothing to chance. The practice was common when girls were underwent virginity test. The girls would undergo thorough examination that included sitting on a stool splashed with milk. When

this idiom is appropriated in the Christian context as well as contemporary issues builds harmony and concordance between the two divides.

Modernity is the other theme highlighted in Kimetto's songs. The mention of grooming, dressing and language in the song **Wolowoli** (change) depicts change brought by modernity associated with western European culture. The song admonishes both young and old members of the community who have deviated from the culture and norms of the community by dressing, grooming and talking disrespectfully. The song goes:

<i>Inyuru chebyoso ne nyoljin tegisto</i>	You find a woman worth respecting
<i>Kekwong'e che yoe</i>	Doing unacceptable things
<i>Inyuru Boisiek che yosen agichek</i>	You also find old men
<i>Kogase kasari</i>	Are not left behind these days
<i>Mengechen bik tugul betusiechu kimi</i>	Everybody is young nowadays
<i>Magomi chi ne yos</i>	Nobody is young
<i>Kisole sumek kotuegitun</i>	The hair is dyed black
<i>Si motook kalwalek</i>	To hide grey hair. (Song 2)

The artist decries the moral decadence that has pervaded his community as a result of modernity. He says that everyone is struggling to remain young and would do everything to remain and maintain youthful look. Money is also highlighted in the succeeding stanza where people are known to love money more than their lives. This is seen in the migration of both men and women in pursuit of pleasure and money in urban areas. Money and urban migration are symbols of modernity which have led to moral

decadence in society. Abortion is cited as a common practice that young women procure with the aid of doctors who do not value life but instead value money. Modernity has come with new challenges facing the community today which both the Kipsigis culture and Christian doctrine abhor in equal measure.

Modernity has also seen change in mode of dressing. In the Kipsigis culture, male and female dress codes were distinct. Maiywa reiterated that men wore *sambut* while women put on *chepkaiyet*. This distinction went further to the initiation camps where men put on a special gown called *Koliget* and the women initiates wore *Menegubet*. Dress code was strictly followed and at no time would this rule be violated. The song **Wolowoli** castigates women who wear clothes that are confusing:

<i>Kogoit ingoriet ne kile miniskirt</i>	A clothe called miniskirt is out
<i>Ne mweunen konyek</i>	The eyes ran away
<i>Kogoit ingoriet madiaba Kinyasa</i>	Another one called <i>madiaba Kinyasa</i>
<i>Ne kogolaach kwonyik</i>	That women wear
<i>Ile ko kinyasa</i>	You think it is a short
<i>Achicha inyee wolowoli</i>	No, no they change change. (Song 2)

Trousers and shorts are traditionally worn by men while dresses and skirts define women. The artist blames the change in times occasioned by modern lifestyle.

Language is another issue that modernity has affected. The song talks of the young generation referring to their parents by names that the parents themselves do not understand. *Fathey* and *mothey* are corrupted versions of father and mother respectively. Kimetto sees this as an indication of corrupted morals and lack of respect to the elders by the youth. He advises them to show respect to their elders and seek to beautify the heart rather than the body.

**Kirate Setyo** is another song that talks about modernity. Money is the reason that would make one betray a brother. The song also criticizes young ladies who wear excessive make ups in order to attract undue attention. The artist employs sarcasm when he says that her mouth is red like that of a tick. This imagery makes the listener distaste this practice since it makes her be seen as a tick. Since a tick is a parasite, the artist seems to suggest that those who wear excessive makeup are out to fleece their hosts of their blood. The image of a tick used in this context alludes to prostitution which is a product of modernity.

**Kokobeng** addresses economic woes in society today. Education is highlighted as a challenge to many parents who struggle to raise fees for their children. Wars, global conflicts and famine are also mentioned as challenges facing society today. All these issues are products of modernity associated with western civilization.

Corruption is a major topic that is tackled in Kimetto's songs. The songs **Osoya** (bribe) and **Kimnyet** ( ugali) are a direct onslaught on corruption in different sectors in society.

The chiefs, police officers and judges are castigated as leading in demanding for bribes:

*Inyuru Kiruogindet komoche osoya* You find a chief demanding for a bribe

*Soya!* Bribe!

*Koninyoru Pilisiot Kotebe Osoya* A Police officer also asks for a bribe

*Soya!* Bribe!

*Agot jaj eng kotini Komache osoya* Even a judge in court asks for a bribe

*Soya!* Bribe!

*Mwalimuyat agine komache osoya* Even the teacher too wants a bribe

*Soya!* Bribe!

*Ilen isom boisiet kotebe osoya* You ask for a job they ask for a bribe

*Soya!* Bribe!

*Ilen iyai kiy tugul komache osoya* Everything you do demands for a bribe

*Soya!* Bribe! (Song 20)

The public officers mentioned paint a picture of contemporary African governments where corruption is the order of the day. Kimetto illustrates how the vice has affected every sector in the public service and how impossible it is to do anything without paying a bribe.

Mortality is the other subject highlighted in Kimetto's Songs. The Kalenjin and Kipsigis in particular feared death. Death was viewed as bad omen such that whenever it fell on a family, they were isolated for months before an elaborate cleansing ritual was conducted.

In the song **Betutab meet** (The day of death), death is demystified but not before bringing the audience' consciousness to its inevitability. The reality of death is captured at the beginning of the song where it is said that it surprises and captures like a trap. It is further personified as an enemy that cannot be compared with any other world over. The artist seems to remind the members that death was not only an occurrence unique to the community but rather a universal phenomenon that is best explained in the Christian religion. Like most African religions Christianity holds that there is life after death. The Kipsigis hold that there is life after death through reincarnation. Children born were believed to be those members of the community who had just died. They were thus given the names of those members who had just died. The artist capitalizes on this background to advance the Christian resurrection concept. Hope of life after death is kindled while the fear associated with it is diminished. The melancholic mood at the beginning of the song is replaced by an ecstatic tone at the end when resurrection is celebrated.

**Tilil Kipsengwet** is a song that explains the concept of heaven, the ultimate destination for every Christian. After discussing death and giving hope that there is resurrection the artist seems to be obligated to answer the question, 'after resurrection, then what?' As mentioned earlier, Kimetto speaks to his community with some sense of urgency sounding like the choice of being a Christian is communal. He appeals to the Kalenjin nation to purpose to get to heaven.

*Lagokab Kalenjin oiye*

Kalenjin children

*Ongitililge Oiye*

Let us cleanse ourselves Oiye.

*Tili Kipsengwet oiye*

Heaven is holy oiye



<i>Mache sigunet oiye</i>	It needs repentance oiye.
<i>Oiye agure Kalenjin oiye</i>	I call upon the Kalenjin Oiye
<i>Kogas it Kiptayat oiye</i>	To listen to the Lord oiye
<i>Kimwachini lagokab Kalenjin</i>	We tell the Kalenjin children
<i>Kele mi emet ne kararan</i>	That there is a good place.
Kimwachini bororiosiek tugul	We tell all the nations
<i>Kele mi emet ne kararan</i>	That there is a good place. (Song 14)

The promise of a perfect place called heaven gives the audience hope beyond death and helps them overcome the fear of death. The song emphasizes on how holy heaven is and the protagonist sounds like he has been there in person. He positions himself at that elevated position as the spokesman of the community speaking with authority as a type of prophet.

#### **4.2 Summary**

In conclusion, this chapter has dealt with different thematic concerns captured in the songs of Joel Arap Kimetto. We have illustrated how he uses different idiomatic expressions sourced from the Kipsigis culture and tradition to highlight issues affecting his community utilizing the gospel music license and space.

Kimetto has captured a range of themes affecting all generations in his community. We have highlighted nine thematic concerns of the artist captured in his songs. We realized that some songs captured more than one theme a fact that illustrated the creativity of the artist in that he is able to weave a number of themes within the same frame. Generational

change and its challenges have been highlighted in the songs **Wolowoli, Ya Yosin, KirateSetyo** and **Banda Chepkoigoch**. Conflict prevention and resolution is the other theme ably captured in the songs **Isun Inye** and **Ingete Kimereng Mindo**. Conflict avoidance is strongly advocated and resolution mechanisms borrowed from Kipsigis traditional judicial system are suggested. Parenting is a subject that the artist foregrounds while admitting that the song **Isun Inye** was composed as a result of his experience with one of his sons. He suggests that parents ought to be patient with their children especially as they navigate teenage. H.I.V and Aids and Drugs and substance abuse are contemporary issues that the artist deals with in four songs namely; **Kichigili, Rat Torosta, IsunInye** and **Maiywek**. Corruption, economic woes, modernity and mortality are also tackled using idioms from the Kipsigis and culture.

Having discussed how the analyzed songs appropriate Kipsigis idioms and the major themes tackled by Kimetto, we shall evaluate the results of this appropriation in the next chapter.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**HARMONY BETWEEN CULTURE AND CHRISTIANITY REALIZED**  
**THROUGH APPROPRIATION OF KIPSIGIS IDIOM**

**5.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the inherent harmonies and tensions between Kipsigis tradition and Christian religion as presented in Joel Arap Kimetto's Gospel songs. The chapter shall examine how Kimetto's songs strive to bridge the gap that Christian religion created when it came in contact with the African religion and culture. By appropriating the Kipsigis idiom in Christian music, Kimetto illustrates that the clash between the Christian religion and African culture was not supposed to be there in the first place. The idioms used are indicative of the universality of human belief and quest for supernatural deity. On the other hand, the clash between the two cultures has resulted in tensions brought about by modernity and civilization which are elements of Christianity. We shall attempt to illustrate how these harmonies and tensions are dealt with by the artist through his songs.

In an article published in the journal *Sounds of Change* titled *Swedish Mission and Music Education in South Africa*, Stig-magnus Thorsen observes that the Swedish missionaries in South Africa "combined the Christian mission with the cultural mission," (186). It is evident that the missionaries all over Africa were not only concerned with Christian evangelization but were also determined to subvert the African culture. Thorsen submits that the missionaries "chose to associate with the Europeans and became specifically co-

operative with the representatives of the British Government in Natal,” (185). The cooperation was for the purpose of attacking the African culture and replacing it with the ‘civilized’ western culture. Frans Fristedt illustrates the missionary approach to the black people in *Twenty Five Years in South Africa, Memories and Experiences* when he says that they (missionaries) deliberately created a divide between the Christian converts with those who chose to remain with their African culture and religion. These were called “heathens” which is rather a derogatory identity tag.

In *Almost Like Home*, Sendtron presents converts who are meek and subdued seen with their “heads bent in confession and prayer or faces raised in hymns of thanks giving and praise” (7), in total contrast to the heathen who are “... horrifying to listen to the dreadful, monotonous shouting..., and to see the wild gestures of waving their arms about and swaying their upper bodies...” (106). This (mis)representation of the African cultural practice as monotonous while that of the Christian as civilized is what the artist attempts to correct through his songs.

## **5.2 Kipsigis Culture in Gospel Music**

### **5.2.1 Harmony in the Idiom**

Kimmeto’s songs are in two parts; the first part is a reflection of the Kipsigis culture and tradition where idioms are sourced, and the second part introduces the Christian concepts and principles. This creative approach by the artist demonstrates that the Kipsigis culture and tradition share a lot in common contrary to what was initially propagated by the

missionaries. We shall analyze the following songs in clear demonstration of how the two supposedly opposing cultures are in harmony.

The song **Isun Inye** begins with a Kipsigis proverb that is introduced and applied in different contexts for the first ten stanzas. The proverb *memuchi iter taritik ko masir metingung, ago imuchiiter komatech keswet eng metit* (You cannot stop birds from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building a nest on your head) is used to generate other generic versions of the proverb with the same meaning. The generic proverb derived is *Ndo iimin murek, ko mebel choget* (If rats trouble you, you don't have to burn your granary). The two idioms are used to advise the members of the community on how to deal with issues that are stressful. The message is that there are many ways of solving problems and one should not despair to the point of committing more blunders in life. The idiom suggests alternatives that one could consider in resolving personal challenges. In essence, there can never be only one solution to problems that are in society.

The song seamlessly transits from Kipsigis cultural context to the Christian principles of dealing with difficult situations. The critical role of a pastor is introduced as one of the alternatives of dealing with disobedience among the youth. The song suggests that if a child becomes disobedient, friends, clansmen, elders and the pastor can be asked to talk to him. The pastor is brought in as one of the alternatives but seemingly as the last resort in the protocol. The placement of the pastor in the midst of the Kipsigis traditional method of canceling the youth is a clear suggestion that Kipsigis culture is in harmony

with Christianity. The song also suggests that prayer is a very effective mechanism to address problems in life. Prayer is both a Christian and African Traditional religious phenomenon which is believed to be the solution problems. The other suggestion is for the parent to take his children to church regularly:

<i>Isun inye, isun isun inye</i>	Bring them close, bring them close
<i>Sigindondon isun inye</i>	You parent bring them close
<i>Imutun kobwa Kanisa</i>	Bring them to Church
<i>Isun inye, isun inye</i>	Bring them close, bring them close.

(Song 1)

The song has fused the Kipsigis conflict resolution mechanism when dealing with the children with the Christian principles of prayer and church attendance. The song therefore suggests a two thronged approach to the problem where the Kipsigis traditional approach agrees with the Christian approach.

The song **Banda Chepkoigoch** is a call for sobriety and slow and careful approach to issues. The kipsigis are known for their careful and slow response to issues. There is a common saying that says *korwoch mui* (let the skin think) which is an equivalent to the English expression “to sleep over it”. This expression is used to warn people against rushing in making decisions which they may later regret. The song acknowledges the fact that the elders taught that people should walk slowly. In fact a generic version of the proverb, *Kibendi machei kel*, is used towards the end of the song.

The journey is appropriated into the Christian religion and is likened to the spiritual journey to heaven. The artist advises his audience that they should go slow on issues of Christian faith just as their master Jesus did. The song says:

<i>Chepkoigoch Kisubi yetindenyon</i>	The tortoise following our Lord
<i>Banda chepkoigoch</i>	Tortoise pace
<i>Kisubi Kot keit gaa</i>	Following him 'till we get home
<i>Kot keger togenyin</i>	Till we see his face
<i>Banda Chepkoigoch</i>	The tortoise pace (Song 3)

Kimetto reminds his audience who are members of his community that following Jesus is a slow and sure process that they are accustomed to and long practiced by their fore fathers. The fusion of the Kipsigis worldview into the Christian religion makes it more acceptable to the community since they can easily relate to it.

In the interview with the artist, he said that he was compelled to compose the song owing to the emergence of charismatic movements that robbed the mainstream churches of their members. He says that until the early nineties, the predominant churches in the Kipsigis region were The Roman Catholic Church, African Gospel Church and African Inland Church. However, the mid nineties saw the entry of Pentecostal churches that attracted the youth and the educated members. Since then, he says, many other movements have penetrated the region and thus the need for him to raise the alarm.

**Ya Yosin** (old age is bad) is phrase that is used to highlight the mortal nature of human being. The song's title suggests that old age is bad; the Kalenjin culture generally agreed that old age is both good and bad. The song samples the philosophies of different gender as well as other Kalenjin ethnic groups on this subject and says:

<i>Mwoe boisiek kole kiruk yosin</i>	The elders say oldage is a bull
<i>Mwae Chepyosok kole Korom yosin</i>	The women say oldage is tough
<i>Komwa Bikab Pokot kole yosin magitor</i>	The pokot say that oldage cannot be speared
<i>Aikwek korom yosin</i>	Indeed old age is bad
<i>Ne kiam Kipkeny</i>	That ate <i>Kipkeny</i> (Song 4)

The song then introduces the biblical account of old age as discussed by King David. David is presented as someone who dreaded old age and is said to have pleaded with God not to desert him in his old age. The song says:

<i>Kinai Daudi kole korom yosin</i>	David knew that old age is tough
<i>Kosa Jehovah kole mat iwirtan</i>	He prayed God that don't throw me
<i>Yetun Kayositu</i>	When I grow old
<i>kokabek kimnatet</i>	And my strength is no more
<i>Tun Kayositu</i>	When I grow old
<i>Ak asich kalwalek</i>	Full of grey hair
<i>Komebagaktan we Kamuktaindet</i>	Do not leave me my Lord
<i>Inaman eunyun</i>	Hold my hand



*Kota it taingung*

Till I get to your presence. (Song 4)

The fear of old age and its ultimate end which is death is an issue both in the Kipsigis community just as it is in Christian religion. Kimetto builds on the Kipsigis knowledge and the philosophy on old age as an entry point to Christian religion by quoting one of the biblical heroes whom he unmasks as having feared death. Juxtaposing the two in my view creates harmony between Kipsigis culture and Christianity.

In **Ingete Kimereng mindo**, gossip and rumor mongering is condemned as the cause of conflict. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Kipsigis viewed rumor mongering as a recipe for serious conflicts and carried heavy penalty. The song builds on this background to introduce what Christianity says on the same subject.

<i>Soman eng Kalewenaik we</i>	Read from Proverbs
<i>Taman ak sisit</i>	Chapter eighteen
<i>Kaitetet tiptem ak agenge</i>	Verse twenty one
<i>Si kobiit iguye</i>	For you to understand.
<i>Tinye kipnatet ngelyepta</i>	The tongue has power
<i>Ne imuchi kosoob</i>	To heal
<i>Ago tinye kimnatet kora wee</i>	And it has power also
<i>Ne imuchi kobar</i>	To kill. (Song 6)

The Biblical view on rumor mongering and gossip is similar to the Kipsigis view. While the Kipsigis considers careless talk as a recipe for conflict that could lead to death, the Bible takes the tongue to be a small organ that is double edged; with the ability to heal or kill. The two accounts are in concordance which brings harmony between Kipsigis culture and Christian religion.

The narrative in the song **Kichigili** resonates with the Kipsigis audience. This is because a Biblical account of two communities that intended to intermarry had cultural difference that impeded them. The bride's community practiced circumcision while the groom's did not. When the groom's community came for the bride they were told that they could not take her until the groom was circumcised. For the love of the bride, not only was the groom circumcised, but the entire community's men were. This was a strategy by the bride's community to paralyze their neighbor's defense which they later attacked and massacred. The artist uses this narrative because the Kipsigis do circumcise their men and they border the Luo to the west who apparently did not circumcise. This account is exciting and makes the Kipsigis to relate well with Christianity and does not view it as foreign.

It is worth restating at this point that the Kipsigis, like most Kalenjin communities are pastoral. They keep animals for both milk and meat. More importantly, the animals are a measure of wealth. Animals are used as bride prize and thus by implication a means of procreation. The animals know their shepherds and there is communication between them. The animals bear names and whenever a shepherd calls, the animals respond

appropriately. The song **Uro uro** is grounded on this premise; a premise that is quite familiar with the community. The argument pursued by the protagonist in the song is that if an animal can listen to and respond to the instructions given by its shepherd, then there is no reason as to why a human being cannot listen to his master who is God. The song says:

<i>Kot kongen sigiriet Kiptayandenyin</i>	If a donkey knows its master
<i>Agot eito Kongen Chito nebae</i>	Even an ox knows its feeder
<i>Ko kinam nee chito</i>	What is wrong with man
<i>Si mania Kiptayanden ?</i>	Not to know his master?

(Song 10)

The pastoral nature of the Kalenjin makes it easier for them to comprehend the biblical relationship between a master (shepherd) and the animals (sheep). This juxtaposition in my view establishes strong links between the two cultures.

Another characteristic of the Kipsigis is that they used to raid their neighbors, the Maasai to the south and the Kisii and Luo to the West. Whenever these raids were executed, there emerged the heroes depending on the number of cows they brought home.

The heroes were crowned and were envied by young boys who looked up to them as their role models. On their return after these raids, they sang a special song of victory on their way back home. The title of the song is **Agoyo**. Kimmetto appropriates this song to illustrate the power of praise songs. He begins from the premise that if the Kipsigis used to praise their heroes, the Christians also praise their Hero who is God. He samples a

number of the Biblical heroes who sang songs of victory in times of challenges. These heroes included Paul and Silas as recorded in the New Testament of the Bible as well as the Israelites as they carried the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament. By paralleling Kipsigis hero celebration song with the biblical heroic singing harmony is created between the supposedly opposing cultures.

In the song **Agoyo**, Kimetto chooses to begin from the biblical account as a basis of building his argument. This is a departure from his common style where he begins from the community's experience as a foundation for Christian message. After giving the accounts of Paul and Silas in the opening stanzas, the song revisits the Kipsigis musical archive and states:

<i>Kimi tiendo ne kirure</i>	There was a ripe song
<i>Ne kityeni boisiokyok</i>	That was sang by our elders
<i>Ye kagoterter uinwek</i>	When they overcame obstacles
<i>Ne kigiguren Agoyo</i>	That was called <i>Agoyo</i>
	(Song 13)

This introduction grounds the song to the Kipsigis culture and way of life and paves the way for the actual *Agoyo* song in the succeeding stanzas which also acts as the climax of the song. The song assumes Kipsigis traditional tune characterized by long repetitive chants with phrases that communicate meaning sparsely distributed in the stanzas.

<i>Agoyo!</i>	<i>Agoyo!</i>
<i>Agoyo!</i>	<i>Agoyo!</i>

*Agoyo wee*

*Agoyo wee*

*Agoyo.*

*Agoyo*

*Oiye, tiendab acherik*

Yes, a warriors' song.

(Song 13)

The last line in each stanza describes who sang the song and on what occasion. The other phrases include: sang after crossing the river; sang after a successful raid; sang after overcoming challenges; sang after the warriors brought cattle home and sang when the brave brought the cattle home. The song then brings back the Christian belief that there shall be singing and celebration in heaven after overcoming the challenges on earth. The Kipsigis would identify with the heaven celebration and shall be more convinced to desire to get to the heavenly celebration if it is anything like the celebration they know and have participated in. This juxtaposition is another way of bringing harmony between the two cultures

### **5.2.2 Harmony in Melody and Props**

In *Sounds of Change* James Flolu in a paper titled *Music Teacher Education in Ghana: Social and Political Features of Music in Africa* argues that Christian converts in Ghana were prohibited from “participating in traditional music activities and culprits were excommunicated from the church,” (166). The only music and musical activities that were permissible in church were “hymns, brass and music, chants, psalms, canticles, masses, and other types of western classical music,” (166). This was a common practice with all the missionaries across Africa. The prohibition as observed was on any musical activity that exhibited African characteristic. Kimetto through his music has deviated

from this norm and indeed gone further to use traditional tunes, costumes and instruments that were negated in the early Christian circles. The deliberate appropriation of the tunes and costumes in the rendition and performance of Kimetto's songs has bridged the gap which was created by the missionaries.

The song **Tilil Kipsengwet Oiye**, takes the Kipsigis traditional tune of a female circumcision song called *Chepkotilet*. This was a song purely reserved and sang for the initiates during their passing out. It was performed to celebrate the bravery of the girls who were then graduating to be adults. Maiywa says:

Interviewer:           Who sang *Chepkotilet* and in what occasion was it performed?

Maiywa:               (Laughing). *Chepkotilet* was a great song and dance performed by young women and girl initiates during their pass out ceremony called *ngetunet*. The dance was performed at night either inside a big circular hat or an arena around a huge fire. The fresh initiates were in competition to attract the best suitor who could pay more bride prize to her father. The initiate who danced best would win the highest bride prize and would be married the same night. It was also an occasion when young men could spot their brides and it was always competitive. The best performer would only go to the man who had enough cows and this meant that young men had to work hard to raise enough cows for this occasion. (Respondent 2)

There are three things that Maiywa highlights in this account. First, the song was performed at night. Secondly, it was a form of competition for both the young brides and their suitors. Finally, it was a celebration of a cultural practice that marked passage of rite from childhood to adulthood. These attributes of the song and performance are in direct collision with Christianity where night or darkness is symbolic of evil while female circumcision is an abomination. For Kimetto to choose the tune for a song that talks about heaven is both sarcastic and ironical at the same time. When we sought answers to this question, he responded:

Interviewer: Your song *Tilil Kipsengwet Oiyeye* uses the tune and dance style similar if not the same with that of *Chepkotilet* while you are aware that *Chepkotilet* was a female circumcision song. Could you explain why?

Kimetto: As you have rightly stated, I used the tune and style of Kipsigis female circumcision song in the song *Tilil Kipsengwet*. This was deliberate in the sense that I wanted to tell the world that our traditional practices were not that evil as they were branded. In as much as the circumcision itself was bad, not everything around it was bad. Our celebrations were beautiful, our singing was wonderful and our dance great. I wanted to show the world that we can remove those 'bad' components in our culture and tradition and still retain the original and rich flavor in our songs.

(Respondent 1)

Kimetto seems to be conscious of the fact that the place of traditional cultural practices is shrinking yet those positive elements of his culture can be appropriated into new spaces, gospel music being one of them. The irony in this song is the Christian concept of heaven, a place that is supposed to be holy, is described through a tune of a song that the Christian religion regards as evil. This is a creative way of bringing two extremely opposing concepts together and hence creating harmony.

Another song that appropriates traditional tune is **Uro ee Uro**. As discussed in the previous chapter, the song is the actual song that was sang to a goat that refused its kid. The song is more of a chant with repetition of the words *Uro uro* which is nonsensical in Kipsigis. Meaning is only derived in the context of singing. The artist does not only think of importing the tune but the song in its entirety. After warming up his audience to the tune and performance of the authentic song, he infuses Christian messages long after the audience has fully come on board. The infusion is done within the performance of the original song whose tune and rhythm is carried on to the end.

Kimetto employs rhetoric question in bridging the two divides, the Kipsigis culture and the Christian doctrine. The song asks:

<i>Kot kongen sigiriet Kiptayandenyin</i>	If a donkey knows its master
<i>Agot eito Kongen Chito nebae</i>	Even an ox knows its feeder
<i>Ko kinam nee chito</i>	What is wrong with man
<i>Si mania Kiptayandenyin?</i>	Not to know his master?

(Song 10)



The other aspect evident in the song is the use of *Chepkesem*, a Kipsigis five stringed instrument whose sound is the key signature at the opening of the song. A whistle and a drum are also used, common in Kipsigis traditional songs, dances and performances.

**Yele Laleyo** is another song that uses a traditional tune of a Kalenjin praise song. The artist replaces the second lines *oh laleyo* in the original Kipsigis version with the Christian praise phrase Halleluiah amen in the modified Christian version. Here below is a comparison of the two versions.

<b>Original version</b>	<b>Modified version (Kimetto's).</b>
<i>Yeleo Laleyo Laleyo oh</i>	Yeleyo Laleyo oh
<i>Oiye Laleyo</i>	Oh halleluiah
<i>Yeleo Laleyo Laleyo oh</i>	Yeleo Laleyo Laleyo
<i>Oiye laleyo Oiye...</i>	Oh halleluiah amen...
<i>Oiye boiboyet.</i>	Oh eng boiboyet. (Song 17)

Kimetto takes the song in its authentic form and replaces words and phrases to fit his message as derived from the Christian perspective. The song therefore sounds authentically traditional but the message in it is Christian.

**Banda Chepkoigocho** is another song that appropriates Kipsigis traditional tune. The song is not only rendered in the traditional tune, but the instrumentation is purely Kipsigis. *Kimengeng*, a Kipsigis stringed instrument, a drum and jingles are used. Drumming is slow and provides the tempo which is symbolic of the slow pace in life. The dancing is gracious with minimal body movement except forward and back head movements. This

is characteristic of the Kipsigis traditional dance. By using these instruments, the artist demonstrates that instruments, irrespective of their source are universal and can be used to actualize songs of any kind.

**Kirate Setyo** is another song that is in Kipsigis traditional tune. However, the song begins in a common melody where all the singers sing in unison for the first four stanzas. On the fifth stanza, the tune changes to Kipsigis traditional version and the soloist takes over most parts where he chants long lines and lets the other members answer the refrains. The seamless fusion of contemporary and traditional tunes harmonizes Kipsigis culture and Christianity.

### **5.3 Inherent Tensions in Kimetto's Songs.**

Okumu, in a paper titled *Local, Tradition and Global Aspects of Contemporary African Music in South African Television* argues against the notion that Africans should revert to cultural traditions. He opines that “African music, while being traditional in practice and interrelating with the forces of dynamism, cannot escape the process of change” (160). This opinion is also held by Barber (1997:7), when he argues that calling for the retention of African cultural values benefits the needs of the observer and not from the nature of that which is being observed. This section identifies the inherent tensions caused in the process of fusing Kipsigis traditional cultural elements into the Christian religious space in the songs of Joel Kimetto. While Kimetto's songs strive to infuse Kipsigis culture through the appropriation of the idiom in the gospel music, the attempt has resulted in some tensions and contradictions that are left unresolved.

In the introduction to Sida studies volume 12, Thorsen observes that extrinsic forces such as missions, colonization, or neo-colonization “often evoke a striving towards modernity...sometimes followed by clashes between diverse African environments,” (14). Modernity is blamed as the cause of moral degradation in the song **Wolowoli**. Christianity is a symbol of change since the process of becoming one involved discarding traditional practices and by extension culture. The championing of the preservation of Kipsigis culture and at the same time championing change is in itself a contradiction. This contradiction brings confusion in the Kipsigis Christian who is lost in dual identities; that of a Kipsigis first, and secondly as a Christian.

The other tension evident in the songs is when the songs **Banda Chepkoigoch** and **Chitab Kalenjin** are juxtaposed. While **Banda Chepkoigoch** advocates for going slow on issues, **Chitab Kalenjin** (Kalenjin man) calls for the members of the community to move fast with the times. Indeed it personifies the world and says that it is on the ran:

<i>Epchech it oh chitab Kalenjin</i>	Listen to us you Kalenjin man
<i>Kemwaun ra</i>	We want to tell you today
<i>Oiye Labati emet</i>	The world is on the ran
<i>Matonone</i>	It is not static. ( Song 18)

The assertion that the world is on the ran implies that people are always in a hurry to meet the demands of life. This creates tension between Christian religion on one hand and societal expectations and demands on the other.

In conclusion, Kimetto's songs to a great extent strive to harmonize the Kipsigis traditions and culture with Christian religion through appropriation of idioms, tunes and instruments sourced from the community. This chapter has illustrated how different Kipsigis idioms are fused into Christian narratives as narrated in the song, and vice versa in some cases. This harmonization makes the songs more acceptable to the members of the community as they can easily relate to them. The tunes also make the songs performance familiar to the members and thus receiving wide appreciation in the community. *Chepkesem*, the drum and the whistle were the evident instruments used in the songs.

Since the main concern of the artist was to illustrate the cohesion that exists between Kipsigis culture and Christianity, we discovered few tensions inherent in the songs brought about by incidental contradictions.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6.0 Conclusion

In this chapter, I seek to make a summary of what I have discussed in the preceding chapters by identifying the salient observations made with regard to the appropriation of Kipsigis idiom in the performance and songs of Joel Arap Kimetto. I started by pointing out that the appropriation of the Kipsigis idiom in Kimetto's songs can only be best appreciated with the understanding of Kimetto's background. I began by taking a step back to the biographical history of the artist, paying attention to his immediate environment, background, experiences, challenges, and notions, with the aim of seeking connection between his history and the reasons behind his appropriation of the idioms in his songs. It appears that Kimetto's songs are a product of what Mikhail Bakhtin (20) calls both parody and travesty of the past. While he is glorifying the past as an ideal example to the present, he severally engages in a dialectic analysis of the present to usher in new traditions, in this case Christianity, which seem to work as an ideal past. He seems to be resorting to the past for leverage to address the present because, as Bakhtin adds, the loftiness of the past has "something of an official air" (20). Kimetto's personal experiences have a great influence on his songs for he emerges as a strong advocate of the past while appreciating the inevitability of the present.

The development, growth and survival of Kimetto as a gospel artist can be said to be because he speaks to the consciousness of his people, echoing Kipsigis culture and traditions. He seems to be torn between the traditional past of his people and his

inevitable acquired Christian identity. He illustrates a kind of nostalgic attachment to his traditions and culture which he constantly escapes to through his songs. He has appropriated his people's art through constant interaction with elders, neighbors, fellow singers, politicians and religious people, curving himself out as an extraordinary person. His rise in music career cannot only be attributed to his being a beneficiary of the emerging issues in society, but also his personal experiences early in life as well as wide exposure through travels within and beyond the Kalenjin nation. The other element in his songs that has kept him unraveled is the fact that he has remained consistent with his style as opposed to most of upcoming singers who have taken the popular trajectory, conforming to the trends in vogue worldwide. Kimetto has paid fidelity to his roots by retaining the folkloric connection, a deliberate deviation from most common trend in contemporary Christian music. His songs have thus become emblematic to a silent protest against the becoming Western culture.

The other significant leverage that catapulted his singing career is his association with former President Daniel Arap Moi who happens to be a devout Christian. Moi's interest in Kimetto's songs, it can be argued that although Moi grew and benefited from the African Inland Mission scholarship, he must have "missed" his culture. He seems to be nostalgically reliving his past through Kimetto's songs. In the artist's own words he composes songs that speak to the Kalenjin consciousness that transcend time and space. A keen observation during the performance shows involuntary and spontaneous (re)action from Moi as he rises from his seat and joins the performers without invitation.

The artist benefited greatly from Moi's philanthropic character with donations of recording equipment and a van.

I observed that Kimetto's songs are full of idioms in form of authentic Kipsigis traditional proverbs and narratives. Kimetto incorporates the two genres - the proverb and the narrative - in the creation of his songs. The idioms are creatively crafted into the gospel songs with well thought out application that harmonizes the Kipsigis culture and Christian religion. Most of his songs therefore carry in them narratives and proverbs as the foundation upon which the songs are created.

Kimetto uses Kipsigis idioms to address issues affecting his community cutting across time, gender and generational divides. Kimetto visits the community's rich oral tradition as well as communal memory and consciousness from where he sources the idioms. This is evident from his reference to the traditional past in his songs. He does not claim exclusive rights to the knowledge he helps to create but rather acknowledges the source as communal. He appropriates the idioms in tackling themes like change, H.I.V and Aids, Substance and alcohol abuse, corruption, conflict and mortality among others. We observed that he uses the idiom as a foundation upon which he builds his arguments. Through this, he demonstrates that issues affecting society are universal and they traverse cultural boundaries, space and time.

The appropriation of Kipsigis idiom in Kimetto's gospel songs has helped in diffusing tension between the Kipsigis tradition and culture on one hand and Christianity on the other. He achieves this by juxtaposing Kipsigis culture, embedded in the idioms, with Christian culture as carried in the bible. Kimetto uses the gospel song as a vehicle to articulate his culture while at the same time pushing a Christian agenda.

This study however is not exhaustive. It would be interesting to investigate the intersection between the individual creativity and the communal claim of the idioms appropriated in Kimetto's songs. Perhaps question that emerges is whose songs are they? Are they Kimetto's or do they belong to the community?

A comparative study could also be done between Kimetto's songs and other songs by other artist from the community. This shall highlight the differences and/or similarities between the songs to ascertain the level of creativity of Kimetto.



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## Appendix 1

### KIMETTO'S SONGS ANALYZED

#### 1. ISUN INYE

Ng,wonduni kinetege kila,  
Magigesu ng'omnot!  
Ng'wonduni kinetege kipkoi  
Magitore ng'omnot

Kas tupchet kalewenoni  
Kas amwaun x 2

**Memuchi iter taritik**  
**Komosiir meting'ung'**  
**Memuchi iter taritik WCC**  
**Komoslir meting'ung'**

Irnuchi iterkomatech wee  
Kesit eng' metit  
Irnuchi iter komatech wee  
Keswet eng' metit

Metere bikab kokwet we wei  
Kot ko mang'alalalenin  
Memuchi iterbikab emeng'ung'  
Kot ko mamwaitaenen ng' olyon

Imuchi iter ng' alekwak we  
Komang'em sobeng'ung'  
Irnuchi iterng'alekwakwe  
Komabutkong'ung'et

Magisose ng'alek che mwae bik we  
Kas kotigonet!  
Almat isas ng'alek che mwae bik we  
Kas kotigonet!  
Ago eng' tilet itil inyege  
Matin kotilun x2

#### 1. BRING HIM CLOSE

In this world we learn daily,  
You don't exhaust knowledge,  
In this world we learn continuously,  
You can't exhaust knowledge,

Listen my brother to this proverb,  
Listen I tell you x 2

You can't stop birds  
from flying over your head,  
You can't stop birds wee,  
from flying over your head,  
But you can stop them from building wee,  
a nest on your head.

You can stop them from building  
a nest on your head.  
You can't stop your neighbours  
from talking about you,

You can't stop your countrymen  
from saying something about you.  
But you can stop their words  
from ruining your life,

You can stop their words  
from ruining your life.  
You can stop their words  
from destroying your home.

Don't ignore what people say  
listen to instructions / advice,  
You don't ignore what people  
say to you, listen to instruction  
But you make decisions alone,  
don't allow them to decide for you.





















































































## Appendix 2

### Interviews

#### Respondent 1. Joel Arap Kimetto.

Key: J stands for John, the interviewer.

K stands for Kimetto, the artist and respondent 1.

J: Thank you for accepting our request for this interview. Kindly could you tell us who you are and perhaps where you come from.

K: Thank you very much. My name is Joel arap Kimetto. I was born in a place called Sigor which is in Chepalungu Constituency in Bomet County.

J: Which year was that?

K: That was in 1955 or 1956. You know my parents were illiterate and they were not certain of my year of birth.

J: When did you start singing?

K: I think singing was in our blood. In fact my uncle from my mother's side used to sing. He was invited to various ceremonies. He later joined the late Kipchamba arap Topotuk. As a young boy, I occasionally accompanied him to these ceremonies carrying his instrument, *Chepkesem*. That is how I learnt how to play *Chepkesem*. My uncle discovered my singing talent and encouraged me to sing. However, I was inspired much later when I went to Nakuru where I was employed to milk cows in the current Technology farm. The owner of the farm had a guitar and when I showed interest, he taught me. I lost these two fingers (*showing two of his right hand fingers*) in the farm, but I was not discouraged. I later went back home and joined Kipchamba briefly before I became a Christian. That is when I started composing gospel songs. My first composition was in 1977

although I did not record because Chandarana Studios Ltd. was the only recording studio in the entire region and was interested in songs that could sell.

J: Do you consider yourself a truly gospel musician?

K: Why not? It is only that my songs are different because I use Kipsigis traditional melodies and instruments. I also use Kipsigis sayings, proverbs and parables which are very educative. If you ask me why, I will tell you that I want to preserve our culture and pass it on to the next generations. Don't you people see that our culture is dying? It is the responsibility of the artist to preserve the culture of his people. Remember I was first a Kipsigis before I became a Christian. So I can say that I am a Kipsigis Christian.

J: How do you reconcile the two; Kipsigis culture and Christianity in your songs?

K: You see, Kipsigis culture and Christianity have more things in common than those that divide them. I think the missionaries are the ones who did not take time to understand our culture and that is why they demonized everything. As you will find in my songs, most of the Kipsigis cultural practices are found in the Bible. Take for instance circumcision; is it not in the bible? Since I understood my culture well before I became a Christian, I know what is beneficial and what is not. I therefore call myself a crusader for preservation of African culture which carries our values and history.

J: What inspires your songs?

K: My songs are a product of day to day occurrences in society. I am inspired by what happens every day around me. I came to Kericho in 1970 seeking employment after I dropped out of school in class four. My mother could not raise

my school fees although it was just six shillings per term. I was only 15 years old and the first place I landed was the famous *Musibar* (Municipal bar). I foolishly bought alcohol to everyone in the club only to find myself penniless at midnight. It was much later that I realized that the *Musibars* were run by our neighbors whose aim was to paralyze our young men and therefore conquer us economically. That is the day I decided never to drink again.

I am greatly disturbed by this generation. They call themselves *dot com* generation yet what they do is worse than what *analog* generation does. I know that you have travelled a lot and you will agree with me that our young people are idle and you will find them sited along the road counting vehicles from morning to evening. When they get back home, they expect to be served lunch then go back to the road to count vehicles again as if they have been employed to do that. If they recognize you they will stop you and ask you for ten or twenty shillings for a glass of *changaa* or *busaa* then the next thing you hear them singing saying, ‘I am a bull going to my land!’ This is what made me compose these songs to urge the young people to work hard and stop consuming alcohol. This is what inspired me to compose the songs *Chitab Kalenjin* (Kalenjin man) and *Maiywek* (alcohol).

J: Your song *Tilil Kipsengwet Oiyee* uses the tune and dance style similar if not the same with that of *Chepkotilet* while you are aware that *Chepkotilet* was a female circumcision song. Could you explain why?

K: As you have rightly stated, I used the tune and style of Kipsigis female circumcision song in the song *Tilil Kipsengwet*. This was deliberate in the sense

that I wanted to tell the world that our traditional practices were not that evil as they were branded. In as much as the circumcision itself was bad, not everything around it was bad. Our celebrations were beautiful, our singing was wonderful and our dance great. I wanted to show the world that we can remove those 'bad' components in our culture and tradition and still retain the original and rich flavor in our songs. (Respondent 1)

J: Do you think your songs appeal to the young people?

K: It is not my business to know who like or do not like my songs. I only sing with two main objectives; to evangelize my community and more importantly, preserve our culture.

J: Thank you very much for making time to talk to us. We understand that you are busy and we appreciate your sacrifice.

K: You are welcome.

**Respondent 2: Daniel Maiywa.**

Key: F stands for Festus the interviewer

D stands for Daniel the respondent.

F: Thank you for creating time to talk to us today. Could you tell us who you are please and perhaps where you come from?

D: My name is Daniel Kipkurgat arap Maiywa. I come from Belgut District in Kericho County. However we migrated from Sigor in Bomet County in 1940's



when my father came to Kericho highlands. He was employed by the Europeans as a cook. By then I was nine years old.

F: Do you listen to Joel Kimetto's songs, and if you do why?

D: Every Kalenjin listens to Kimetto. I like listening to his songs because they talk of things that you understand. He is not like the young musicians who sing things that you cannot make head or tail. Kimetto's song use traditional tunes and is full of wise sayings and proverbs that teach people a lot. He reminds us of our culture and values. I enjoy his songs very much.

F: Can you give us one song you like and what it is all about.

D: One of my favorite songs is *Kirate Setyo*. The title is a clip of the proverb 'You shall marvel the hyena way.' The proverb is derived from a narrative of a group of hyenas who roamed villages looking for human corpses. The group had its leader who always scratched the corpse before the rest would eat it. One day they found a body lying on a hip of manure in the cattle shed. The body however had a club under its head. The rest of the hyenas asked their leader to scratch the corpse for them. On scratching the body, the man sprang into life and hit the hyena dead. The rest of the hyenas could not run, but were left marveling at what they had just witnessed. It was too shocking for them that a corpse would kill their leader and thus the proverb, "You marvel the hyena way." So when Kimetto uses this proverb, it reminds us of the stories told to us by our grandparents. The stories had moral lessons that helped people live in harmony.

F: In your opinion, are Kimetto's songs relevant to the present generation?

D: Yes they are. It is only that this generation is more interested in the loud and hitting tunes. They don't care what the songs say and you would see them jumping up and down. In fact in the song *Banda Chepkoigoch*, Kimetto warns the youth against defying the advices given to them by the elders. There was a great famine in Kipsigis land and crops failed and animals died. There arose wide spread hunger that left the people frail and destitute. Meanwhile, the neighboring Kisii community had bountiful harvest as a result of abundance of rain in the highlands. The Kipsigis young warriors decided to organize a raid to their neighbors. However the elders warned against them and told them that the timing was wrong. Instead of paying attention to the advice of the elders, they agreed to sneak at night and carry out the raid. The result of the raid was a massacre where all of them were killed and their corpses fed on dogs. To date, the Kalenjin refer to the *Mogori* massacre, *Mogori* being the place of the great battle between the Kisii and the Kipsigis. It is from this incident that the Kipsigis coined the proverb *Kibendi banda Chepkoigoch*.

F: Who sang *Chepkotilet* and in what occasion was it performed?

D: (Laughing). *Chepkotilet* was a great song and dance performed by young women and girl initiates during their pass out ceremony called *ngetunet*. The dance was performed at night either inside a big circular hat or an arena around a huge fire. The fresh initiates were in competition to attract the best suitor who could pay more bride prize to her father. The initiate who danced best would win the highest bride prize and would be married the same night. It was also an occasion when

young men could spot their brides and it was always competitive. The best performer would only go to the man who had enough cows and this meant that young men had to work hard to raise enough cows for this occasion. (Respondent 2)

F: Do you think Kimetto's songs are purely gospel or they have been diluted by the use of traditional tunes, sayings and proverbs?

D: Kimetto's songs are gospel but in original Kipsigis traditional tunes and sayings. That is why the songs are unique and different. From 1980's we have been listening to these songs and they don't get out of fashion. The reason is that they speak to our inside. Even those people who do not go to church listen and enjoy them very much.

F: Thank you very much for creating time for this interview.

D: You are welcome.

**Respondent 3: Joseph Marindany, Kimetto's uncle.**

Key J: John, the interviewer.

M: Marindany, the respondent.

J: Good morning. Kindly tell us your name.

M: My name is Joseph Marindany Kikwai arap Kalya. I was baptized in 1978 by father Camaliel in Sigor. That is when they named me Joseph.

J: What relationship do you have with Joel Kimetto?

M: Joel is my son. He is the last born to my elder brother and I took care of them when their father died. I took him to Nakuru and trained him to milk when he was young.

J: What do you think of Kimetto's songs?

M: He is a very hard working person. I remember he used to play guitar all night when we were in Nakuru. He was determined to play the instrument such that after losing his fingers, he did not give up on his dream. His songs are rich with Kipsigis proverbs and stories that we used to share those days. He is very creative. We enjoy listening to the songs and we hardly sit when he stands to perform.

J: Which of Kimetto's songs appeal to you?

M: All of them. But there is this one that talks about dressing. Yes, Wolowoli. Do you know that in our culture men and women dressed differently? But what do we see today? Women wear men's cloths and in some instances, you find men plaiting their hare. Let me educate you even though you claim to have gone to school. Kipsigis men had their special attire called *Koliget* while women wore *Chpkauiyet*. The dressing code was observed strictly and it was unimaginable that one gender would think of wearing the other gender's attire. But what do you see today? Men in women clothes and women in men's attire. Kimetto criticizes this behavior which I also agree.

J: Thank you very much for your time.

M: You are welcome and incase you need more information about our culture please do not hesitate.

**Respondent 4: Chesimet, an artist.**

Key N: Nicholus, the interviewer.

C: Chesimet, the respondent.

N: You are an upcoming artist with your song *Obot chemingin* highly successful. To whom do you attribute your success in your career?

C: Joel Kimetto made me discover my talent in singing. One day I visited his studio and he asked me to take the microphone and speak to it. That was it. He told me that my voice was very good and that I was a singer. From then, I have never looked back. We are age mates and I admired the style and content in his songs because it reminds me of the old days when we were young. Our fathers taught us values and ethics that made us responsible. But nowadays, the young people don't want to listen to the instructions of the old people.

N: Don't you think you Kimetto is propagating Kipsigis culture more than advancing Christian message?

C: If you listen to Kimetto's songs to the end, you will realize that he uses the Kipsigis proverbs and expressions and marries them with Christian principles. In fact the Christian message is understood more by the Kalenjin people when the message is wrapped in the language they understand.

N: Thank you very much for creating time to talk to us.

**Respondent 5: Joseah Arap Sang. Chairman of the Kalenjin Council of Elders**

**(Miot).**

Key J: John, the interviewer.

S: Sang, the respondent.

J: I take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely for honoring our request considering your busy schedule.

S: You are welcome. It is more of a duty and my pleasure to host you today. You are most welcome.

J: You are the current chairman of the *Miot* council of elders. Perhaps I should begin by asking what is *Miot*?

S: *Miot* is a word formed from joining two words, *mi* and *iyotet* meaning there is procreation or birth. This was a term that can be traced back to the children of Israel in the time of Moses. When they disobeyed God, they died in their numbers and none of those who sinned got to the Promised Land. Those who survived kept greeting themselves saying that there is rebirth or procreation this was meant to encourage themselves and to allay the fear that they were going to be extinct. To cut the long story short, the Kalenjins are the remnants of the Israelites from Egypt who later got assimilated by the tribe of Judah to the extent that they almost lost their identity. They later regrouped themselves and gave themselves the name *Miot* and they detoured and headed south where they followed the Rift Valley until they settled in the current Rift Valley region in Kenya. *Moit*

therefore is a collective identity of the Kalenjin community. Remember Kalenjin is a much recent term that has more political and ethnic connotation and that the reason why we traced back our identity to Miot.

J: What is the significance of this festival?

S: This festival is significant in two ways. First, we are here to open the refurbished stadium that is one of the markers of our identity as Kipsigis. This stadium, as you may be aware was constructed over fifty years ago by committed and hard working men and women of this region under the stewardship of the latesenior chief Kipsang arap Tengecha who happens to be my father. There were no graders those days and people used their bare hands to dig and carry tones of soil. The field was twice as big and it was only reduced with the construction of the new tarmac road in early 1980's. It is said that the construction unified the people so much that on its completion, they likened to the tower of babel and Egypt pyramids. The second reason for our gathering is to celebrate our culture. Kipsigis culture as you can see in the activities going on is very rich and we thought that we should preserve and transmit to the coming generations.

J: Among those invited and listed to perform today is Joel Kimetto who is a gospel musician. Why did you select him yet this is a cultural event?

S: Kimetto is a great friend of mine. There are two people I truly respect and moved by their messages to our people. First of all is the late Kipchamba. He was a true messenger to the Kalenjin people and it is unfortunate that he had to die that early. However I am happy that he had someone to carry

on from where he left. Kimetto's songs inspire and speak to the Kalenjin people on contemporary issues from the rich Kipsigis cultural perspective. Kimetto is gifted such that he is able to marry the Kipsigis culture with Christianity. His rich knowledge of the Kipsigis tradition is seen in his songs yet he is a gospel musician. One of his latest songs talks to the Kalenjin man and asks a question that I also often ask. Where are we headed as a community? Do we still expect handouts from our leaders or isn't it time that we worked hard. Remember we have no excuse to be poor yet God has blessed us with fertile land and rain throughout the year. Kimetto's songs are therefore both cultural and gospel in nature.

J: Thank you again for finding time to talk to us.

S: You are welcome.

**Respondent 6: Kiplangat Chebose.**

Key N: Nicholus, interviewer.

C: Chebose, respondent.

N: Kindly tell us your name and where you come from.

C: My name is Kiplangat Chebose. I come from Mugango Village in Bomet County. It is just after Tenwek Mission Hospital.

N: Briefly tell us the history of Tenwek Mission Center.

C: The site where the Mission center stands today was a shrine used by our forefathers for worship. I remember when we were young and there was prolonged drought, the mothers went to the waterfall next to the Hospital.



By then the river had dried up and our mothers went to the shrine carrying baskets full of millet and sorghum. As they came back, they were heavily rained on to the extent that they could not cross the flooded river.

When the missionaries came, they destroyed the shrine and build a church. They considered Kipsigis worship as demonic.

N: How did the people react?

C: The people were divided. There were those who protested the destruction of the shrine while others supported claiming that they had converted to Christianity.

N: How were conflicts resolved in the Kipsigis tradition.

C: Conflict resolution was a jurisdiction of the elders. The Kipsigis did not have an overall King or ruler. Justice was administered at the village level. The village was headed by *Boyobgok* who acted as both the administrator and chairman of the council of elders. Cases were conducted on a subway and each case was determined based on its seriousness. A case that involved rumor and gossip attracted stiffer penalty than that of causing physical injury. This is because our people believed that psychological injury was more serious than physical injury.

**Respondent 7: Vincent Bett.**

Key **B:** Betty, the interviewer.

V: Vincent, the respondent.

B: Good morning sir. Could you tell us your name please and perhaps where you come from?

V: My name is Vincent Kibii Bett. I was born in Konoin District, Bomet County. I am the first born in a polygamous family, of course to the first wife of my father. I was lucky to have gone to school at a time when most parents did not mind their children going to school. My father was very strict and also hardworking. He made sure that all of us went to school. That is why I am a teacher today.

B: You say that you carried out a study in 2002 covering the three districts on the perception of HIV and AIDS by the Kipsigis community. Could you briefly share with us your findings?

V: As you may be aware, our people are conservative in nature and would hardly discuss H.I.V issues openly. In year 2002, I conducted a survey on the perception of H.I.V among the Kipsigis in three Districts namely Kericho, Bureti and Bomet. What I gathered was amazing that many of our people had ailing members who did not access medical attention due to fear of stigmatization and discrimination. They were nursed at home with a lot of fear. Even during funerals, nobody dared to mention H.I.V as having caused the death of the deceased.

B: In your opinion, how has Kimetto's songs contributed to H.I.V awareness among the Kipsigis.

V: I think Kimetto's songs *Kichigili* and *Rat Torosta* have demystified H.I.V perception among our people. The song *Kichigili* urges people to visit Voluntary Testing and Counseling (VCT) centers while *Rat Torosta* encourages abstinence.

B: Are Kimetto's songs then gospel or secular?

V: One thing you ought to understand is that when issues such as H.I.V and Aids, drug and substance abuse and economic challenges pervade society, every member is affected. It does not matter whether one is in church or not, the impact is the same. Kimetto therefore reaches out to all members irrespective of their affiliations, religious or otherwise. That is why his songs appeal to a wider audience than other musicians. The difference, of course, being in the use of authentic Kipsigis language full of imagery and symbolism.

B: Thank you again for creating time to speak with us today.

V: You are welcome. One more thing I forgot. It is through my study that we wrote a proposal for an N.G.O that creates H.I.V awareness through music which is now ran by Great Commission Singers under Kimetto.

B: Thank you very much for your contribution to the community.

### **Appendix 3**

#### **ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

The following questions were used as a guide in the analysis of the songs.

Title of the song\_\_\_\_\_

1. a) Under what category does the song fall? (A-Is it purely gospel song or, B- song appealing to both Christian and non- Christians).  
  
b) What makes it fall under this category?
2. Who is speaking in the song and who is the voice addressing?
3. What are the thematic concerns of the song?
4. What idioms are used in the song?
5. What does each idiom represent?
6. What are the results of the application of the idioms?

## Appendix 4

### ANALYTICAL TABLE

<b>Title of the Song</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Reasons for class</b>	<b>Who is speaking and to who</b>	<b>What are the thematic concerns</b>	<b>What idioms are used</b>	<b>What does the idiom represent</b>	<b>What are the results of the application of the idiom</b>
1. Isun Inye	Both gospel and Secular	Generality of reference	A community leader advising to the parents	Parenting, conflict resolution	If rats disturb you, don't burn your granary	There are many ways of solving problems	Harmony between Kipsigis culture and Christianity
2. Wolowoli	Both gospel and secular	Generality of reference	Community spokesman to the general members of the community	Modernity, Change and moral decadence	Changing Changes	Ever changing society that does not preserve its values	Tension between Kipsigis tradition and Christianity
3. Banda Chepkoigoch	Gospel and secular	Reference to both Kipsigis idiom and bible	An elder talking to the young	Responsibility	You go the tortoise pace	Going slow on issues.	Kipsigis culture and Christianity harmonized
4. YaYosin	Both	Old age is both mentioned in the Kipsigis culture and the bible	The old to the young	Human mortality	Old age is a bull, Old age is tough, Old age is unpearable	That old age is inevitable	Kipsigis culture in harmony with Christianity
5. KiroteSetyo	Both Secular and gospel	The idiom used sourced from Kipsigis culture	The old talking to the young	Modernity, change.	You marvel the hyena way	That people do things that lave many wondering in shock	Kipsigis culture in harmony with Christianity
6. Ing'ete Kimereng Mindo	Both Secular and gospel	The narrative and proverb are Kipsigis used	Communal thought speaking to the	Conflict avoidance and resolution	A dikdik arouses an antelope, A	Gossip and rumor mongering	The Kipsigis culture in harmony with

		in the christian context	community	mechanisms, Integrity	warthog wakes up a rhino	can ignite major conflicts	Christianity
7. Kokobeng	Both Gospel and Secular	The issues addressed cut across Christian and Secular divide	An observer to all members in society	Economic woes in the community	It is the Dilemma that Killed the hyena	When One is indecisive, disaster is bound to happen	Tension between Christianity and Community in general
8. Betutab Meet	Both	Death is a human phenomenon	Communal and Biblical consciousness to the people	Mortality	Death is a trap, Death captures you at your best	The inevitability of death as a human fate	Concord between the Kipsigis religious belief and Christianity
9. Kichigili	Both	Taking precaution was is a measure both with the Kipsigis and Christianity	Leaders to the members of the community	H.I.V and Aids	You scrutinize before eat	Knowing one's H.I.V status before making a lifetime commitment	Tension between Kipsigis culture and Christianity
10. Uro	Both	The act of beseeching is both inKipsigis culture and Christian religion	A concerned elder to the general members of the community	Rebellion and Disobedience	A beseeched goat ends up liking its kid	Listening to instructions leads to avoidance of Disaster	Culture and Christianity harmonized
11. Magigenu, magingolu	Both	Cases of deceit and lies are both found in the Kipsigis community as well as Christian religion	Communal consciousness to the entire community	Integrity	A duel between a liar and a deceptive person leads to a draw	Wherever there is deceit and lies, truth conquers all.	Culture and Christianity in agreement
12. Torosta	Secular and Gospel	Faithfulness to one partner is a	The old and experienced	Fidelity, HIV and Aids.	Tie your nappy and zero graze	One should use protection	The Biblical Christian

		concept taught in the bible as well as secular circles.	members of society to young men			and exercise faithfulness to one partner	teachings in harmony with Kipsigis culture
13. Agoyo	Both	Praise to the hero is both in the Kipsigis culture and Christianity	Communal memory passed to the members.	Celebration, Victory, Hope in misery	Agoyo, a song sang to the heroes after a successful raid	Victory always calls for celebration	There are victory songs both in Kipsigis and Christian cultures
14. Tilil Kipsengwet	Gospel	Heaven is a Christian concept	Biblical prophetic voice to the Kipsigis community	Immortality	The tune used is reminiscent to Kipsigis traditional circumcision dance	In order to get to heaven, one must be holy	Tension and harmony at the same time
15. Maiywek	Both Gospel and Secular	Alcohol and wine are both in Kipsigis culture and the bible	Christianity and Kipsigis tradition abhors excessive consumption of alcohol	Responsibility verses Irresponsibility, Alcoholism	You don't add water to the pot if the flour is to be borrowed	Excessive consumption of alcohol leads to poverty	Kipsigis culture agrees with the Christian position on alcohol
16. Toror Jehovah	Gospel	Jehovah is the Christian God	Jehovah was presented as a totally different God from the one that the Kipsigis worshiped	Worship	The tune used is borrowed from the Kipsigis traditional women dance called <i>Oiya</i> , which was a worship song for their <i>godasis</i>	A reminder that there is one who is most high and needs to be worshiped	The Kipsigis are reminded of worship of their god, <i>asis</i>
17. Yele Laleiyo	Gospel	Describes the biblical story of creation	Self, addressing self	Life	The tune used is sourced from Kipsigis folk song	A reminder that there is one who is most high	The Kipsigis are reminded of worship of their god, <i>asis</i>

						and needs to be worshiped	
18. ChitabKalenjin	Secular	Speaks to the Kalenjin as a nation, not as Christians	A member of the community speaking to the rest	Economic woes, diligence and Responsibility	You don't laugh today when the joke was yesterday	The Kalenjinman should not be slow in reacting to issues	Tension is created between Christianity and Kipsigis culture
19. KagibwanOling'wong	Secular and Gospel	While the song is about paying visitation to the other communities, one of the objectives is to spread the gospel	The leader of delegation introducing himself and the members of his team to the people	Unity	We come to your place that we may shake hands.	Unity of the Kalenjin people is in regular sharing and visiting	The unity advocated for between different Kalenjin communities is likened to the unity of the tribes of Israel in the bible
20. Osoya	Secular and Gospel	Bribery is discouraged both in Kipsigis culture and Christian religion in equal measure	The Community consciousness speaking to the people	Corruption	He who gives or takes a bribe are the same; both shall die by the sword	Corruption is a vice that leads to death of individuals as well as the community	The Kipsigis Culture is in harmony with the Christian principal on corruption and bribery
21. Kimnyet	Secular and Gospel	Bribery is discouraged both in Kipsigis culture and Christian religion in equal measure	The Community consciousness speaking to the people	Corruption	He who gives or takes a bribe are the same; both shall die by the sword	Corruption is a vice that leads to death of individuals as well as the community	The Kipsigis Culture is in harmony with the Christian principal on corruption and bribery