

THE UNSUNG HERO: BIOGRAPHY OF BONIFACE MGANGA

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C50/84853/2016

**A RESEARCH PROJECT IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE AWARD OF
MASTER DEGREE IN LITERATURE SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
LITERATURE, FACULTY OF ARTS- UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.**

December, 2021



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DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of a degree in any other university.

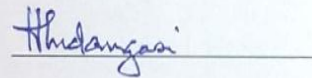
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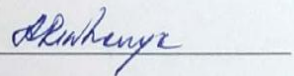
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ABSTRACT

Boniface Mganga was an accomplished musician, composer, arranger, organist, founder and consummate director of the world famed Muungano National Choir. In addition to his artistic contributions, Boniface Mganga demonstrated diverse leadership skills in the civil service and political arena. It is against this background that this research study sought to document his life narrative. In this research, I focused on documenting the life of Boniface Mganga considering his immense contributions in choral music. I argue that the available written literature about Boniface Mganga does not capture a complete portraiture of his life and therefore a comprehensive research is justified to fill the existing gaps. These gaps range from his familial background that provides the musical gene that flows in the family, birth, early stages of his musical talent, leadership skills, academic, social and political dispositions and how his early experiences contribute to his growth and musical contributions. Guided by the *Interpretive theory of Biography*, the research documented the life of Boniface Mganga in line with the theory's conventions. The study employed unstructured and structured interviews with family and close respondents. Both primary and secondary data sources were also explored to enrich the study. The qualitative research relied on data collection through different tools, analysed, the data collected and documented the life of Boniface Mganga. The findings of the research proved that the life narrative of its subject merited documentation due to several information gaps that hindered appreciation and comprehension of the life of Boniface Mganga.

Key Words: *Boniface Mganga, Biography, Interpretive theory of Biography.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I wish to express my gratitude to the Department of Literature, University of Nairobi, for providing a conducive learning environment. Such an environment with supportive lecturers guaranteed successful completion of my Master of Arts Project. I am grateful to be associated with my literature lecturers whose guidance and advice not only shaped my research, but also contributed towards my intellectual growth. I highly appreciate your guidance and advice that all shaped my research on Boniface Mganga's life story.

To my supervisors Prof. Henry Indangasi and Prof. Alina Rinkanya, I shall remain ever grateful to you for your valuable and technical guidance that guaranteed completion of my research. Your thorough approach towards my research has taught me a lot and the successful completion of my project, shall remain to be a clear reminder of your commitment, guidance and advice.

I am also very grateful to Boniface Mganga's family for their almost unlimited support they have accorded me to have this research complete. Truly it is a supportive family. To Delvin Omwodo and all the respondents who went out of their way to provide valuable information upon which this research is based, thank you very much.

To all my postgraduate classmates, thank you for the encouragement and memorable learning experiences we shared together. My best friend Bramwel Orlando, despite the challenges we faced, we stayed focused and encouraged each other that we shall finish. Thank you very much.

To my colleague Ann Sang, I am very grateful for your typing assistance that gave me more time to concentrate on analysis and writing. Thank you so much.

To my mother Sr. Genovefa Maashao, thank you for your immeasurable support. My gratitude would be incomplete if I fail to appreciate the support and concern of Mrs. Agnes Kehrls with her family in Germany. Thank you so much.

To my wife Elizabeth Mwabili, our children, Timothy Righa Mghanga, Genovefa Maashao Mghanga and Arnold Musimi Mghanga, I cannot appreciate you enough for the sacrifices you made when I was busy working on this project. This is our success. Thank you so much.

Lastly, I wish to express my appreciation to God for making it happen despite the challenges that I encountered. I shall forever remain indebted to him.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0: Introduction.

Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish philosopher and essayist, once said that, “No great man lives in vain. The history of the world is but the biography of great men.” In essence Carlyle talks of achievers and their place in the world of history. Carlyle’s statement is largely associated with his Great Man Theory, which contends that highly influential men and women and unique individuals with their natural attributes such as superior intellect, heroic courage, exceptional talent among other attributes, ought to have their place in history for he believed that such individuals shape history through both their abilities, personal attributes and divine inspiration. In his published series of lectures, *On Heroes, Hero-worship, and the Heroic in History*, Carlyle states:

Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modelers, patterns, and in a wide sense creator of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; in all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment of thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world’s history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these. (Carlyle 21)

Carlyle, with strong emphasis, points out achievers who stand out in the society and how they create patterns of influence and how such influence impacts on the masses. In this case, Carlyle’s theory provides a good rationale for the growth of the biographical genre. So if achievement of heroes, heroines and of great men and women has a permanent mark in history, how does history

connect with biography? For biography's principle objective is to document a life of a notable person.

In Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, famous Greeks are paired with famous Romans. In this ancient biographical work, twenty-three pairs of biographies are compared and contrasted in order to analyze their moral virtues and failings. In his analysis, Plutarch's intentions are to explore the influence of character on the lives and destinies of famous people. As much as Plutarch's interest was not in documenting the history of his subjects, he nevertheless documents information about the same people thereby showing the interconnectedness of biography as a genre and history as a discipline.

History demonstrates this fact especially during the Middle Ages, where monks, priests and hermits wrote biographies, where their main subjects were restricted to church fathers, popes, martyrs and saints. The main objective of such a selective choice of subjects was to inspire the masses for easy conversion to Christianity. Based on these subjects of early biographers, one feature comes out clearly: they were notable individuals only related to good deeds and morals. One of the earlier biographers, courtier Einhard proves this fact in the *Life of Charlemagne*. Therefore, such biographies not only documented the notable lives of subjects with outstanding good deeds, but also preserved knowledge for the posterity with religious objectives. These biographies focused on praising the spiritual virtues of their subjects and offering evidence for their canonization. Eynsham in *Lives of the Saints* observes that these biographies played a very important role in the spread of Christianity, as they provided the priests with rhetorical tools to promote their faith. Eynsham further contends that biographical collections were not only written to commemorate the lives of saints, but they were also didactic and instructional. Similarly,

Boniface Mganga's biography not only seeks to record his life, but also seeks to contribute to the growth of the biographical studies.

In Medieval period, the genre of Prophetic Biography (*Al-Sira al-Nabawiyya*) arises in the Islamic world due to the need to document the life of the messenger of God (*Sirat Rasul Allah*). Most of the content is derived from trustable Hadiths and Quran. In these biographies, narratives depict military expedition undertaken by Mohammad and his followers. The objective of these biographical narratives is to venerate Prophet Mohammad.

Indian biography was what George Duby termed as, "A collection of mental images which form the real core of the notion of nobilitas." With the mental attitude that befits the aristocratic subjects, Indian medieval biographies were subjective rather than objective for they focused so much on praising their subjects. As a researcher I strived to bring to life the "collection of mental images" that characterized Boniface Mganga's public life as a famous musician especially where such mental images are substantiated by facts and available data.

In medieval China, biographical genres included travel records, such as those of the monks Xuanzang (600-422), Yijing (635-713) and Faxian (337-422), who are regarded as the earliest Chinese travelers to India and hagiographical biographies, exemplified by writers like Huijiao, Daoxuan Zanning, Ruxing, among others, who wrote about lives of famous Chinese Buddhists, relying on historical sources, verbatim records which were composed immediately after a monk's death upon his request, oral interviews and traditions from people close to the monks, other literary accounts relevant to their subject and written or oral accounts of miracle stories. Yang Lu (1) states that most of these medieval biographies did not only offer life narratives, but also presented rich details of their subject's time. Lu further observes that in such biographies, narrative played a crucial role "to a medieval biographer's effort in conveying his subject to

readers.” This implies that the medieval biography and hagiography in China employed history and narrative technique in weaving life narratives. In the documentation of Boniface Mganga’s life narrative, the same approach could not be ignored as it facilitated an in-depth portrait of Boniface Mganga’s life. Whereas history provides the subject’s data, narrative as a technique conveys the subject to the reader.

In Europe, there was a transformational shift of the biography towards the end of the Middle Ages, especially in Renaissance period, as biographies became less church-oriented. It is at this period that biographers started documenting the lives of rulers, knights and other prominent people. Secular biographical subjects characterized this age. The poets and artists used secular subjects, and as a result encouraged writing even in vernaculars, hence the growth of biography. Giorgio Vasari’s *Lives of the Artists*, documents artistic developments of his time despite the fact that several of his depictions lacked credibility and authenticity and had to be subjected to scientific research. However, Vasari contributes to the growth of the modern biography which had the freedom to document secular subjects as opposed to the previous biography whose objectives were purely religious.

James Boswell’s *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, heralds the development of the modern genre of biography written in English. Boswell’s work differs from the previous developments of the genre by how he documents his work through research, archival study, eye-witnesses accounts and interviews. This feature of research is what makes this age’s biography unique. As a result of this research background, the biography comes out as robust and thorough and this forms the cornerstone of the biographical literature of the present day. However, in the 19th Century there was a reversal, as the biographical writing drifted to hagiographical methods which were similar

to the earlier biographies of saints during medieval times. But in the middle of this century, a clear distinction between hagiographical biographies and literary biography emerged. This coincided with a growth in reading culture which saw the printing media give a boost to biographical writing.

When Great Man theory lost its relevance in the middle of the twentieth century due to its unscientific orientation, as argued by Herbert Spencer, psychology and sociology, which heavily influenced the growth of the modern biography, replaced it. In the place of Great Man Theory, human behaviour was explained and looked into using Darwinian theories. Sociological biographies conceptualized their subject's behaviour as a result of the environment, as eloquently argued by Herbert Spencer's criticism that "great men were products of their social environment," and this approach strongly downplayed individuality. In addition to this paradigm shift, the development of Psychoanalysis led to a more comprehensive understanding of the biographical subject. This rapid growth was given impetus by Roberts' *Biographical Research* which provided methods of data collecting and analyzing a person's life. (10)

Therefore, biography as a genre has come a long way as far as its documentation, methodology and development are concerned. This tremendous transformation of biography equips the genre with adequate tools to document the lives of personalities, and it is in this regard that I was guided to document the life of Boniface Mghanga whose contributions in the society, Kenya and the world at large deserve a place in the scholarly world.

1.1: Background to the study.

The late Boniface Mghanga was the 9th Member of Parliament of Voi Constituency. Before he embarked on his political life, Boniface Mghanga worked as a state house official during President Daniel Moi's regime. Boniface later formed Muungano National Choir which sang praise, patriotic and sacred songs from different communities of Kenya. Muungano National Choir won the hearts of Kenyans and world at the large through its famed renditions. The choir topped the charts for close to two decades, virtually changing the country's music scene. Muungano National Choir became Kenya's leading cultural ambassador and won accolades across the country and beyond. In 2011, Boniface Mghanga died through a road accident near Tsavo River on his way to his home in Voi. His death took away a pillar in Muungano National Choir, leaving behind a towering legacy which has remained unrivaled.

1.2: Statement of the problem.

There are many unsung heroes and heroines in Kenya. These heroes and heroines have contributed immensely in different arenas but the majority have gone unnoticed. Several autobiographies and biographies have been written but still the number of documented life narratives fades in comparison with the many undocumented life narratives which are worth documenting. It is from this background that this project aimed at gathering information from both primary and secondary sources, analyzed the data and documented the life of one of the undocumented heroes whose immeasurable contributions to the world of music deserve a special place in the world of academia. In documenting Boniface Mghanga's life, I wish to contribute to the biographical genre in Kenya.

1.3: Objectives

The research entails three objectives:

- a. To document the life of Boniface Mganga through research and account for its significance to Kenya's cultural history.
- b. To present a balanced view of Boniface Mganga set squarely in his time and place.
- c. To contribute to the growth of biography as a literary genre.

1.4: Research hypotheses

- a. Boniface Mganga's life story is important, and he made a significant contribution to his country.
- b. Existing literature on Boniface Mganga has some discrepancies and inadequacies to be altered.
- c. Biography employs historical data and narrative technique.

1.5: Justification of the research

Biography is a literary genre that aims at communicating the truth of an important person's life.

The non-fiction genre, unlike other forms of literature builds on authenticity since it is based on facts. Biography also distinguishes the achievers from the masses; as Sidney Lee puts it in his *Principles of Biography*, "Biography exists to satisfy a natural instinct in man – the commemorative instinct – the universal desire to keep alive the memories of those who by character and exploits have distinguished themselves from the mass of mankind." (Lee 7). It is in this spirit that I sought to document the life of Boniface Mganga, whose contributions to the society are remarkable, and which therefore distinguishing him from the masses. Despite Boniface Mganga's contributions in the society, his life and its significance have not been documented and therefore justify the writing of this biography.

1.6: Scope and limitation.

The study focuses on the life of Boniface Mganga, his contributions to the society as a political leader and his legacy as a leader in various areas. The study employs theoretical approaches outlined below to document the life of Boniface Mganga. As a researcher, I focused on the major theme of the biography which is the music legacy created and left by Boniface Mganga. I further examined his political life, academic life, and his music career as major themes which occur repeatedly and how such patterns develop the subject's life narrative. Along the examination of the dominant theme and patterns of politics and music, I also investigated the challenges the subject came across and how such challenges affected and shaped the progression of his life.

As a researcher I also formulated my own opinions and thoughts about the subject based on descriptive, inferential and evaluative observations.

1.7: Literature review.

This section examines various works that informed the argument to write a biography on Boniface Mganga. First of all I read and examined written media as well as internet sources on personalities who contributed to nation building in general and more particularly Boniface Mganga. This provided a background for further exploration of this personality; I also read various biographies of various subjects with different backgrounds and abilities, as well as other scholarly works giving detailed and elaborate understanding of the origin, nature and the function of a biography.

In 2011, *The Star* newspaper had the following headline: "Former MP Mghanga Dies in Road Accident. *Sunday Nation* had the following headline: "Music Wizard who loved the fine things in life," while *The Standard* on 17th July, 2011 had the following headline: "Mghanga is finally

laid to rest.” The striking sentence under the *The Standard’s* headline read as follows: “President Kibaki, former President Moi and Prime Minister Raila Odinga have condoled the family of the late Voi MP Boniface Mghanga who was buried at his Ikanga village in Taita Taveta County.”

Fred Atoh and Sylvester Ogama made an attempt to document Boniface Mganga’s life in *Kenyan Musicians: A Biography Volume 2*. The work focused more on Boniface Mganga’s contribution to music and did not provide in-depth information on his life.

These materials created a window for me to understand who Boniface Mganga was to his immediate community and the nation at large. However, the materials lacked in-depth and finer details regarding the contributions of Boniface Mganga. Therefore, this research sought to fill the gap which other works on Boniface Mghanga have not adequately documented hence providing a detailed account of his life ranging from his birth, his social, political, religious and academic backgrounds. I further sought to document his contributions and legacies to the society as well as his last moments before he died.

In *On absence and abundance: biography as method in archival research*, Jake Hodder states that “writing biography involves meditating between two competing questions: On one hand is what we can really know of a life and on the other, what can a life reveal to us about something else? The relative weighting of these foci distinguishes two different types of biographical scholarships: one is concerned with biography as subject, the other as method.” Borrowing heavily from Hodder’s double-pronged assertion, this research not only sought to reveal the patterns and themes of Boniface Mganga’s line narrative, but did, in a systematic manner, apply the right tools to bring forth new knowledge that sought to fill a biographical gap.

In *Biography as History*, Banner states that, “A life deeply lived, like any complex historical narrative, moves across space, time, and areas of human involvement both capriciously and predictably, validating certain accepted historical constructions while challenging others, (2009,582). In conformity with Banner’s assertion, this research sought to document a life of a subject with vast networks and historical constructions dating from colonial period to postcolonial Kenya. Through data analysis, some constructs were validated while others were invalidated.

Ralph Waldo Emerson notes that “all biography is autobiography.” This implies that by a biographer writing about his or her subject, they also write about themselves. By writing about others, they indirectly write about themselves by the perspectives they take. The patterns of the subject they take and the interpretations they come up with from their subject’s life. Emerson’s observation on biography captures the need for a biographer to be sensitive to truth and be honest in portraying his or her subject in the most honest way possible. In *The truth and nothing but the truth: not all biographies are accurate*, Ng’ang’a Gicumbi, underscores the element of truth in a biography. Gicumbi asks three pertinent questions: why should the subject’s interpretation(s) of events (especially if they are controversial) be trusted as being definitive? Secondly, for whom is the book intended? Thirdly, how should a life narrative be told?

The first question hinges on authenticity. A biographer should strive to capture the truth by all means possible for the attempt to fabricate the truth by depicting a larger-than-life figure or a super-hero kills the spirit of the biographical objective which will make the readers feel short changed. Therefore, this research aimed at presenting the biographical truth about Boniface

Mganga though the challenge of differentiating the biographer's thoughts about certain aspects of the subject's life and what the respondents presented as truth concerning the same aspects was real.

On writing a biography, Gichumbi contends that care should be taken to understand construct systems. These construct systems, in this case from the respondents as well as the researcher's, should be evaluated for their authenticity before writing the life narrative. Gichumbi further argues that life narratives should be ready to explore alternative views of the subject's narratives as well as imagine that what the close respondents might present as 'bad' or not appropriate regarding the subject, could actually be the truth about the subject. In doing so, the biographer will be doing justice to the readers of the end product.

Regarding the second question, for whom is the book intended, Gichumbi guides that it is imperative to have the target audience in mind when writing the biography. In this case Gichumbi, points out that many life stories are read by serious and avid readers who are keen on societal change. This implies that the chief objective of life narrative writing is to document the truth and history for generations. Therefore, as a researcher, I wrote the biography of Boniface Mganga having in mind my audience and most importantly, documented the truth for posterity.

Gichumbi and Emerson underscore biographical truth and authenticity by avoiding half-truths or unrealistic truth as a biographer in order to document a realistic life portraiture. Devoid of biographical truth and authenticity, reduces biography's role to sanitization. Andrew Morton presents such a case in *Moi: The Making of an African Statesman*. The general feeling from the book reviews on Andrew Morton's work was that the readers felt intellectually duped. This is

based on how Morton depicts Moi as a victim of inaccurate Western media, bias and sensationalism. Morton berates the critics for failing to see the ‘real Kenya’ and listening too much to inaccurate information. The wave of criticisms and the undertones of the same build a narrative that Morton had been bribed to burnish his subject in the biography. In response, Morton attempts to downplay the bribing allegations by saying, “cynics suggest that I had taken the Kenyan shilling simply to burnish his image. The truth was more simple; I wanted a fresh challenge after writing about the British royal family for 13 years, and Moi was an eminently suitable, even if not an obvious, case for a biography.” I am not convinced that the life narrative written by Andrew Morton reveals realistic depictions of the Moi Kenyans and probably the world knows. Morton tries to sanitize Moi’s weaknesses by finding fault with Western media. When it is obvious that Moi suppressed democracy and perpetuated one-party rule, Morton downplays the role of the world community calling for democratic rule. To a biographer, this scenario provides several lessons, such as: biographies should not be treated as indisputable authorities, and fabrications kill the interest of a life story, where such could be avoided if the biographer could have done due diligence in separating truths from half-truths and falsehoods. Therefore, as I undertook the research on Boniface Mganga, I ensured that I prioritized the truth in order to achieve authenticity and win the trust of my audience.

Comparatively, Peter Limb presents *Nelson Mandela: A Biography* with freshness and authenticity that rivets the reader’s attention effortlessly. This is despite the fact that his subject is the world’s most famous African statesman and a lot has been written about him. In Limb’s introduction, he foregrounds his task as a biographer by promising to present “a well-rounded, balanced view of Mandela set squarely in his time and space.” As a researcher I underscored Limb’s terms “balanced view” and “set squarely in his time and space” and tested this hypothesis

with Limb's entire work. In his Mandel's account Limb gives biographical and historical background, personal coverage, political coverage, praises and criticisms in equal measure without any bias. Considering his famous subject, Limb gives his depictions chronologically without downplaying other political figures' contributions towards struggle for freedom. Unlike Andrew Morton, Limb does not present Mandela as a victim seeking sympathy and understanding but rather as a freedom fighter with an indefatigable spirit out to confront and defeat apartheid in South Africa.

So does Limb live up to his promise of presenting a "balanced view" of his subject and setting him "squarely in his time and place?" In my view he keeps his promise. But how does he achieve this? Limb praises Mandela's role in building a new nation and standing as a bulwark of democracy despite South Africa being racially segregated. In the same breath, Limb suggests that Mandela's pro-business bias overshadowed the need to effectively address poverty and unemployment. The implication of this bias is still present in South Africa today. Limb further strikes the balance by squarely setting his subject in time and place by interweaving Mandela's narrative with South Africa's. Depictions of Mandela's education coincide with the growth of youthful educated elite. Mandela's living conditions in Orlando in the 1940s are depicted alongside the larger changes that affect black South Africa at the same period. So how does Limb achieve this? In my view, Limb's extensive research is the basis of this achievement. The wide consultations and extensive interviews, all drawing from primary and secondary sources, help Limb in documenting his subject's life narrative. Limb further creates an impression that he did not rely wholly on available written sources about Nelson Mandela but rather went ahead consulting latest research on Robben Island so as to incorporate the perspectives of other prisoners to put Mandela's experiences in context. This demonstrates how a biographer should

strive to widen their scope as long as it will guarantee the quality of the biographical research. Therefore, as a researcher I extensively engaged primary and secondary sources of information and did enough fieldwork as it was dictated by patterns of information that kept interconnecting to give Boniface Mganga's life narrative a balanced view that is set squarely in its time and place.

John Iliffe's *Obasanjo: Nigeria and the World*, also corroborates the importance of extensiveness fieldwork as espoused by Peter Limb's Biography. In *Obasanjo: Nigeria and the World*, Iliffe manages to fill the gaps left by other articles and books about Obasanjo. The biographer draws from published sources as well as the recently published documents from foreign office regarding the subject. In a bid to document Obasanjo's life in an in-depth manner, Iliffe draws from Obasanjo's rich political, social, religious and economic life. In these depictions Iliffe acknowledges Obasanjo's weaknesses and strengths. For instance Iliffe depicts Obasanjo as an unscrupulous leader and an authoritarian but goes ahead to justify why power changed him by stating that his dedication to promote unity and growth of Nigeria was the cause. This demonstrates that in biography writing a biographer should tie every action to its trigger – cause and effect, the principle of causation. This depiction is corroborated by the depoliticization of the military and the liquidation of Nigeria's external debt. Having minimum gaps in a biographical work will earn a biographical work credibility and this is what I should strive to achieve when documenting Boniface Mganga's biography.

1.8: Theoretical Framework.

This study relied heavily on Interpretative Theory of Biography, which involved studied materials, collection of personal-life documents, stories and narratives which describe turning-point moments in individuals lives (Denzin 1989). The theory guided the research in writing life narrative of the late Boniface Mganga.

According to Denzin, in *Interpretive Biography*, there are specific conventions which structure how life narratives are told and written. Denzin argues that “the subject matter in biographical method is the life experiences of the person.” Denzin states that:

Autobiographies and biographies are conventionalized, narrative expressions of life experiences. These conventions, which structure how lives are told and written about, involve the following problematic presuppositions, and taken-for-granted assumptions: (1) the existence of others, (2) the influence and importance of gender and class, (3) family beginnings, (4) starting points, (5) known and knowing authors and observers, (6) objective life markers, (7) real persons with real lives, (8) turning-point experiences, (9) truthful statements distinguished from fictions.

Denzin adds that these tenets aim at defining the biographical method as a distinct approach to the study of human experience.

According to Denzin, biographical texts are always written with an ‘other’ in mind. This implies that the researcher should be sensitive to the ‘other’ eye and strive to detail honest depictions of all aspects of their subject’s life and character. In *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, Boswell documents the life of a lexicographer through a detailed research which did not only involve archival study, but also eye-witness accounts. This gives Boswell’s work a phenomenal status of a modern biography. Therefore, in writing about the life narrative of Boniface Mganga the ‘other’ should be considered (Elbaz 1989) “the presence of the ‘other’ in autobiographical and biographical texts means that they are always written with at least a double perspective in mind: the author’s and the other’s. The eye of the other directs the eye of the writer. This further

implies that the work of a biographer is open to scrutiny from the onset of the research by self and the 'other'. This ethic in biographical writing is what Leon Edel underscores in *New Directions in Biography* when he outlines four key principles of which two corroborate this concept of truth and the "otherness." Edel contends that "a biographer should learn to be an objective 'participant –observer' and search assiduously for the deeper truths which motivates his subjects." (7) Therefore, being an objective 'participant-observer' guided my research and ensured that I was conscious of the 'other' and documented the truth about Boniface Mganga's life.

In *Interpretive Biography*, Denzin holds the view that biographer's works are 'gendered' that is they reflect the writer's biases and social classes. In the process of elaborating their subject's life depictions, biographer's gender and class positions are observed. Even though such observations are present in English biography, the modern biography is no exception. The work of the biographer is to present the life story as it is. Narratives of gender and class of his or her subject would project their viewpoints.

The fourth concept which Denzin brings in *Interpretive Biography* theory is family beginnings. Denzin argues that any biographical work must be grounded in family. In their quest to structure a life narrative of their subjects, biographers must start with the family and in so doing, they find the zero point of origin for the life in question according to Denzin. Elbaz further argues that this zero point had extended from the realm of the individual self to that of the social whole. This illustrates how a biographer's subject is grounded to the family of origin but still has his or her narrative extended to the social family.

The fifth concept which Denzin underscores is the textual turning point. Denzin argues that every autobiography or biography must have its turning points. In relation to the family beginnings which hold that biographers start from zero point before they extend to the ‘other’ families, that is to the larger society, and in the process of this development, there are “acts of ceaseless renewals.” The turning points are further elaborated in *Turning Points and Transformations: Essays on Language, Literature and Culture*, where De Vine and Hendry, observe that, “in fact with Freytag’s pyramid in mind, one could claim that all literary works focus on the trope of transformation born of a turning point, because such moments comprise the very essence and vitality of human life and culture.” DeVine and Hendry expound the significance of turning points in storytelling and why turning points are necessarily transformational and in what ways. Secondly, DeVine and Hendry examine the significance of the turning points in language, literature, culture and human lives. De Vine and Hendry observe that the art of storytelling depends on change or transformation and how the whole idea of transformation reflects the lived experiences of every day human life. This implies that as a researcher out to document the life narrative of Boniface Mganga I had to consider the turning points and transformations of my subject and how these transformations align themselves in the subject’s life as he sought meaning to his life. In a biological sense, as a researcher, I focused on the ‘metamorphosis’ of my subject and how every stage of his life contributed to the progression of his general life narrative at the same time underscoring the turning points with their implications to the subject, his family, immediate environment and society at large.

Under the tenet of objective markers, Denzin states that lives have objective and subjective markers which reflect key critical points about the life in question. Denzin further argues that these markers suggest the existence of ‘real’ persons, whose existence in a real world can be

mapped, charted and given meaning. These markers may present themselves as traits or values of the subject that he or she stood for and which structure the life narrative. The markers may also be negative. So what distinguishes objective and subjective markers? Edel in his keynote address titled *Biography and the Science of Man*, contends that “the task of biographical narrative is to sort out themes and patterns; not dates and mundane calendar events.” (7) Edel goes further to demonstrate how this task can be executed diligently by understanding man’s ways of dreaming, thinking and using his fancy and at the same time, being an objective ‘participant-observer.’ This informs the manner in which a biographer should distinguish between objective and subjective markers. The objective ‘participant-observer’s’ role of the biographer ought to bind him or her in correlating gathered information with confirmation of documents. However, an interplay between objective markers and subjective markers should help in reconstructing the life narrative as downplaying any of the two markers will limit the biographer. This research, used objective and subjective markers in documenting Boniface Mganga’s life but striking a balance between them. Ratner supports this claim in his paper, *Subjectivity and Objectivity in Qualitative Methodology*, when he claims that “objectivity is said to negate subjectivity since it renders the observer a passive recipient of external information, devoid of agency. And the researcher’s subjectivity is said to negate the possibility of objectivity knowing a social psychological world.” (1). Ratner further guides that “objective knowledge requires sophisticated subjective processes such as perception, analytical reasoning, synthetic reasoning, logical deductions and distinction of essences from appearances.” Therefore, guided by the clear distinctions between subjectivity and objectivity, as a researcher I adhered to objectivity to guide my subjectivity and therefore conducting my research accurately without any bias. I further strived to avoid subjectivity impeding objective comprehension of my research subject.

1.8.1: Biographical theory.

Arthur Miller defines biographical research as a method that collects information about an individual and analyses a person's whole life, or portion of a life, through the in-depth and unstructured interviews; or something reinforced by semi-structured interviews or personal documents. Miller's assertion implies that life study should be viewed in procedural terms. These procedures aim at producing rich descriptions of persons or conceptualized structural types of actions which are designed to make a reader of a biography "understand the action logics or how persons and structures are interlinked.' Therefore, this theory was used to gather information about Boniface Mghanga from relevant sources, analyzed it and established how different structures brought out the narrative of his life.

1.9: Methodology.

Methodology refers to the systematic manner in which a particular task, in this case an academic task, is approached, conducted and accomplished. This qualitative research applied a detailed description of methods and analyzed data using the Interpretative theory of Biography perspectives. This study required fieldwork to accomplish its objectives and therefore, methodology played an important role in laying the framework through which data was collected, analyzed and results and findings obtained. Guided by this principle, this research used infinite population to gather data due to the nature of the research and hence applied purposive sampling in selecting unique cases that provided valuable and relevant information for this study. In order to minimize the risks to the university, as a researcher I sought a research permit and approvals from relevant authorities like departmental approval, local authorities and subject's family consent. This study took cognizance of *Contemporary Oral Literature Fieldwork, A Researcher's Guide (2015)* as a vital publication in informing and guiding some of the practices prescribed under methodology.

(a) Data collection

The study collected data regarding Boniface Mganga's life from primary sources, such as subject's personal documents, observations, speeches, eye-witness accounts, internet communications, and secondary sources, such as books, articles, online sources, archival data, CDs and documentaries. Data collected regarding his life was collected from political leaders, family members, friends, fellow choir members, recordings, relevant institutions and associates.

(b) Tools used in data collection.

The study will employ the following tools in data collection:

(i) Observation.

Observation as tool was used to collect data which is obvious. The tool complemented other data collection methods.

(ii) Oral interviews.

Oral interviews were used to get oral information from the interviewees who were comprised of immediate relatives, friends, associates and any person(s) of interest.

(iii) In-depth and unstructured interviews.

According to Boyce and Neale, "an in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspective on a particular idea, program, or situation." In-depth interviews are useful when detailed information is required. They offer a complete picture of what happened and why it happened. As a tool, in-depth interviews collected a lot of information concerning the life of Boniface Mganga especially from close people who knew him closely.

(iv) Semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews provided a tool through which the respondents were able to give information with minimal limitations. However, for this tool, interview guides were used to facilitate focus on the topics without constraining them to a particular format.

(v) Personal documents.

Personal documents included documents like: birth certificates; which indicate the official date of birth, photos; which corroborate a certain aspect of the subject's narrative, a diary; revealing personal information which was very instrumental in developing the narrative, marriage certificate; which indicated the official spouse and any other document which contributed to the development of the narrative.

(vi) Recorded materials.

Concerning Boniface Mganga's musical performances' data was obtained from CDs, archives, audio tapes, online sources and lyrics manuscripts among others.

(c) Data analysis.

The collected data regarding the life of Boniface Mganga was organized in a chronological order and analyzed in a systematic manner as shown below.

(d) Focus on timeline of the subject's life.

The study came up with the subject's life timeline. The time line was designed to help the researcher organize the data collected. The timeline highlighted the key events or moments of the subject's life. The timeline also indicated dates to indicate when these key events or moments took place and how they affected the subject and how the subject responded to these effects.

(e) Focus on chronological structure of the subject's life.

The study employed a chronological structure to develop a life narrative of the subject. The structure was organized from the subject's roots, birth and childhood, young adulthood, adulthood and finally his death.

(f) Observing the thesis of the biography.

The research and focused on the thesis of the study. The main focus was on his life story and the legacies of his entire engagements both as a family person and a leader in different levels.

(g) Focus on major events and milestones of the subject's life.

The study focused on the major events and milestones of the subject's life. This included, birth, marriage and death. Milestones included accomplishments and achievements in education, politics, leadership and achievements in the music world where the subject built a name for himself locally and globally. The study highlighted key moments in the subject's life to ensure that the reader gets a good sense of what mattered to the subject and how his inclinations influenced his impact on the world around him.

(h) Focus on major themes and patterns of the subject's life.

The study focused on the major theme of the biography which was the music legacies created and left by Boniface Mganga. I examined his political life, academic life, and his music career as major themes which occurred repeatedly and how such repeated patterns develop the subject's narrative of life. Along the examination of the dominant theme and patterns of politics and music, the study also investigated the challenges the subject came across and how he overcame such challenges.

As a researcher I also made my own opinions and thoughts about the subject based on descriptive, inferential and evaluative observations. I also expressed my own views about the subject based on the data collected and analyzed.

(i) Writing and revising the biography.

After complying with the set guidelines on seeking permission from the subject, laying down the theoretical framework, collecting data through the designed methodology, I embarked on writing the biography under the supervision of the selected supervisors and revised the manuscript based on guidance given by the supervisors.

CHAPTER TWO

ROOTS: HOW IT CAME TO BE.

It is in the heart of Dawidaland (Now Taita Hills) Bura, where the first missionaries' activities found life. A cool land of bewitching beauty, incessant gargling of water from upstream snaking its way to the lowlands, as if to show off their beauty and provoke exploration to any curious eye. Situated thirty-nine kilometres west of Taita Taveta's largest town, Voi, one hundred and ninety-three kilometres northwest of Mombasa and three hundred and sixty-six kilometres South West of Nairobi, Bura's geographical features are scenic. Vast grass fields, dense patches of forests on hills and swampy fields that are fed by the flowing waters from the hills capture the beauty of this unique land. The gargling streams flow with fresh water, and the nearby canopies expose the beautiful valley's fertility. It is here that the first missionaries found solace, whether coming from Mombasa or Bagamoyo, German East Africa, present-day Tanzania. Whereas missionaries found resistance from some communities in their religious quest, here they found the warm embrace from the peaceful Wadawida.

Laurence Mwazighe states that before the coming of the missionaries, the Taita traditional culture was the religion of the day. So when Padre Mavel and Brother Salanus, alongside a local couple with their fifteen children from Bagamoyo, arrived on 18th of October 1892 and facilitated the construction of the first Catholic Church in Kenya on 30th September 1896 at the upper coast, they zealously started debasing some of the traditional practices they found in Taitaland. Polygamy, night dances, offering of sacrifices to their shrines and initiation practices formed the core of what was not aligned to the new faith, and they would do their best to eliminate them. Of course, this affected the normal flow of the locals' way of life. Gibran Mwandigha observes that notably affected was one Mzee Kimadu with his famous drumming skills. As a maestro of music and dance of his time, Mzee Kimadu's drumming skills were

exceptional and as a result he made a name for himself. The talent flowed from his being naturally and effortlessly. Not only did his playing of traditional *Mwazindika* dance hypnotise his dancers, but it would also evoke some spirits that would possess them while his audience became spell-bound. Most of those who would become ‘victims’ of his consuming drumming were women. The effect was irresistible. Whether in the dark or light, the effect would be of the same measure. The rhythm coupled with the tempo would reach a certain crescendo and strike the innermost cords in the dancers’ souls with a special touch that would send them into a frenzy or in another world, so to speak.

Gibran Mwandigha hold the view that Mzee Kimadu’s history has been handed over to a handful by virtue of relation, sheer curiosity of learning or research. However, it is common knowledge that he hailed from Tungulu village in Bura and married Ngongo from Mwanda, uppermost parts of Taita, an area which greatly embraced Catholicism. Together as a couple they had two children: Mka Mzungu (Married to Florian Mzungu) and Hilarius Mzee Kimadu, who was born in 1922 and later became George Mghanga’s father (Later baptized as Boniface Mghanga).

So with the introduction of missionaries, the new faith denounced such “evil” practices like spirit evoking and drumming, and advocated for “holy” practices that came along with the white man’s civilization. Given the overwhelming reception Bura had accorded Catholicism, the few who held on to the traditional ways found it difficult to maintain them and gradually had to join the converted, though in some reported cases not in the most overt and zealous manner, as compared to those who had seen the ‘light.’

Gibran Mwandigha recalls that such was the case of Mzee Kimadu, who would take his young Hilarius to the Catholic Mission School in a basket, so as not to be seen following the missionaries’ ways, and yet it was the same missionaries who had come to steal his thunder. For

how could a famed traditional drummer dine with those whose faith had shuttered the very centre of the tradition he so vehemently professed and promoted? It was humiliating. But Mzee Kimadu could not let this humiliation deny his son the much praised white man's education. Since Mzee Kimadu's enthusiastic audience had its reception poisoned by the new faith of the missionaries and consequently his trade being adversely affected, he unwillingly conformed to the irresistible wave of conversion. Though many could remember his exceptional talent during his time, its fame and glory paled in comparison to its former self, and more about him also faded with time.

The young Hilarius grew knowing Catholicism as the true faith, just as he grew finding its dominance everywhere he went. Having demonstrated eagerness to learn the new novelty of the white man, his priest selected him to join the Catholic central school – Kabaa Mission School. According to John Osogo in his thesis titled *The History of Kabaa –Mangu High School and The Contribution of The Holy Ghost Fathers Upon Education in Kenya*, Kabaa Mission School was designed as a central school, which drew students from Msongari, Mangu, Kiambu, Lioki, St. Peter Claver's Nairobi and of course Bura Mission where Hilarius came from. Coming from Bura Mission School, Hilarius joined Kabaa Mission School in Ukambani managed by the same Holy Ghost Fathers, whose agenda of "Civilizing and Christianizing Africa" was spreading like a bushfire.

At Kabaa Mission School, the majority would stop learning after finishing religious studies and receiving baptism. Those who sought to know more proceeded to learn more in agriculture and industrial work. Hilarius belonged to the former category. Immediately after he finished his studies at Kabaa Mission School, he joined Uganda Railway. He shortly worked at Kisumu, then Mombasa. At Mombasa he was an active member of Makupa Catholic Church Choir playing the guitar, keyboard and accordion in a measure that the choir recognized him for his prowess. Laurence Mwazighe confirms that Hilarius owed his prowess to one 'Mnyasa', one of the freed

slaves originating from Nyasaland (now Malawi), who came with the missionaries and got settled at Bura. The freed slave from Nyasaland was very skilled and he generously trained anyone interested. Evidently, the missionaries had come to set the captives free in line with Isaiah 61:1 which states that, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners.”

Zealously fired by the Holy scriptures, as intimated by Fr. Florentine Mallya, the missionaries not only sought to destroy slavery, but also curb the influence of Islam spread by the Arabs by taking away the very “commodity” of their human peddling business. In his article titled *Bagamoyo and The Spiritans*, Mallya states as follows:

Amidst the success of the mission work in Zanzibar, they didn't lose sight of the main objective which was to get to the homeland of slaves. Zanzibar remained in their view, a stepping stone to the mainland. Father Fava went several times to Bagamoyo in search of a suitable location for the next stop. He even bought a plot in Bagamoyo.¹¹ Within a span of two years the work had become overwhelming and there was need for a religious congregation with African experience. It is precisely at this juncture that the Spiritans came into the picture in East Africa. Spiritans had been working in Reunion since 1839. Father Alexandre Monnet also known as “the Father of the Blacks” and Father Frederic Le Vasseur were well known in Reunion as advocates of the rights of slaves. When it came to passing the baton in Zanzibar, Spiritans were a natural choice to Bishop Maupoint. (3)

The freed “commodities” were proving themselves precious beyond the price tags their captors’ had imposed on them. All the way from Zanzibar, to Bagamoyo and finally to Bura, these freed

slaves, under the supervision of their saviours, had helped the locals acquire different skills fit for survival in a much technologically advancing world. Many had benefitted and a change from the past was evident.

Whereas Mzee Kimadu was a well-known traditional drummer, his son sang and played the white man's hymns and instruments, though not as well as his father, but at least good enough to be easily noticed in a fast changing world. The same talent will also be noticed at Bura and he would play the church's pedal keyboard during Sunday services. Having travelled beyond his birth place to study and work, Hilarius could not find the love of his life elsewhere other than at his place of birth: Bura. So after briefly staying at Bura, Hilarius wedded his first wife Caroline Mghoi Mwamburi on 12Th October 1938 at Bura Catholic Church. This wedding was presided over by a Spiritan Father called Fitzgerald C.S.Sp and witnessed by Joseph Mwadime and Loice Chausiku from Bura, as documented at Bura Mission archives. After this official church wedding, Hilarius was then posted to Mwakitau to work with Uganda Railway as a clerk.

After the church wedding, Hilarius continued playing the church keyboard, and his prowess continued being instrumental mostly during Sunday services, just as it had been before the wedding. And as Laurence Mwazighe recalls, his talent brought him closer to the clergy, as well as the novices and the young girls who grew up as orphans under the care of the missionaries. In these interactions, Hilarius knew too well that novices were under probation before they took their vows of Catholic sisters. He also knew that intimacy with the young girls under the missionaries' care was not allowed. Despite the restrictions, a friendly relationship developed and soon Hilarius became irresistible to one of the girls under the mission's care. Hilda could not go unnoticed by Hilarius for her beauty and before she took her vows, Hilarius had enchanted her with his personality. This saw the white priest by then, Fr. Madigan, go searching for the girl and angrily castigating Hilarius before taking the girl back to the mission. Having demonstrated

her inability to overcome the temptation, Hilda was later allowed to marry, and her dream of becoming a Catholic nun, if at all she had it, never actualized. On the other hand, Hilarius was unceremoniously chased away from the church and the scandal spread very fast, especially among the Parish members. The negative impact of the sexual scandal largely reduced Hilarius' association with Bura, and led to his relocation to Mwakitau where his sister settled with her husband Florian Mzungu.

2.1 Family life.

The historical land that prides itself as the place where the first flight took place in Kenya on 3rd October 1915 is where Hilarius Kimadu was transferred in the early 1940s. According to Fundi, he moved with his first wife Caroline to work as a clerk with Uganda Railway, which during his time had changed to Kenya and Uganda Railways and Harbours in 1929 and later to East African Railways Corporation in 1948. They occupied lower Railways staff quarters, popularly known as "Landi", as a young family. According to Apolinary Ngati and Gibran Mwandigha, Caroline and Hilarius had five children namely, Pantaleo Kimadu born in 1939 (late), Apolinary Ngati born in 1942, Gibran Mwandigha born in 1944, Patrick Jude Niven born in 1946 (late) and Timothy Mwamburi born in 1948 (late). It did not take long before Hilarius' desire for more wives started to manifest. Shortly, this trait became too strong for the first wife to tolerate, for it seemed to be strengthening every day. So one evening, Caroline had to leave with some of his children, particularly the younger ones, which was a risky trek in the vast wilderness (Now Tsavo West National Park) where wild animals roamed so freely. It did not take long before Hilarius married another wife called Cecilia Me Mbala Mwashighiri from Bura, who took care of some of the first wife's children: Kimadu and Ngati. Hilarius did not have any child with this second wife. This relationship also ended up in divorce.

It was obvious that these wives were dissatisfied with something. Some of Hilarius' colleagues, acquaintances and village mates, like Vincent Fundi, had come to know him as a man whose changing of women had become a concern, particularly in the manner he easily married and easily divorced. It was like a match – incoming maidens versus the outgoing. And in this match, Hilarius was the referee whose whistle could mean in with the new or out with the old. The villagers only remained to be the passive spectators of this match. Though polygamy was a common thing during his time, it was how Hilarius seemed to fail to retain his women that made the practice lose value. This failure could not be attributed to his financial status for he was popularly known as the man who had the Mwakitau Railways staff payroll. In addition to this, he was very charming and a sharp dresser. These attributes contributed immensely to him being so magnetic to the opposite sex. However, the contradiction of his status and inability to maintain his wives had tongues wagging. But as the talk continued, Hilarius too continued marrying. Hilarius then married Eunice Machocho. Machocho, born in 1938 and a descendant of the Ngeti clan based in Mghange, cut the figure of a beautiful lady who seemed to know what she wanted. Though illiterate, she was assertive. Coincidentally, Machocho was born the same year Kimadu had his wedding with his first wife Caroline Mghoi Mwamburi. The sixteen year difference between Kimadu and Machocho was nothing to deter her father from marrying her off. She had come with her father to the land of first flight following her father's elder brother, Mwambingu. They settled at Chereghe, a place known to be occupied by people from Mghange but still in Mwakitau. At the time when Machocho was being married, Hilarius had been allocated a parcel of land just by the main road and opposite the railway station. This strip mostly had shops serving train travelers from Mwakitau station as well as the local community. There were already other shops along this strip mostly owned by professionals and prominent business people. According to Fundi, such prominent business people were Mzee Mwawasi wa Mwaruta from

Mwanda, who was the first person to set up a shop in 1936, followed by Mori Mwangima, a Second World War veteran, then Mwandoe from Mrughuwa. Looking ahead, Hilarius had started putting in place his retirement plan regardless of his marital status.

2.2 Early Childhood

Apolinari Ngati recalls that in 1952, Machocho gave birth to a son. He was of brown complexion and a sight to behold. As a father, Hilarius was happy to have his first born with his new wife. However, the child developed a boil in one of the eyes which would then produce smelly pus. Consequently, the first born passed on shortly. The child was buried in Mwakitau. The joy was cut short too soon. This loss was immense for a woman mothering for the very first time. The loss became vividly tattooed in her memory. Which remedy could heal such a loss? It was only time. Time became the only natural healer, but memories would not fade that easily as she would recall and share with fellow Landi women. When their men had gone to work, the wives would have a women's talk. Some would share experiences of similar, equal or greater magnitudes and as a result of talking it out, the effect seemed to lessen the grim memories. Women's talk was the stage upon which Landi women would offload their burdens of womanhood regarding their marriages and their community. So with the coming of their second born on 5th August 1954, Machocho and Hilarius shifted their attention to the newly born bundle of joy. Hilarius would name his son George Mghanga Wa Ngwang'wa. According to Benedict Mghanga, the second son was named after his maternal grandfather George Mghanga Wa Ngwang'wa, a former Mghange chief. The parents being devout Catholics, they took him for baptism in Mwakitau Catholic church. Benedict Mghanga states that, "the boy was baptized as George Mghanga and not Mganga as would later be known." As the young Mghanga grew in stature and understanding, he got along so well with his step brothers from his first step mother Mghoi and they co-existed peacefully as a family. At this time, Hilarius constructed a house along the strip

of land allocated for businesses and started his business. Pantaleo, the eldest son of the first wife, would sometimes run the business while his younger brothers Apolinary and Mghanga would help the herdsman in herding their fathers' cattle, goats and sheep. Having been introduced to herding at a younger age, the children got so used to the wilderness that the father developed confidence in Apolinary and started sending him to Mwatate, thirteen kilometres away, to place orders of fuel and other goods at the main Indian distributor called Fajal Jamal. Apolinary narrates how he would cycle to Mwatate in a hide-and-seek manner to avoid wild animals, especially elephants and buffaloes, which crisscrossed the dusty main road by then. Mghanga grew seeing his older brother run such tough and risky errands of their father and admired his bravery. Though the errand portrayed Ngati as brave, he had to do it for failure would attract a punishment. The young boys never questioned their father and would mostly make peace with him. As Ngati recalls, "Hilarius rarely had a son-father conversation in case of any disobedience. He swiftly punished disobedience." As a result, the boys grew knowing very well they had nothing to talk about with their father. They understood him as a disciplinarian and that is who they grew up knowing.

As one of their cooperate social responsibilities (CSR) in Mwakitau, Railways had given a place for teaching the young children from the area. Fundi recalls that the kindergarten was established near the railway station and it is here that Mghanga graduated and joined Mwakitau Primary school for class one. At school, as Arimogast Hillary recalls, the young Mghanga was mischievous, very playful and highly curious. These traits pointed to an extrovert who was social and out to explore his environment. At school and home he seemed to easily get along with anyone without reservations regardless of how one treated him. His classmates at this young stage would easily follow what he would start and soon it will become a game. This made him a

popular game starter amongst his peers. These peers would follow him during off school days, visibly enjoying his company.

Then one day it happened again. Mghanga's elder step brothers were used to it. They were left by their biological mother who had divorced with their father. Step-mothers took over raising them from where their biological mother had left off. They knew the taste of "cocktail parentage." Being raised by a father who was a disciplinarian alongside their several step-mothers' upbringing abilities, which varied depending on their familial backgrounds and how each wife assumed her role in relation to her preceding wife, the boys had a lot to learn. It was like a class. While Hilarius' marrying spree was like a match - incoming wives versus the outgoing wives and Hilarius being the referee - his children, victims of divorce, were like students at the hands of 'teachers' in form of their step-mothers. Though each step-mother had the title of a wife, each had a different lesson for the boys left behind. Whether the lessons were superior or inferior to the biological mother's lessons, it would later show as the boys would look for their biological mother and cut ties permanently with their father and some of their step-mothers. Faded memories of their 'teachers' also help to answer this question. Lessons came from step-mothers who had their own children as well as from a childless step-mother. The effect created was permanent and unique in its own way in the growth of the boys. Machochi had thought that as a wife, she was the woman Hilarius had been looking for since he married his first wife. She seemed to imagine that she was the solution to this endless craving for marrying. She imagined that with her, Hilarius will throw away the whistle and disappoint his spectators by ending this in-versus-out marrying match which had become a talk of Mwakitau. Predictably, the spectators were never disappointed. She was. So when one day George Mghanga's mother left after a quarrel with her husband, it was the same familiar childhood terrain Mghanga was exposed to. There was no option. His father expected him to adjust and live with the new mother.

If the other boys managed, then the young Mghanga was also expected to manage. Once again Hilarius had blown the whistle: in with the new, out with the old.

Fundi notes that with the going of Machocho, a young wife from Mrughuwa came. Hardly had she settled to acquaint herself with her new home when she got a replacement. Out she went and in came another young wife from Mghange, and just like her preceding co-wife, she also left. Then came a young beautiful wife from Mwanda who Hilarius sent home under the pretext of going for her shortly, and being submissive and obedient to her husband she left, that was the end of the relationship. Two of the three young wives married in quick succession, were later confirmed mothers. They had left expectant.

The next wife was an introvert and seemed loyal to her husband. Her name was Defense Gombe. Gombe came from Sagalla, a subtribe of Taita whose dialect is closely associated with the Duruma and the Pare of Tanzania and therefore slightly different from Kidawida. The Sagallas live in the south of Voi town. How the two met is not clear but Gombe is remembered as an obedient and a loyal wife. Apolinary Ngati recalls that their marriage took place between 1957 and 1958. At the time of this union, Hilarius' business was at its prime. He became known in Mwakitau and beyond as the first person to own and successfully run a petrol station. Of all the known wives, Gombe saw the growth of Hilario's business investments.

During Mghanga's childhood, Hilarius was robbed twice by robbers believed to be Chaggas from Moshi, Tanzania. The robbery attacks, according to Arimogast Hillary, could be attributed to Hilarius' success. *Pantaleo Mzee Hilarius General Supplies*, Hilarius' business named after his firstborn with his first wife, had flourished to an extent of overshadowing other long time established businesses. Taking advantage of strategic positioning of his premise which was just by the main road and immediately opposite Mwakitau Railway station, Hilarius' business was

known for kerosene, petrol, diesel, food stuffs, clothes, wrappers and blankets. When there was a need to buy by the community, for the majority in Mwakitau, *Pantaleo Mzee Hilarius General Supplies* dominated as the main option. For at Hilarius' shop, one could hardly be disappointed. However, the subsequent robbing and Hilarius' luxury of women weakened the business.

Unfortunately, in Mwakitau and its neighbouring districts, many had had about his easy 'match making' and easy 'match breaking.' Easy at it and quick at it. At this time his name was taitanized as Hilario and his trait regarding women became synonymous with the coinage of his new name. Gombe seemed to have come into the marriage prepared. Arimogast Hilary points out that this was because her perseverance outlived her preceding co-wives by far. She gave birth to seven children: Reinant Mwamburi (late), Jones Wakaya Mwamburi Hilary, Arimogast Mwanganyi Hilary, Redempta Ngila Hilary, Todesia Hilary, Viridiana Wali Hilary and Florentina Hilary. When other wives found their polygamous husband's behaviour intolerable, Gombe seemed to be above such abhorrence. True to this trait, she stayed with Hilarius till her death in 1979 and was buried on the land where the famous shop once stood. After Gombe's death, Hilario soldiered on.

Left with Gombe as her stepmother, Mghanga played and interacted freely with his stepsiblings. His two stepbrothers from the first step-mother had managed successfully and left for Mombasa to their mother who had turned into *Matingasi* (local brew) seller to raise her children. Gibran Mwandigha, the third born of the first wife, once came to Mwakitau asking for school fees and had his belongings packed and dumped at her mother's place by his father. At the mention of his father, the memories of his father dumping him come to his mind with freshness and accuracy that shows the magnitude of the effect the action created in him. That was the last time he saw his father and the young Mghanga. Left by stepbrothers he had long got used to and remaining

with step siblings of the fifth step mother, Mghanga's life was affected. But being a sociable child and with no option, normalcy resumed as he made the best out of the company available.

One day as they were playing, he carried his younger stepbrother, Arimogast Mwanganyi, on his back and ran with him around. At the climax of the fun, Mghanga tripped over a metal bar and fell sending his 'passenger' flying over and ahead of him causing a dusty landing. The 'accident' had the 'driver' bruised while the passenger's forehead got a deep cut that threw a gush of blood on the spot. This triggered swift caning from the man of the house, the chief disciplinarian, Hilarius. The lashing temporarily drew a long face. However, it would not last. For no sooner had the effect of lashing faded than Mghanga resumed his playfulness. The deep cut would later heal and leave a permanent mark that would always be a nostalgic reminder of their childhood memories when they met as grown-ups.

One day a cloud of uncertainty shrouded Hilarius' family. Boniface Mghanga got lost. How could that happen? Cattle, sheep and goats came home on their own. Family members wondered. His father made some inquiries and it later emerged that he was seen boarding a bus in his tattered clothes with a woman who looked like his mother. This narrative, upon close follow-up by the family members, was confirmed by some Mwakitau Primary School pupils who said they saw the incident and even bid their popular friend good bye as they stared admiringly at the Voi-bound bus.

Seemingly, even after Machocho had cut marital ties with Hilarius, she could not leave behind the only son she had with the man who had disappointed her. After spending some time away, Machocho had finally found solace somewhere and that solace would not be complete without her son. Being young enough for remarriage, questions lingered in many villagers' minds about her next move. Hilarius, as his efforts would later prove, had a lot of questions about her

estranged wife's next move. Whereas Hilarius and his curious lot remained guessing, Machocho and her son George Mghanga were warmly welcomed at Mkwachunyi, a village more than fifty kilometres away from Mwakitau. This secret relocation, from Mwakitau to Mkwachunyi, is less known to many. Some journalists have assumed that Boniface Mghanga was born at Mkwachunyi, Voi Sub County (formerly Voi District). This misconception has stood for long in some quarters. For instance, national music authority like Permanent Presidential Music Commission, through Dr. Atoh Fred Ochieng' in *Kenyan Musicians – A Biography Volume 2* records that Boniface Mganga was born at Mkwachunyi. Though the biography provides valuable information about Boniface Mganga, it leaves some glaring gaps that this work seeks to fill in order to provide a balanced and detailed life account of Boniface Mganga.

CHAPTER THREE

From Mwakitau to Mkwachunyi

When Machocho left Hilarius, no one knew where she had gone. Arimogast recalls how his father made fruitless efforts to trace his estranged wife. At the peak of speculations, George Mghanga also got lost, and it was later confirmed that his mother had taken him away. This confirmation made Hilarius believe what he had heard from his friends - his colleague was the new husband. Arimogast remembers hearing his father saying that he knew where his son was and even the man his wife had gone to.

Upon his discovery, Kimadu never made any attempt to follow them. He just confirmed that the colleague was under maintenance department, and his name was Josiah Mambo from Mbololo. He was transferred to Landi, a small village by then located between Voi and Mwatate towns, which derived its name from Railways Staff quarters.

While Josiah Mambo took in Eunice Machocho and stayed with her at Landi, he had left a family at Mkwachunyi. Mambo had left his first wife Cecilia Manyama Mombo with four children: Charles Kiteto, Gladys Kimeru (late), Grace Charo, and Japheth Mwangange Mwakibuwa. Cecilia Manyama Mambo recalls how she was heartbroken when she first learnt of her husband's intention to marry a second wife. Born at Mwakiki (formerly under Voi District) in 1929, Manyama confirmed how her husband's plan betrayed his promise of staying with her alone. In retrospective, Cecilia narrated how her mother-in-law decorated her during their traditional wedding, how her father-in-law welcomed her to the family, and how Mambo's promises during their wedding crowned the memorable experience. Born in 1916, Mambo was 13 years older than his wife. The age difference demonstrates that Manyama was still young enough to give birth to more children, particularly the male ones, which Mambo so much desired. Considering that out of four children Manyama had only one boy, Mambo insisted on marrying a second wife

to increase his chances of having more male children. Confronted with a reason that exposed her 'failure' Manyama had nothing to say, as she recalls.

Another person against Mambo's move was her mother. Manyama recalls how her mother-in-law posed a question to her son. "Your father has four wives, and you see how we are having problems. Why do you want to create the same problem?" Mambo's mother further challenged her son by observing how his father had failed to take good care of her and her co-wives, and as a result, the children had to do casual jobs to fend for themselves, while her husband indulged in alcohol. With all the pleading, Manyama recalls how Mambo stood his ground and justified his decision by telling his mother and wife that he loved Machocho, and could not stand seeing her being mistreated by her ex-husband. Having no one to challenge his final decision, and his own father approving his decision, Mambo finally brought in his second wife. Women could only complain, but men had decided.

Manyama recalls the first day she saw Machocho arrive with Mambo without a child. It was in 1960s. Since she had no house built for her by her new husband, the mother-in-law had to accommodate her new daughter in-law, as she waited for her own house to be established by her husband. The fact that Mambo had not set up a house for his second wife, reveals some urgency of sorts on the part of relocating the second wife. Was Machocho determined to be away from Kimadu even without considering basic things like accommodation? However, whether the urgency was by default or design, for Machocho there was no turning back, and for Mambo his decision was final.

During the first few weeks of interacting with Machocho, Manyama and her mother-in-law learnt that Machocho was divorced and she had a son left at Mwakitau. Manyama states that her co-wife opened up and told them that Kimadu had everything she needed for her living, but she had

no right of using what was available. Any time Kimadu found out that she had used anything without his permission, he would come home drunk and beat her up. From a woman first loved and cherished, she had turned to a punching bag. Where was love she enjoyed during the early moments of their union? The two women sympathized with their fellow woman, for that was the only option after listening to her. For the first few months of the early 1960s, the two wives had to make peace and accept that their husband's decision was final, and opposing it was fighting a losing battle.

On his side, as the man of the house, Mambo constructed a new house for his second wife, for his own father also ensured that each of his four wives lived in her own house. The reason behind this was to ensure that there were minimal clashes. So guided by this understanding, Mambo expected minimum clashes from his two wives. Then one day, as Manyama recalls, she went to collect firewood at an area that bordered her co-wife's compound. What followed later was a confrontation from her husband, who sought to know why she had plucked firewood from that tree. Before she could answer, a slap stopped her. After this incident, confrontations, quarrels, and troubleshooting became the order of the day. But one thing was for sure - Machocho had made her presence be felt and recognized as one of Mambo's wives. She abhorred to be treated as an intruder and a husband snatcher.

3.1 George Mghanga at his new home

Having her own house, Machocho knew her son could have some place for accommodation. Her mother-in-law's tiny house could not accommodate Machocho and her son. But in her own house she was confident to bring her son. In addition, she had borne Mambo some children already. So one day, as Manyama remembers, Machocho set out to Mwakitau, arriving incognito, locating her son, who was grazing, and coming along with him to Mkwachunyi. When Machocho arrived at Mkwachunyi with her son in 1965, Manyama remembers the first time she

saw George Mghanga. “He arrived here (Mkwachunyi), putting on torn clothes, and his appearance was one of a neglected young herd’s boy.” Later, Mghanga’s mother narrated to them how she found her son herding. It was obvious that he lived in deplorable conditions. Chrispus Ali recalls how his step brother arrived and got to learn of his plight by and by. At some point he got infected with jiggers, and had only one pink shirt, which was in tatters, that he used to put on with a pair of khaki shorts. These descriptions paint a vivid picture of a neglected life of the young George Mghanga. However, his mother’s response to his plight had a lot of unknown in store, just as Mghanga’s abrupt disappearance had left his family at Mwakitau in a state of wonder for quite some time. From Mwakitau to Mkwachunyi - had Machocho made the right decision?

Withering criticism and discouragement against her new marriage, being patient enough to have her husband establish a new house for her, getting children with him, then go for her son she had left behind some years back, taking him without her estranged husband’s knowledge portrays Machocho as a calculating woman. A woman, though illiterate, knew what she wanted in life, and was out to fight for it in a challenging environment.

The first few weeks were peaceful for George and his new step-siblings. He slept in his mother’s house, and quickly got accustomed to the rigours and routines of a polygamous family. He was born and bred in one, and for the new one, he would easily adjust. Only that he would have to contend with the new father. The young Mghanga proved sociable, as he easily and effortlessly made new friends within the first few weeks. One of the friends, who recalls how easily he got along with Mghanga, is Stephen Kifuso, who would later be his confidant when they became adults. Stephen Kifuso recalls the first time he met Mghanga, “I was happy by then that I had gotten a new friend from the family.” Grace Charo, a step-sister, vividly recalls how she easily

got along with George later, despite their mothers' differences. Several children from the large Kiteto's family confirm Mghanga's sociable trait. He had an easygoing disposition.

Born in 1945, and nine years older than George, Stephen Kifuso contends that when George was brought to Mkwachunyi by his mother, his step-father was still working with Railways, but was nearing retirement. Therefore, with the growing family of two wives, each with several children, Mambo had begun to feel the financial strain, considering his meagre salary as a railway maintenance staff. It did not take long for the young Mghanga to realise that he was not wanted by his new family. Mambo openly stated that Mghanga should be taken back to his father in Mwakitau, and he detested his presence in his family. George shared his frustrations with his newly found friend Kifuso. He told him that the issue of inheritance was behind his step-father's rejection. His step-father thought in an African sense that his sons were his automatic heirs, and therefore Mghanga, being not his son, ought to be an heir of his father in Mwakitau. But Machocho stood her ground by insisting that her son should not be discriminated against. Kifuso recalls that Machocho insisted that if Mambo loved her, he should also love her son. Therefore, her son was justified to live where she lived. In other words, she was simply posing a paradox to her husband. How could he prefer maize to ugali yet the latter comes from the former? Mambo's reaction towards the coming of Mghanga reveals the possibility of Machocho's failure to consult with Mambo. As a result, Mambo practically answered his wife's paradox by sending away Mghanga. With no option, as Benedict Mghanga recounts, Mghanga was taken to stage and returned to his father in Mwakitau.

One would have thought that Machocho would give up on her attempts to bring Mghanga close to her, considering that she had other children with Mambo, yet she had attempted to bring her son and failed. It would have been easy for a woman to give up on that pursuit. Not of Machocho's ilk. For hardly had a year elapsed when Machocho travelled back to Mwakitau

looking for her son. She was indefatigable. She wanted her son back. On arriving at Mwakitau, she learnt that Kimadu had dispatched Mghanga to Kitobo in Taveta to help in selling 'Denge', a local brew so common with the locals. Machocho followed her son to Kitobo and got him out of the den. She later boarded Voi train with her son. Unfortunately, her fare could not take them to Voi, and therefore they had to alight at Mwatate and start a long trek to Mkwachunyi. Mghanga was back to Mkwachunyi for the second time, only this time round he knew his environment better.

From Taveta to Mkwachunyi again, Machocho was determined to have all her children under one roof. Having managed to do so, Machocho tried to enroll George Mghanga at Mkwachunyi Primary School. It took the village elder Mzee Mwanyigha's intervention for George to join the primary school, recalls Manyama. The fact that the village elder had to intervene for George's schooling makes one question the step-father's role in Mghanga's education. Was Mambo for it, or he preferred it done by his cousin, the village elder? Isaack Mwangasu, his former classmate, observes that it was in 1965 that George Mghanga was registered as Boniface Mghanga in class three. As Benedict Mghanga contends, the change of name from George to Boniface took place at Mwakitau under his father Kimadu, who was a staunch Catholic. Despite the new name, George was commonly used by his family both at Mwakitau and his new family at Mkwachunyi. His mother was known as Mama George. His step-siblings, all received him as George and had learnt to know him as George. At home he was called George, and at school Boniface, and as Mama George had wished, at least all her children were under one roof.

Boniface Mghanga was now with his mother, who loved him, and a step-father, who disliked him but loved his mother. Where there was the cold hatred, his mother's love provided warmth that made him not to feel out of place. Machocho stood as the only hope for her child. But Boniface Mghanga knew he was not wanted in this family, but with his mother on his side, he

had the courage to soldier on. Together with other children of the polygamous family, Mghanga took over family chores as it was expected. Mwangasu recalls how Mghanga used to graze his step-father's livestock. During the weekends, boys from different families with livestock would take heavy breakfast to sustain them during the day as they shepherded their livestock around Mkwachunyi hills. Alongside grazing, they would start hunting rock rabbits, antelopes and birds. They would use self-made catapults and bows and arrows in their hunting. In these expeditions, one thing stood out: Mghanga's sharp shooting skills. This could be attributed to his early experiences as a young herds-boy at Mwakitau. When the sun had set, livestock with protruded bellies would lazily drag to water points constructed by Kenya Railways, while Mghanga with a stick at hand would whip the wayward sheep, cow, or goat as he followed behind the stock as a good shepherd. Owing to his sharp shooting skills, Mghanga would carry home more birds and one or two antelopes, while his peers from the same grazing field had less or none. Ali, his step brother, credits Mghanga as one whose shot rarely missed. In later years, his skill will prove helpful in Mghanga's life and even earn him recognition.

As Mghanga got used to the Mkwachunyi home, life seemed to be becoming harder for him, and in some cases for his mother, but who could Mghanga turn to? It was only his mother. Kifuso recalls one day when Mghanga slept in one of the classrooms at Mkwachunyi Primary School. He had been beaten and sent away by his step-father. The only place he found for the night was one of the classrooms. Still spending the night in the cold, and probably having several chairs for a bed, his mother would locate him, bring him food and console him. Grace Charo describes another place where Mghanga also used to spend the night as Mkwachunyi Nursery School. As usual, his mother would locate him, give him food and leave him to brave the night's chill, but not without a dose of consolation. There were also days the mother and the son were sent away. This, as Kifuso observes, was due to Mambo's wives personal issues that would sometimes

incite the husband against the other. Consequently, a fight will break loose, and Mama George and his son would flee away from the heat of the beating, and spend the night in the cold, and return the following morning when the heat had cooled down. Scampering for safety by these two had become so frequent to be known by all and sundry in the village. Sometimes Mghanga would be forced to look for a friend or a classmate to accommodate him during the night. Mghanga would learn that his mother too had scampered for her own safety, and therefore looking for accommodation from a friend was a strategy to cater for supper too. Isaack Mwangasu, Mghanga's primary school classmate who once accommodated him, confirms that this strategy in a way made his parents get to know Mghanga's tribulations, for he could not eat and sleep without his parents' knowledge of what had transpired.

When Mghanga realized that he had become so frequent to his hosts, he changed from one house to another. This became evident when he was chased away from home and sought refuge at Kulele, a neighbouring village. Grace Charo recalls how Mwacheda, a widow, hosted her step-brother for quite some time. He even started attending school from Mwacheda's place. Considering that the distance from Kulele to Mkwachunyi Primary School is four kilometers, one can undeniably see Mghanga's thirst for education. Joining Mkwachunyi primary school was by mere luck, considering the circumstances he found himself in. Seeking refuge in the cold, while his step-siblings curdled their sheets and blankets, must have been traumatizing for the young Mghanga, but how he remained steadfast in his quest for education strikes him as a determined boy, who was out to triumph despite all odds. Mghanga's plight had caught the attention of so many villagers that it became common knowledge, and even those who were ignorant, came to learn that he came with his mother. Manyama, Mghanga's step-mother, recalls how her father-in-law Mzee Kiteto had to feel for the boy, and that he had to tell his son and the

family at large that Boniface Mghanga should be considered as part of his family, and he would not condone his discrimination and mistreatment.

With persistent calls to Mambo to stop mistreating his step-son, at least Mghanga came home and started feeling the warmth of his family. It was a relief that will prove to have been blocking a lot of potential and exceptional talent. But as relief had shifted to Mghanga's plight, his mother had her own plight at the hands of her drunk husband. It was as if misfortune was jumping from the son to the mother, and this time round it had jumped and seemed to have stayed for too long for mama George to persevere. She opted for a break, and away she ran leaving Mghanga behind, and his step-siblings under the care of whoever will care to take the responsibility. She left without anyone's knowledge, and therefore did not tell anyone in particular to assume her mothering responsibilities.

After running away from Kimadu's brutality she had hoped that her second lover would fare better. She was disappointed and needed a different environment to handle her disappointments. She ran to Mombasa. Interestingly, Manyama the first wife assumed her role and took care of all the children, including Boniface Mghanga. Used to this kind of life, Mghanga enjoyed his every stay under his step-mother and with his step-siblings. In fact, as Grace Charo observes, the environment provided a good ground to interact as brothers and sisters under their mother, the first wife. Certain misconceptions were sorted out, and at least every child enjoyed the other's company; at least there being no direct wife-to-wife rivalry and sending away of Mghanga, peace prevailed. To her advantage, her co-wife's absence had proved an opportunity for Manyama to endear herself to her one time monogamous husband.

After three months in Mombasa, Mama George was back. When she returned, a cloud of misfortune she had left behind still hanged above her. It was a reunion whose certainty could not

be predicted. Being one not to give up so easily, particularly on her children, Mama George had come to reclaim her marriage and family. Mambo, full of anger, demanded Mama George with the son she came along with, to leave his house immediately. Mama George tried to explain herself to no avail. On realizing that her husband was determined to have her vacate for good, the calculating Machocho ran for chief's intervention. In the presence of the chief, Mambo sought to know why Mama George had left the children with the first wife, and why she did not explain herself. Accepting her mistake and promising never to repeat it, Mama George pleaded for forgiveness that thawed the cloud of misfortune. Charo could not believe how Mambo opened his heart for her. It was like a reunion that was long anticipated by the two lovebirds. The three months absence became a game changer that saw Mambo love his second wife like never before. It brought drastic changes that had tongues wagging. For instance, Manyama recalls how Mambo relocated to his second wife and temporarily visited his first wife and his children. What was once a strained relationship had now transformed into a strong romantic relationship that left critics with mouths wide open.

3.2 Primary Education

Mkwachunyi Primary School received pupils from Ikanga, Kambito, Kirutai, and Kulele villages. This gave the school a big population, and Mghanga, coming from Mwakitau Primary with a relatively small population, found a big school he had probably never seen before. At Mkwachunyi Primary, Mghanga was among the oldest pupils not only for his class, but in the entire populous school. He was heavily built, sociable, and courageous, notes Isaac Mwangasu, his former classmate.

Mghanga easily got along with everyone in school, and this set a stage for his popularity in his school. He easily mingled with everyone, recalls Mwangasu. When in class, Mghanga did not read much, but his brilliance was unrivalled. Mwangasu states that there was no doubt that

Mghanga was the most intelligent pupil of his entire class. His intelligence caught the attention of his teachers, including his headmaster, Mr. Michael Mkala. Noting his potential, Mr. Mkala would take him in when he was chased away by his step-father. Mghanga once told Benedict Mghanga how he cooked, ironed, and washed for the headmaster when he accommodated him. The headmaster never complained, for Mghanga proved skillful at whatever he did, knowing too well that his survival depended on how he executed the responsibilities bestowed upon him. Mghanga grew knowing that mediocrity repelled favours, which his life was so much reliant on.

One day older boys sparked a fight between two younger boys. Being a common sport among the Mkwachunyi village boys, a crowd had gathered as spectators to the fight and cheer up their preferred fighter. One of the older spectator would order the two younger boys about to fight to entangle their pointing fingers, then disentangle at his command. He would then blackmail them that if they did not fight, their mothers would die. With fear of losing their beloved mothers, the two fighters would give a spirited fight amid cheers from their respective supporters. Mwangasu and Mghanga were among supporters; though the former had his fighter to support, he recalls that Mghanga remained neutral but cheered the loudest for the fight to continue. Eventually, there would be a winner and a loser, but still Mghanga showed his neutrality, and Mwangasu had come to identify him with his neutrality whenever there was such a fight.

In addition to Mghanga being sociable, he was also peace loving. “Did Mghanga used to fight,” I ask. According to Mwangasu, “I had never seen nor heard him fighting.” But what Mwangasu easily remembers are the countless instances of Mghanga’s humour. “How humourous was he?” I ask. “He would crack jokes that would leave his classmates and schoolmates in stitches. Then he would also be part of the audience by joining them in their laughter he had cracked. His broad shoulders would shake, eyes narrowing into slits with laughter, while still at it, he would crack

another joke that would inject another dose whose effects sent his audience holding their ribs. Mwangasu observes that he was a natural comedian, whose comic relief made his peers around him enjoy his company,” Mwangasu recalls. Once Mghanga nicknamed anyone, chances were very high the nickname would stick. For instance he once called Mwangasu Mwakuzughwa (The hungry one) and the nickname remained to adulthood. This could also explain why his company easily attracted friends everywhere he went. However, most importantly, his jokes provided him with comic relief that lightened the burdens of suffering he went through at the hands of his step-father, whose supposed care had fallen short. Kifuso, his longtime friend and confidant, states that Mghanga during his childhood rarely kept grudges, and this trait would later be confirmed when he grew up.

Interestingly, though Mghanga was comic, he never allowed jokes to make him lose focus on his academic work. When I interviewed Mwangasu and asked him how Mghanga behaved in class, this is what he responded, “In class, Mghanga was alert; he answered questions in English, and solved problems in Mathematics and Science. Academically, no one outshone him.” Due to his easy grasp of concepts, many pupils sought his assistance for better understanding of some concepts; because of his warm and charming personality no pupil found it difficult to seek assistance. Mwangasu recalls that many a girl admired his intellect and charm. One such particular girl was Evangeline Kulola Mwamboa. The top position became Mghanga’s preserve. He dominated the class, and no one ever beat him till he finished his primary education in 1969. Whereas Mghanga traditionally maintained the first position, Kulola featured among the top ten of her class. Seeking to better her performance, Kulola widely consulted Mghanga on academic. This saw the two visit each other frequently during weekends and holidays. Since Mghanga sterling academics performance was widely known by many parents, Kulola’s father, Mwamboa, allowed the two to learn together, and this not only improved their academic performance, it also

strengthened their friendship. This friendship would later on materialize into marriage. And as Kulola confirms, that though Boniface Mghanga was older than the rest of his class, he was bright, charming, and it did not come as a surprise when he married her. They long knew that they loved each other. Their chemistry had started way back in primary school. “His sharp intellect and charming personality were irresistible,” Kulola recalls.

Though Mghanga and Kulola were good friends, the two had familial backgrounds with similarities and differences that should have set them apart rather than unite them. Literally, they were two worlds apart. Both came from polygamous families. One was better off than the other. Kulola’s father Mwamboa was a rich and well known businessman, Mghanga’s step-father was a Kenya Railways maintenance supervisor, who could hardly meet his family’s ever increasing needs with his meagre salary. Therefore, class difference should have set Mghanga and Evelyn apart, but it didn’t. When school fees payment became a hindrance to Mghanga’s stay in school, he would engage in the trade he knew too well - grazing for money. “How often did he graze for money,” I sought to know from Manyama. “It was during weekends and holidays, Mghanga herded people’s livestock in order to get money to pay for his school fees,” She explained. “He would alternate with weeding, planting and harvesting services to sustain his primary school studies. Sometimes he would go to work with his mother, and the proceeds were sometimes for domestic needs,” Manyama added. That was the rhythm of life for Mghanga working hard to excel in class and working hard to sustain his stay in the same school. It had become his lifestyle. A lifestyle of striving against all odds. “Mghanga excelled in school against all financial odds that threatened his early academic life. In addition to his domestic woes, that should have depressed him or made him wallow in self-pity, he rose above them, and chose to remain joyful, making him an inspiration to his peers. Who would not admire such kind of a person?” posed Kulola. “His unflinching determination was phenomenal, as his charm was magnetic,” she adds.

3.3 Mkwachunyi: The matrix of musical talent.

While still at Mkwachunyi Primary School, something had caught Boniface Mghanga's attention. It was something that was intertwined with his destiny by sheer coincidence. If his mother had not relocated him from Mwakitau to Mkwachunyi, Mghanga would not have probably been the impactful and famous Boniface Mghanga the world knows. Therefore it can be said that Boniface Mghanga met with his destiny at Mkwachunyi thanks to his mother Eunice Machocho. She had brought her son upon his destiny's way, and upon Mghanga seeing it, he swam with the tide.

As fate would have it, Mghanga's step-father Mambo had a step-brother called Leonard Mwawasi. They lived in the same vicinity as a family. This enhanced interactions in a manner that one family member could easily know what the other was doing. This was common with polygamous families, and Mghanga, having found himself in such an environment, as Kifuso states, "Easily noticed and got interested in what his uncle Mwawasi was doing." Mwawasi was a choir master, a composer, a guitarist and a passionate musician. All these attributes fascinated Mghanga, particularly when he saw how Mwawasi was conducting St. Barnabas A.C.K Mkwachunyi Church Choir. Mwawasi used to work at Kwale, and occasionally came to Mkwachunyi. It was during this time that he would engage in musical activities. Mghanga took advantage of his uncle's availability and learnt the skills of musical composition, conducting and playing musical instruments, like keyboard and guitar, which were readily available. When his peers were busy playing football, Mghanga was singing in Mwawasi's choir.

Mghanga really enjoyed hunting, and took pride as the best archer who rarely missed his target. His peers like Mwangasu and relatives like Ali relied on his skill. But Mghanga had realized something that consumed him wholly. Bow, arrow and catapult could not match the passion that came with music notes, drum, keyboard, and guitar. The passion was unmatched. This realization

converted Mghanga from a hunter to a music enthusiast. Kifuso confirms that wherever Mwawasi was you would definitely find Mghanga. He had become a loyal disciple. Mwawasi too, on his role as a teacher, noticed the burning desire and the bubbling potential which just needed some skills and guidance to be fully realized.

Betty Wambugha, a cousin, recalls that, “Leonard Mwawasi got a job with Matuga Girls Secondary School in the mid-1960s.” Despite the commitment, Mwawasi did not let the choir to die, as during vacations the choir members would gather at his home and rehearsals would resume. Wambugha further recalls that, “One day I found Mwawasi playing the guitar and leading the choir. The choir members, men and women, were dancing to the rendition, and Boniface Mghanga was among them.” All of them were enjoying the music, as bright faces confirmed, back and forth steps in a rhythmic dance, men’s basses and altos and women’s sopranos all combined in harmony to create a rhythmic effect that was so appealing. His commitment and passion in music saw Leonard Mwawasi promoted from a simple office manager to music trainer at Matuga Girls Secondary School. Wambugha and Kifuso confirm that, “In equal measure to his commitment and passion, Matuga rose through the ranks in Kenya Music Festivals not only in Coast Province, but also nationally. Matuga Girls Secondary School success of 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s proved Mwawasi’s music prowess and natural talent.” Therefore, Boniface Mghanga was not only being mentored by a choirmaster, he was also being inspired and taught about how dedication, passion, and talent were the best recipe for quality music, whose effect was irresistible. Matuga Girls music performance and Mkwachunyi’s fame spoke volumes of Mwawasi’s talent, dedication and passion. As a result Mwawasi had made a name for himself, and Boniface Mghanga, his student, was following very closely his teacher’s success stories and fame. Mghanga had found an inspirational mentor. As Kifuso observes, “It did not take long before Boniface Mghanga proved himself a smart learner.”

It did not take long before a student became a teacher. Kifuso observes that in 1967, Boniface Mghanga started recruiting members of his own choir. Having learnt how to compose songs, conduct a choir and the basics of voice, Mghanga was confident enough to fill the gap created by his uncle, when he left for work at Matuga Girls in Kwale. By realizing what he was capable of doing, Mghanga was becoming a more complex character. At the age of thirteen, Mghanga was learning too fast for his age. Whereas his agemates were engaging themselves in traditional chores, like grazing, hunting, farming, Mghanga had pushed beyond those limits by engaging in music too. “Had there been any young person doing such exploits before?” I enquired from Kifuso. Kifuso responded with a smile on his face while slowly shaking his head side by side saying, “Never before had Mkwachunyi witnessed such a young boy who was so ambitious and industrious. He was exceptional among his peers.”

As if to avoid appearing to rival his music mentor, Mghanga chose to fully experiment with his musical gifts at the neighbouring village of Kirutai, while he gradually continued to recruit members for the new choir he had started. Mwangasu, his classmate, recalls how after classes Mghanga would walk for more than five kilometers to Kirutai just to train the Kirutai ACK Church Choir. He would do it from Monday to Friday after classes and come back home. So what motivated him? Many who know Mghanga would attest to the fact that his determination and passion for music were outstanding throughout his entire life. Adding the two traits to his natural talent in music, Mghanga was intrinsically motivated, and it did not take long, for his efforts to bear fruits of resounding success. Dennis Mzugha vividly recalls that when zonal ACK churches competitions came, Kirutai emerged the best under their young choir master, Boniface Mghanga. This made Mghanga popular beyond his village. Many church members recognized the powerful talent in the young boy. The success of the choir boosted his morale and confidence. As young as he was he began swimming in his glory. “Many admired such a feat and

talent,” notes Denis Mzuga who, though young, grew at Kirutai hearing about Boniface Mghanga’s prowess in music. One particular member who had been endeared to Boniface Mghanga as a result of his musical genius was Stella Paulo Mwatee. Though she came from Kirutai, she was in the same school with Boniface Mghanga. Boniface Mghanga made a new friend. Friendship which would mark important stages of their lives later. To crown ACK Church Choir’s victory, the choir master received a windup alarm from the diocese. The choir celebrated their success carrying their metallic table clock around the village. When the celebrations were over, it was time for Boniface Mghanga to go home. He went home with the present. “What was not clear was whether the present was supposed to remain with the choir at Kirutai or the choir master was to retain it. The same week the choir had celebrated its success and its choir master, it ganged up and came all the way to Mkwachunyi demanding their present from their choir master. Confronted by the bigger boys in the choir he had trained, Mghanga had no option but to submit. This incident discouraged Mghanga from training the choir again,” observes Mwangasu. Even though the success story had ended on a bad note, Mghanga was now confident that whatever his mentor could achieve, he could as well achieve.

Academically, Mghanga continued dominating his class. Musically, he vigorously continued recruiting new members for his new choir. Having cut ties with Kirutai Choir, he now concentrated his energies on forming his new choir. He seemed to have learnt that East or West home was the best. According to Mwangasu, it was at the middle of 1967 that Mghanga’s efforts of forming a choir bore tangible fruits. At the age of thirteen, he had managed to bring together grown-ups and pupils to a total of twenty-five choir members. Mghanga built on what his mentor, who was at work in Kwale, had left behind. With his mentor’s blessings Mghanga was the new choirmaster, conductor and a composer.

Mghanga made rehearsals compulsory. During week days, since reporting to school was at 8.00am to 3.00 pm, the choir members would meet in one of the classrooms in school immediately after classes. Mwangasu points out that this arrangement was convenient for the members who were pupils, as well as the adults who were free in the evening. The non-schooling members would join them and follow instructions of the young choirmaster. Despite the fact that the choir had no structures and never kept any record, Mghanga's roles in the choir were clear: a choirmaster, conductor, a composer and a director. Considering the choir's composition, ideally it was meant to enhance church's choral performance and nurturing talents. The Kirutai ACK Choir, competing successfully, had opened Mghanga's eyes to the fact that with good music, a lot could be achieved. Having this mindset he directed the choir towards excellence. Mwangasu recalls that, "Rehearsals were done nearly the whole week." After meeting in school in one of the classes every week day, on Saturday they would still meet again. As Mwangasu puts it, "Performing after service on Sunday at St. Barnabas ACK Church at Mkwachunyi made the choir more appealing to the community." This appeal not only motivated Mghanga, but also endeared more church members to join Mkwachunyi Choir. The Choir grew rapidly under the leadership of the young Mghanga. As Mwangasu observes, Mghanga's discipline in the choir and his charming personality glued together the choir, as his creativity in composing, mesmerizing conducting and inter-personal skills kept the choir on the right trajectory. Through his attributes, Mghanga had distinguished himself as the head of Mkwachunyi Choir, and the entire choir depended on him for survival.

3.4 Boniface Mghanga: The Composer

Mwangasu confirms that apart from being intelligent in class, Mghanga was also very creative.

"Did Mghanga compose all the songs you sang as a choir?" I sought to know from Mwangasu.

"Nearly all songs we sang were composed by Mghanga," Mwangasu acknowledged. As

Mwangasu further recalls, his compositions ranged from sacred, praise to patriotic songs. As one of the choir members and one who played the reed rattle (kayamba), some of the repertoire he remembers that was entirely composed by Mghanga were as follows:

Lwaka Loko Lukema Kireti (There is a voice calling from the wilderness)

Twashukuru rais wetu (We Thank Our President), sang in Mombasa State house

Yetu Jamuhuri (Our Republic)

Mabadiliko Baada ya Uhuru (Changes after Independence)

Jesu Mkiri Wodu Waruka (Our Saviour has Resurrected)

Simba Nguruma - sang to President Jomo Kenyatta (Let the Lion Roar)

Ni Juu Yetu Tuijenge Kenya (It is our Responsibility to Build Kenya)

Towards the end of 1967, Mkwachunyi choir had made a name for itself in Mkwachunyi and all the neighbouring schools. The choir members did not only rely on Mghanga for the choir to run, but they also came to find their leader's personality irresistible, motivating and radiant with joy. Village men and women recognized his potential, and Boniface Mghanga of Mama George had become a household name. His teachers at Mkwachunyi, as Mwangasu recalls, had highly recommended his choir, and soon teachers from as far as Kishamba and Msau in Taita, more than ten kilometres away, were inviting Mghanga to go and train their pupils. Mghanga would walk to the school, whenever the pupils were available, and train them, and news of sterling performances will follow him. Benedict Mghanga, a teacher during this time, confirms that, "Mghanga's teachers too received appreciation from colleagues for recommending a trainer whose skills guaranteed success." Kifuso also confirms that, "His creativity in composing gave

him an edge and in less than a year, Mghanga had managed to have some impact that outshone his own mentor.”

At the end of every year, particularly the night of 24th December, Mkwachunyi village traditionally used to hold Malaika Group. This was a group tasked by St. Barnabas Mkwachunyi ACK Church Choir to move from one house to another singing Christmas carols. The majority of the Malaika Group were youths. First they would assemble at the church, then a priest would pray for them before they went out. Mghanga’s reputation had seen him given this responsibility to lead the Malaika Group. The position moved from one youth, considered to be of good conduct, to another. The boys and girls would go singing hymns, Christmas carols and Mghanga’s compositions. The group would collect food, fruits, and money from different houses in the village. As for collected food and fruits, they were allowed to eat, but surrender all the money collected. In 1967, the group complied by handing over the collected money to Mzee Joseph Mwanyungu, who was the church’s treasurer. Mwangasu recalls how they also complied by handing over the collected money in three consecutive years. However, in 1970, the Malaika Group under Mghanga thought otherwise. Mwangasu observes that, “After Rev. Elkana Sundua started off the movement with a prayer, the group followed their normal routine, but when it came to submitting the collected money, they revolted and insisted that they will only give 50% of the collected money.” The church tried to intervene, but nothing changed. Having retained the money, Mghanga overstayed with it. Ali, Mghaga’s step brother, recalls that, “Malaika Group members nearly beat him up, were it not for the village elder’s intervention.” Come 1971, there was no more Malaika Group, as the church did not only take the issue to be immoral, but it also expressed its displeasure with increased number of pregnancies after the Malaika nights. Mwangasu recalls that Reverend Sundua’s wife called for abolition of the Malaika Group. That

was the end of it. The church, a symbol of light, had realised that darkness bred evil. To keep off evil was by keeping off darkness.

3.5 Boniface Mghanga: The debater and actor

The more Mghanga excelled in whatever he did, the more confident and determined he turned out to be in any new endeavour. Leading in all the subjects including English, Mghanga was identified by his class teachers as the best debater. Mwangasu recalls that, “In 1968, there was a debate in Ndile Primary School. Mkwachunyi Primary used to compete against Ndile Primary School. The two schools used to visit each other and compete in debates.” Mwangasu notes that Mghanga was eloquent as he was brilliant. “With his eloquence and admirable brilliance, he expressed himself with precision. If he was for the motion, he was really for it. He would argue, citing examples for persuasion, and if he was the opposer, he would deconstruct the motion with admirable conviction that evoked clapping from his school.” Mwangasu recalls. He further adds that, “For the oral quizzes too, Mghanga was the key pupil for his school. His answers earned the school points, which saw Mkwachunyi Primary triumph over Ndile Primary.” As the school shone, Mghanga too shone. Though his peers admired his brilliance, few knew what it took to achieve such a feat. As Ali puts it, “Mghanga was a serious reader who spent long night hours studying, using ‘Koroboi. (wick lamp)’” It is no surprise that he led his class from the time he joined till he exited the school. His consistent studying lifestyle provided what it took for him to excel not only in class, but also in academic related activities, like debating, oral examinations and other endeavours he engaged in future.

“In drama, Mghanga was also good,” Mwangasu observes. A fact further confirmed by Kifuso and Ali. Apart from the choir he had formed, he also formed a drama club, comprising of fellow pupils and non-schooling youths. Though the crew never rehearsed regularly like the choir, they took their rehearsals seriously, when ACK churches youths competitions were announced. The

Mkwachunyi drama crew was basically for entertainment. In April 1968, when competitions were held at Reverend Menard Primary School at Mbale, the crew won and proceeded to the zonal level. Though they lost at the zonal, the Mkwachunyi ACK Church celebrated its youth's victory under Mghanga. The loss never stopped the crew from acting in church during some Sundays and special occasions, like Christmas and New Year's Eve. Mwangasu recalls that one day they acted the betrayal of Jesus in school. Mwangasu played the role of Judas, while Mghanga took the role of a Roman soldier. The audience comprised pupils and their teachers. Though the play was not scripted, Mghanga had the crew rehearse it several times before its presentation. Mwangasu notes that Mghanga assigned the crew roles based on their characters and personalities. Though Mghanga proved a good actor, his passion for music remained his priority.

3.6 Boniface Mghanga mesmerizes President Jomo Kenyatta.

President Jomo Kenyatta really loved Coast Province. His frequent visits of 1960s and 70s to the Kenyan coast reveal the president's favorite spot for his annual Christmas and New Year working holidays. If Mzee Kenyatta was not in Nairobi State House, he was at Nakuru State Lodge. If he was not at the two state lodges, then he was at his favorite option: Mombasa State Lodge. For instance, on 16th December 1971 *The Daily Nation* recorded the then Coast Province Commissioner Mr. Eliud Mahihu setting the stage for the head of state's visit. Mahihu said, "Let us all cooperate and come together to give our beloved President a truly hospitable welcome, one that he will always remember. A welcome that will show the great loyalty, love, and respect the people of the Coast have for Mzee Kenyatta." On 21st December 1974 *The Daily Nation* succinctly captures the mood and excitement of welcoming the head of state to his favourite Christmas and New Year holiday destination. "Thousands of wananchi met the presidential party

at Voi, and jubilant crowds lined the roads all the way from Mazaras to Mombasa. They gave him a tumultuous welcome.”

Coast residents had become used to frequent visits by Kenya’s first head of state. The head of state’s visits led to the increase in number of entertainment troupes, choirs, and acrobatic troupes not only in Coast Province, but across the country. When Mzee Jomo Kenyatta visited Nakuru State Lodge, there were traditional dancers and entertainment troupes from various parts of Rift Valley Province. The 28th December 1976 edition of *The Daily Nation* captures this celebratory tradition of the time as follows: “CHRISTMAS Day at State House Nakuru was crowned by songs and dances staged by traditional dancers and choirs from various parts of Rift Valley Province.” This was under the heading, “*Happy Mzee joins dancers at State House.*”

When there was a need to entertain the president at Nairobi State House, different cultural groups across the country and abroad were available. For instance, Ugandan dancers performed on 12th December 1972 during State House golden party before Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and the first lady Mama Ngina. Choirs were not left behind, as St. Stephen’s Choir used to entertain Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, first lady and delegates, as recorded in *The Daily Nation* of 24th December 1977 edition. The founding father introduced a tradition of cultural entertainment at state lodges that really promoted Kenyan talent and the diverse cultures of the Kenyan people after independence. Given his frequent visits to the coast, several entertainment troupes and choirs mushroomed from upper coast, Taita, to lower coast, the land of Mijikenda. Benedict Mghanga states that, “Local administrators, such as chiefs, used to mobilize and organize these groups that were to entertain the head of state.” It can therefore be said that President Jomo Kenyatta promoted praise songs genre in Kenya, and his successor advanced it.

Mwangasu and Duncan Mwanyumba observe that, in 1969, Jomo Kenyatta passed by Voi on his way to Mombasa State Lodge. The local chiefs, as usual, had mobilized and organized village choirs to entertain the head of State at Kenyatta stadium, later changed to Moi stadium. Among the mobilized choirs was Mghanga's Mkwachunyi Choir. As it was the norm, large crowds had gathered to see the respected Mzee of the nation with his flying whisk. In the wake of independence, every mature Kenyan not only wanted to see the founding father, but also wanted to hear from him. As Duncan Mwanyumba recalls, "Many people were driven by such a desire, hence many Taita Taveta residents had come from far and close." Then, finally, the man everyone had been waiting for, President Jomo Kenyatta, with his entourage snaked into Voi town and was welcomed by local dignitaries. The Kenyan flag flew freely, a symbol of a free Kenya. According to Mwangasu, donated means of transport was available courtesy of the local authorities influence. This made it easy for Mghanga and his choir to access the venue. As Mwangasu recalls, "We were twenty-five choir members dressed in school shirts, and home khaki shorts, and skirts." All of them were barefooted, including their choirmaster, but none bothered. What really mattered was how to present the lyrical message to the President in the most melodious way possible. During the presentation, Mwangasu, the choir's reed rattle player, recalls how Mghanga sang his heart out with a praise song, as the choir under him amplified the song that got Mzee Jomo Kenyatta smiling. Paraphrasing the song '*Simba Nguruma*,' (*Lion Roar*) Mwangasu recalls how Mghanga melodiously and confidently went lyrical:

“Wakati wa ukoloni, tulikuwa kama watumwa,

kuingia kwa ofisi ilikuwa lazima uvue kofia

Lakini ulipokuja uhuru kupitia wewe Rais

Hayo hayapo tena sasa.

Simba nguruma wanyama wote wakunje mkia

Kenyatta Simba wa Kenya.”

This translates to:

During colonial times we were like slaves

To get into an office one had to remove their cap

But since you brought independence

Such treatment is no longer there

Let the lion roar and make other animals coil their tails in fear

Kenyatta you are the lion of Kenya.

With such mesmerizing lyrics dedicated to him, President Kenyatta rose. Mwangasu states that, “This caught the attention of all present. The President joined them shortly, and later, after entertainment, Mghanga was called by the President. Soon the word went round that Boniface Mghanga was awarded a scholarship for his secondary school education. President Kenyatta also bought uniform for the choir.” “It was an event that spread all over Taita,” Duncan Mwanyumba observes. Mwangasu recalls that Mghanga had been extremely excited about the award from the President that promised access to what seemed almost impossible to afford, given to his family’s financial status and background. After some few minutes, the entourage proceeded to Mombasa. Having made a name with his melodious renditions, Boniface Mghanga’s choir easily featured among the entertainment groups in Mombasa State House and other events. Boniface Mghanga’s performance made an impression that greatly impacted his musical career.

When Mghanga sat his final examination for his primary education in 1969, he got 30 points out of 36 points. As his schoolmates and classmates Mwangasu and Kulola put it, “Again Mghanga became the first to attain such an academic achievement. Many of his peers admired him, for he was not only famous for his singing talent, but also intelligent, and at the same time setting a record never set before in his school, Mkwachunyi Primary School.” In 1970 Mghanga received an admission letter from Shimo La Tewa Secondary School, which was considered as one of the best schools in Kenya during early post-independence period. Through his charm, determination, intelligence and talent, Mghanga had managed to join one of the most prestigious schools of his time. His musical and academic achievements served to embolden his self-esteem that should have dwindled, considering discriminatory circumstances he went through as a young boy. If he had managed to overcome such circumstances and excelled, as Kifuso observed, then Boniface Mghanga was destined for great things ahead.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE RISING STAR AT SHIMO LA TEWA

According to Douglas Kiereni's article titled *Shimo La Tewa got its name from the travails of slaves*. During the times of Arab slave trade the place was used as a holding ground for slaves headed to Jumba La Mtwana (Mansion of the Slaves). The colonial government opened the institution as an Arabs-only school in 1932, closed down in September 1939 due to World War II, taken over as a war hospital by the British Army, and reopened again in 1947 by the colonial Governor Sir. Philip Mitchell as a secondary school for Africans after the Coast African Association demanded it. Therefore, as history reveals, the institution has a lot to be written about for documentation.

As a result of its richness in history, many people know the school, and those who don't know it due to its history, know it as an old school which has molded some of the notable personalities in Kenya, like the late Karisa Maitha, a notable politician and former minister; General (Rtd.) Joseph Kibwana, former Chief of Defence Forces; Chirao Ali Makwere, a notable politician and former minister; Francis Ole Kaparo, a notable politician and former National Assembly speaker; Noah Katana Ngala, a notable politician; Shariff Nassir, a notable politician; Amos Kimunya, a notable politician and former minister; Marsden Madoka, former President Jomo Kenyatta's Aide-de Camp and politician among others. It is in this great school that Boniface Mghanga and other high academic achievers of his time were admitted in the year 1970. As Stephen Kifuso recalls, Mghanga took great pride in the institution, knowing too well how the institution was famed for molding great achievers. It is in this historic high school that Boniface Mghanga got admission and a chance to be molded into a better person, just like older alumni. The school did not only offer a chance to Mghanga, but also other Taitas from Mbololo, Shigharo, Voi, Ndome, Wundanyi, Mwatate, Taveta and other parts across the country.

According to Ramadhan Abdi Itambo, a Shimo La Tewa alumnus, Boniface Mghanga only needed nine shillings to board OTC bus from Voi to Mombasa, then ninety-five cents from Mwembe Tayari to Mtwapa, and would be at school. There was no need for school uniform, as the school provided the long lasting white shirt and grey khaki shorts for a uniform. So in 1970, Vincent Mwalenga, another Shimo la Tewa alumnus, recalls seeing Boniface Mghanga join Shimo La Tewa High School in home clothes, and receiving his white shirt, emblazoned with school's badge, and a grey pair of shorts made of khaki. Mwalenga further observes that it was easy to know a fellow Taita due to the informally formed 'Taita Students Union', whose objective was to protect Taita students from being bullied by old students, particularly from Kwale and Kilifi, some of whom were already confirmed fathers. In addition to the Taita Students Union, Headmaster Archie Mbogho, a Taita, personally and secretly made follow ups to know the welfare of Taita students due to rampant bullying. Mwalenga confirms that when Boniface Mghanga was joining Form One, he looked older in age, and had a sturdy stature. However, despite his physical appearance, he looked sociable, and within a week, Mghanga proved an outgoing student, who was ready to interact with and explore his new environment. Mghanga's new school has expansive compound and adjacent to Mtwapa Creek, that provided swimming and beach visits to its student. Unlike his former school, Mghanga learnt when it was too hot, students were allowed to remove their shirts, and the school timetables began from 7:00 am to 1:15 pm, with eight lessons, each running for forty minutes. There was only one break at 10:00 o'clock. The menu was well balanced, as follows: on Monday it was ugali and beef stew, Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday students ate fish and rice or ugali, Wednesday - green grams and rice or ugali, and fruits, such as bananas and guavas. For breakfast the boys had tea and bread, and after every two weeks each had a tin of Blueband margarine given to him. During break time there was coffee, and after the last lesson - lunch. Thereafter, students were free up to 4:30 pm,

when they would participate in co-curricular activities up to 6:00 pm, then supper followed by preps up to 9:30 for forms one to three, who will then go to sleep. Form four, five and six would study up to 11:00 pm, then go to sleep. Unlike Mkwachunyi Primary School, where all the teachers were Africans, Mghanga learnt that Shimo La Tewa also had white teachers, like Mr. Alexander Hague for English and Literature, Mr. Shaw for Biology, Mr. Kenneth for Mathematics and Christian Religious Education, Mr. David Piny for Biology, and Mr. Stevenson, the Deputy Head Master. Obadiah Mwanyumba Maghanga, Mghanga's classmate, observes that Mr. Archie W. Mbogho, being a black Headmaster, was well known by students as being fearless and a feared disciplinarian, nicknamed 'Vigoron - Nguvu Kama za Nyati' (Vigoron, energetic as a buffalo) by his students. Shimo La Tewa dormitories were Tom Mboya House, Dr. Aggrey House, Martin Luther King House, Serese Karma House and Livingstone House. All the students were distributed in two streams, East and West. Mghanga joined Form One West. Again, unlike his former primary school, at Shimo La Tewa, as Mwalenga observes, Mghanga had found a culture of very high competition in both academics and co-curricular activities, which had made the school to be well known.

According to Mwanyumba, "Student's life was very exciting, as almost all Kenyan ethnic groups were represented in the student population." Maghanga further adds that academically, "It was a very competitive school, both at A-level and O-levels, at regional as well as at the national level." Mwanyumba had first encountered Boniface Mghanga in 1969 through an interschool debate between Mkwachunyi and Ndile Primary, facilitated by Mr. Winston Luge and Mr. Calist Mwatela, both teachers of English. He again met him at an ACK Church in Tausa as a choir trainer. Mwanyumba's and Mghanga's merit had brought them together not only in the same school, but also in the same class.

It did not take long before the name Boniface Mghanga started becoming a household name at Shimo La Tewa. As Mwalenga puts it, “Right from form one, his talent in music was known. He was very talented. He was very bubbly, sociable and outgoing.” For instance, when Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia was on a state visit to Kenya, and visited Mombasa State House alongside President Jomo Kenyatta on 19th June 1970 to sign a border treaty, Mwalenga recalls that Boniface Mghanga led the school choir in entertaining the leaders at Shanzu, and then to the Mombasa State House. As a form one in a class of eighty students, Boniface Mghanga was conspicuous. Mr. Tola Kofa, his class teacher, made Boniface Mghanga a class prefect. The fact that he could conduct and coordinate a choir spoke volumes of his leadership skills. One thing led to another, and given his charisma, determination and passion for music, Mr. Partington, the school choir master, noticed him, Mwanyumba observes. The teacher-student friendship brought about by common interest in music started shaping Boniface Mghanga’s knowledge in professional reading and writing of music. Mwanyumba recalls that as friendship grew each day, Mghanga’s musical talent and engagement improved just as his popularity grew.

Academically, according to Mwanyumba, Mghanga ranked among the top twenty. Used to be the best in his former primary school, at Shimo La Tewa, Mghanga was nowhere among the top three. Being a longtime acquaintance and later his closest classmate, Mwanyumba observes that Mghanga’s passion took priority in music, despite the fact that he abhorred failure. To Mghanga, the musical success seemed to applaud him louder than academic success, for even if he did not fail, he would be among the best, had he put his determination and focus on academics. The musical success was enticing, and it was the same talent that had made it possible for him to meet the president, and consequently get a scholarship. How could he ignore such a generous endeavour?

Boarding school cheekiness too took a toll on his academic performance. When the boys were free in the afternoon, and it was too hot, most of the boys would rush to the beach to cool themselves, as well as enjoy looking at the almost naked tourists in their swimming costumes. These were fun evoking sessions that the boys really cherished. But the impact could not be underestimated. Like a good number of Shimo La Tewa boys, Boniface Mghanga too used to dodge out of school to go looking for ‘peoples’, recalls Mwalenga. Near the school there was a place called People’s Hotel, which was famously known by the Shimo La Tewa boys for its chapatis. The students replaced the name chapati with ‘peoples’, and it is these ‘peoples’ that Mghanga pursued so frequently, that those close to him, like Mwalenga, took notice. Apart from ‘peoples’, Mwalenga and Mwanyumba agree that Mghanga used to be very happy where girls were. This trait is confirmed by Mwangasu, who was a schoolmate and a member of Mghanga’s Mkwachunyi Choir. Whereas Mwangasu agrees that Mghanga was exceptionally talented in music and academically, a lot of young and older girls he directed in his Mkwachunyi Choir admired and loved him. Mghanga loved them back. These feelings seemed to have been intensified by adolescence, even when Mghanga was admitted to Shimo La Tewa High School; as Mwangasu confirms, “Mghanga impregnated Stella, the old time friend from Kirutai, when he was just about to join high school. Out of apprehension Mghanga ran to Ndome, and got relief when he left for high school.” Dennis Mzugha, a Kirutai resident, confirms this incident. So had the rot set in after such an experience? Had the experience taught him a lesson, or Mghanga had simply learnt the ropes of engaging the opposite sex sexually? Would the experience set a precedent for recurrence of the same? Learning institutions promote social interactions, and it would be interesting to observe Mghanga’s behavioural changes in such settings. As Mwalenga recalls, sometimes Shimo La Tewa used to invite girls from Matuga High School, Coast Girls High School, St. John’s Girls High School and Star of the Seas High School for dances from

7:00 to 9:00 pm. These dances used to take place during third term, towards the end of the year, and many Shimo La Tewa boys really looked forward to them. Again, in these dances Boniface Mghanga's name became popular among the girls due to his amusing dancing antics and music prowess that easily endeared him to the girls, and Mghanga loved them back. With all these audiences it was difficult for Boniface Mghanga to fully maintain his focus on his studies, and therefore difficult too to regain his primary school glory. Musical glory was enticing, and Mghanga knew better its taste.

As Boniface Mghanga progressed to the next class, so deep did he sink to the object of his passion – music. In form two, Boniface Mghanga became well known as the most frequent player of the school's keyboard. The reddish brown mahogany-made pedal piano, which used to be at the dining hall, had come to be identified with Boniface Mghanga. When the classes ended, the majority of the boys ran to their respective co-curricular activities, and he, as it had become his new tradition, would rush to the pedal piano. Ramadhan recalls how he would leave Mghanga with the piano after lunch, and still find him at the same position in the evening. It did not take long before his consistence in playing the pedal piano become conspicuous. According to Kifuso, who is a Catholic evangelist, Mghanga used to play piano at Our Lady Queen of Peace - Voi Catholic Church in 1970s whenever he came for vacation, a passion driven practice that he balanced with his personal studies. Kifuso admits that he was not an accomplished piano player, but the consistence with which he took his practice sharpened his skills with time. As Ramadhan puts it, "The harmonious rhythm that Mghanga played was arresting." Boys would collect their platefuls of food, gather around Boniface Mghanga and listen admiringly to the harmonious rhythms, as they enjoyed their food. Among the enchanted audience was Mr. Partington, the school choir master. As Ramadhan recalls, "One day Mghanga sang a praise song for Kenyatta; as the piano accompaniment provided the harmonic support, Mr. Partington stood for some

minutes listening, as if to judge the rendition, then came closer and acknowledged the performance, much to the admiration of his audience. This was a gesture of approval from a music master that really boosted Mghanga's morale.

Just like when Mghanga at Mkwachunyi Primary School was in the Drama Club, at Shimo La Tewa he still enjoyed acting. Mwanyumba recalls Mghanga taking part in Shakespeare's plays *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*. Mwanyumba recalls that, "Mghanga took his part so well and seemed to enjoy it." With his characteristic humour, alongside other talented actors, they made the play enjoyable. But his passion for drama paled in comparison with his exuding passion for music. As for drama, he swam in it. But music – it carried him along on a tide of irresistible passion. He could not help it.

Mghanga's passion for music saw him become the school's choir conductor, a position he held in primary school. Being given this opportunity, he had experience which only served to perfect his skills. And with Mr. Ken Jones and Mr. Bryant, other music teachers at Shimo La Tewa, and, of course, Mr. Partington's professional guidance, Mghanga was on his way to being an accomplished musician, conductor, song writer, and an organist.

As a result of Mghanga's steady focus, interest and passion for music, the school administration gave him a chance to lead the school choir in rehearsals, inter-school competitions and music festivals. Mwalenga further recalls that teachers came to know about Mghanga's famous presentation he performed to President Jomo Kenyatta. This feat seemed to have earned the school's confidence, not to mention Mr. Bryant's, Mr. Jones' and Mr. Partington's recommendations. Mwalenga observes that the commitment and passion, with which Mghanga led rehearsals, left no doubt that he had the mastery of his trade, which was key to the much anticipated success. Indeed Mghanga and his school choir did not disappoint, for the choir

topped at the zonal level, topped at the regional, proceeded to the national level, and ended up among the best. Mwanyumba recalls 1973, 1974 and 1975 as the years of glory for Shimo La Tewa High School. For three consecutive years Mghanga made Shimo La Tewa shine in Kenya Music Festivals. Even though sometimes Shimo La Tewa School's choir did not make it to the top nationally, it remained to be a force to be reckoned with in the entire Coast region. After every competition, Mghanga returned with his team commanding tremendous cheer, praise and celebrations. Such feats made the name Boniface Mghanga synonymous with music, and indeed the resounding success had a positive impact on the school. In return, Boniface Mghanga became a well-known name in and out of Shimo La Tewa High School.

Mghanga's emphatic musical success came with a lot of exposure and effect on Mghanga's life in general. In the competitions where teachers were conducting their school choirs, Mghanga, a mere student, was doing it, and not just doing it, but even beating them by far. Benedict Mghanga, a primary head teacher by then, confirms that, "it was amazing to see what Mghanga was doing at his age, as a result, Mghanga got contracted by other teachers in Mombasa and Voi during the vacations to train them." Luckily enough, several Taitas, particularly from Mbololo, were willing to host him during such vacations, Mwanyumba states. One such couple, who volunteered to host and even support Mghanga, was Mr. and Mrs. Peter Mvoi. With this kind of help, Mghanga was able to connect with several music teachers outside the school, hence building a strong network of common interest. When school resumed, according to Mwanyumba, Mghanga continued training music lovers, and this even inspired some students, like Kala Ikuttu, his classmate, to develop strong interest in music, and they even started working together. Benedict Mghanga once contracted him to train his Mwakingali Primary School pupils in Voi in conjunction with the school's music teachers. Benedict Mghanga, who later became a close confidant to Boniface Mghanga, agrees that their friendship was brought about by common

interest in music. This clearly indicates that music gave Mghanga a lot of exposure. Mghanga juggled his music interests, academics and leadership responsibilities, earning him his teachers' confidence as an all-round student. His popularity in school and not-that-bad academic performance, ranking among top twenty out of eighty students, made him be appointed the House Captain of Martin Luther King Jr. House (Dormitory) in 1973, when he was in form four. With this new position, Mghanga made personal follow ups on Taita students. Ramadhan recalls that he once saw Mghanga delegate this responsibilities to Mwaliko, a good goalkeeper from a junior class and a Taita. Mghanga threatened Mwaliko that, "If I hear any Taita student bullied while you are here, I would come and bully you myself." By delegating, it was obvious that Mghanga was having his plate full. Focusing on music, prefect responsibilities and Taita students' welfare issues made some students predict that Mghanga will not make it for A-levels. As Ramadhan recalls, these predictions of doom reached Mghanga, and in one of the Taita student informal gatherings, Mghanga told his fellow Taita students, when Ramadhan was present, that he was confident that he would pass his forthcoming examinations, and that he would prefer to finish his A-levels in Shimo La Tewa and prove his critics wrong. Despite Mghanga appearing to be confident, he appeared reflective and concentrated on his studies to make sure he passed his fourth form examinations. Some students believed that Mghanga studied secretly. Mwanyumba, Mghanga's classmate, confirms that Mghanga took his learning very seriously, despite being very active in co-curricular activities.

When the results were out, Mghanga scored Division One after sitting for the examination in 1973. This qualified Boniface Mghanga to proceed to A-levels from 1974 to 1975. True to his word, Mghanga was readmitted to pursue his A-levels at Shimo La Tewa High School. When Archie Mbogho left, and Samuel Mwamburi took over as the new headmaster of Shimo La Tewa in 1972, there were several differences in management of school. Archie Mbogho, who went to

become a permanent secretary, had set high standards in terms of academic performance, discipline, and co-curricular activities. Samuel Mwamburi was equally a tough disciplinarian, and had to work hard to maintain or surpass the standards set by his predecessor. As a result of his approach in administration, students popularly knew him with his refrain phrase, “This must stop” whenever he spoke during the assembly. Mghanga was again appointed the school captain in 1974 by virtue of his leadership skills and being in form five. As Mwanyumba recalls, Mr. Mwamburi expected nothing less than total obedience to the school rules. As the school captain, Mghanga advocated for what his headmaster expected from the students. Despite this, as Mwanyumba observes, Mghanga remained friendly and sociable to his schoolmates. He friendly called his fellow Taitas ‘Ndeo’ (A common name among male Taitas). Mghanga created time to listen to students’ issues, and presented them to the school administration, demonstrating his leadership abilities. When there was an opportunity to address the students as the school captain, Mghanga would do it eloquently in English using the mastery he had for his favourite subject. These traits made him more popular in the entire school, observes Mwanyumba. Mghanga’s tenure progressed well until students started complaining about food and water. Mwanyumba recalls how Boniface Mghanga tried to control the problem, but the students would hear none of it. This unrest was against Mr. Mwamburi’s leadership philosophy of total obedience to school rules. But the students were determined to have their grievances addressed. This led to the infamous 1975 strike. Mghanga, alongside three other prefects, were called on board to explain what caused the strike, and why they could not avert it. Their feedback fell short of school administration expectations, and as a result Mghanga and the three prefects were expelled.

After expulsion, little is known about Boniface Mghanga’s school life, for he sat for his form six examinations while still under expulsion. Mwanyumba observes that Taitas of good will, like Mr. and Mrs. Peter Mvoi, probably provided support to Boniface Mghanga, who had become a

day scholar until he sat for his final examination. In a way the expulsion gave Mghanga an opportunity to concentrate on his academics, for he had been stripped of his school captainship and other school activities. Mghanga sat for his form six examination in 1975, and when the results were out, Mghanga did well. He got three principals and one subsidiary. The results opened another door for Boniface Mghanga to advance his education. He got admission from The University of Nairobi to pursue Bachelor of Arts (Government and Economics).

4.1 The ‘H’ Difference Error

As earlier stated, Boniface Mganga was born George Mghanga, until he was baptized as Boniface and retained his last name Mghanga. When he proceeded to Shimo La Tewa High School, he was known as Boniface Mghanga, and with time the name George was dropped. However, how Mganga instead of Mghanga came to be his official name is what Taita speaking community fail to understand. Under Taita onomastics, as Benedict Mghanga confirms, there has never been Mganga name so far. Cecilia Manyama, Mganga’s step-mother born in 1929, dismisses the name Mganga as alien to the Taita community. She further confirms that she knew Boniface as Mghanga, and not Mganga. The ‘h’ difference error was traced to have come from the registrar of persons, when Boniface Mganga came of age, and required a national identity card. Non-Taitas find it difficult to pronounce ‘gha’ and write it the way they pronounce as ‘ga.’ The ‘second baptism’ Mghanga received gave him a new official name as Boniface Mganga. Coincidentally, the name Mganga means a medicine man in Kiswahili, and translated to Taita, it is Mghanga meaning a person who treats using herbs and has some extraordinary abilities. Boniface Mganga, as the name suggests, proved himself a music wizard with extraordinary music abilities that charmed not only his village and country, but also the entire world.

It goes without saying that Boniface Mganga left a mark at Shimo La Tewa, particularly with his effortless musical talent. Whereas Mkwachunyi Primary School played the basic role of giving

shape to what was an amorphous and raw talent, as well as nurturing it, Shimo La Tewa High School refined Mganga's natural talents and leadership skills. In addition, Shimo La Tewa widely nurtured Mganga's musical and leadership abilities and rewarded his musical capabilities with networks that would prove important in his musical endeavours, as well as his future career. What lay ahead seemed to promise more, given its status as an institution of higher learning that admitted the best students across the country and beyond, and had qualified professional lecturers in nearly all fields. Located at the heart of the city, the University of Nairobi not only offered a chance for academic advancement to Mganga, but also brought him to the epicentre of Kenyan politics, governance, and cultural diversity. Considering what Mganga had demonstrated in his previous institutions of learning, it remains to be seen what the Nairobi environment would make out of his passions, charisma and determination.

CHAPTER FIVE

Boniface Mganga and Family Life, Music: From Nairobi to the World, From a Hit Maker to a Law Maker and Final Moments.

5.1 Boniface Mganga and family life.

Admission to secondary schools normally sever primary school relations, and tend to promote the emergence of new relations and friendships. This was the case when C.P.E results were out, and Mkwachunyi Primary school pupils were admitted to various secondary schools, depending on their academic performance. Mwangasu fondly recalls that Boniface Mganga was admitted to Shimo La Tewa, Isaack Mwangasu went to Kenyatta High School, and Evangeline Kulola went to Bura High School. These two classmates were Mganga's close friends, but the latter held a special place in Mghanga's heart, and the reverse was true. Mganga and Kulola had advanced their friendship to a romantic one. Despite the fact that Mganga was at Mtwapa – lower Coast, and Kulola at upper Coast in Bura – Taita, they maintained communication and kept their relationship growing, despite the distance. These are vivid memories that Kulola holds so dearly and recalls with precision.

The romantic chemistry between Boniface Mganga and Evangeline Kulola grew stronger every day, and it started promising a future together long before they became independent. Each had admiration for the other. When I asked Kulola who was Mganga to her this is what she had to say, "I just loved him because of how he used to talk to people, and was just a good boy." Kulola also remembers how Mganga would swell with jealousy, when he saw her talking to other boys. Kulola further adds, "His brightness, being very responsible and loving his family, especially his mother, were the values that made him stand out." Whether Mganga knew it or not, such values, combined with his sociable and charming mien, were what endeared Kulola to him.

When Kulola finished her O levels, and pursued nursing and midwifery at Nairobi, Mganga was at the University of Nairobi pursuing Bachelor of Arts in Government and Economics. In

Nairobi they often met, and their relationship continued to blossom. In 1979, when Mganga was finishing his university education and still working at Voice of Kenya Television as production assistant (1976 – 1979), Kulola gave birth to a baby boy, whose naming exposed Mganga's perceptions about his fathers. In African culture, the first child, male or female, is in most cases named after the husband's either parent, depending on the child's gender. Therefore, as per African culture, Mganga and Kulola were to either name their son after Hilarius Kimadu, Mganga's biological father, or his step-father Josiah Mambo. Kulola states that she tried to convince him to consider the tradition, but Mganga would hear none of it, and eventually named his son after his close and long-time friend, relative and confidant, Evangelist Stephen Kifuso. Kifuso stood with Mganga through thick and thin, in times of dejection and rejection, and in times of laughter and consolation. Mganga appreciated his loyal confidant by naming his first born son after him. "This is great honour considering that Mganga overlooked his fathers," the evangelist notes with appreciation.

Working and earning, Mganga and Kulola had their colorful wedding on 4th March 1981 at St. Andrews PCEA Nairobi. After considering all cultural requirements, Grace, Mganga's step sister, recalls how prominent people, particularly KANU stalwarts, and government officials were conspicuously present. The wedding was one of a kind. President Moi sent his special present to Kulola and Mganga, and later the couple paid the president a courtesy call at State House. Kulola recalls President Moi's advice on marriage that was hinged on love, tolerance and mutual understanding. The experience was memorable, as Kulola recalls. The couple had their residence at Lavington as their first family home. Kulola was working at Nairobi Hospital, while Mganga was newly appointed by President Moi as a special duties administrative officer at State House (1979-1983). Mganga quickly got promoted as a senior assistant secretary at State House

(1983- 1987). Even though their careers were demanding, family life too had its own demands. It was upon them as a young family to see how they would balance their careers and family life.

Mganga's commitment, determination and passion seemed to be in the blood. Just as Mganga's leadership skills got his teachers' approval at Shimo la Tewa, at State House, the situation was the same. Mganga's magnetic personality, according to personal document, saw him promoted in 1987. Alongside these responsibilities, Mganga was also appointed by President Moi as the secretary to the Presidential Music Commission. Despite the secretarial position he held at Presidential Music Commission, Mganga could not stay without doing the irresistible - music. These responsibilities made the young father and husband too busy to have quality time for them. Adding to his charisma that pulled people around him, the situation became too difficult for Kulola and the boy to tolerate. Choir members, especially the females, enjoyed his company more than his young family. Kulola confirms that the situation became too painful to bear, and it was nothing close to what she expected from a man she had known since her childhood. She was disappointed, yet it was just some few years after the couple's wedding and she was about to deliver their second born child. In 1982, Kulola gave birth to a second born baby boy, and due to some misunderstandings left her matrimonial home for the Cholas in South B. It was at this point that Kulola decided to end the marriage, citing unfaithfulness and absenteeism. Left with a newborn on a chair, and not knowing where his wife had gone, Mganga carried his son to Keziah and Duncan Chola, as he tried to fix the marital problem. Though the couple accepted the newborn of few weeks, they remained with a lot of questions, since Mganga did not offer an adequate explanation. As Mganga went back to try sort out the issues with his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Chola also thought of how to bring together the young family. However, it was evident that as Mganga went up the career ladder, his family life was taking the back seat.

Mganga's career life was shining brightly, and even continued to shine more brightly, as he tried to salvage his young broken marriage. In 1987, Mganga became an undersecretary in the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, a position he held up to 1991. Having worked at State House, Duncan Chola observed that, "President Moi had grown fond of him so much that it made some staff jealous." Chola agrees that his relationship with President Moi catalyzed his meteoric rise in the civil service. Mganga was also appointed as a member of Kenya Music Festival executive committee in 1980 and held the position up to 1995. He was again appointed the chair of Kenya Music and Cultural Festival in 1995. His firstborn having been born in 1979, it was the same year Muungano National Choir was founded. Shortly after its formation, the choir's praise songs caught Moi's attention while its patriotic songs sought to promote social cohesion and patriotism. The choir's musical appeal won global admiration and approval. With all the achievements within a very short span of time, President Moi easily trusted him. Kulola further confirms that President Moi really loved Mganga because "He was very loyal and secretive." Being so close to the most powerful man in the country came with good rewards and favours, which in a way denied Mganga ample time with his young family. Muungano Choir's global approval and its consequent success made Mganga a globe-trotting young father. However, this created distance between him and his two sons as opposed to his choir members who felt his warmth more frequently.

The Cholas accommodated Kifuso and his younger brother for two months. Luckily the Cholas had a young child, and with the coming of the two, Chola's wife had to ask for leave and concentrate on taking care of them. In 1987 Mganga brought home Dorah Mkabili Kitala as his second wife. As Mkabili recalls, Mganga had known her while she was an education student at Kenyatta University. Having failed to bring back his first wife to help in raising the boys, Mganga had to remarry. The two got two girls: Ashley Mganga on 3rd March 1989 and Christina

Mganga on 13th February 1992. The family had increased in number, but by now Mganga had accumulated relatively enough wealth to sustain the family. However, his absence from family due to being over-occupied remained. Even though his being absorbed in work was paying off, material possessions could not make up for fatherly love and guidance for the children, as well as love and availability for his wife and the entire family. Materially, Mganga's fortunes increased exponentially. Talk of Vauxhall Astra, Volkswagen Golf, Peugeot 504, and later Mercedes Benz, double-cabin pick-up, Toyota Prado, four mansions at Lavington-Nairobi, land in Mombasa, Taveta and Voi all confirmed a change of status. His hard work was paying off, for he had transformed from a child of misfortune to a man of admirable influence and wealth. Stephen Kifuso, his son, recalls that one day his father told him, that what inspired him to strive for success was for his children to get what he was not privileged to get. Mganga further told his children that his humble background and circumstances beyond his control denied him some privileges. With all basic needs provided, Kitale played her role well as a mother of four children: two boys from a co-wife and her two girls. As Mganga continued pursuing his dreams across the world, he occasionally chipped in to offer guidance and limited love and time to his family at Lavington. As Ashely and Christina fondly recall, when their father traversed the world, he never missed an opportunity to buy exotic dresses, chocolates and perfumes for his wife and girls and new clothes for the boys. In return, the children loved their father back, for under their mother Kitale, they had grown to know that they were siblings. There were no differences among the children. Kifuso confirms that even though he missed his biological mother, "His stepmother filled the gap with love, care and concern, but the father's presence was limited." Their father being a busy man, the girls really missed him for the nine years they stayed together as a family. Ashely and Christina recall how other girls used to be visited by their two parents, and by comparison, felt incomplete with their father's absence. Duncan grew up bitter

with his father, a fact Kifuso and his mother Kulola confirm. Unlike his brother, who had his father's warmth and love, even though limited, Duncan grew longing for the same, and when he learnt of how he shifted from Chola to his loving step-mother, it only filled him with questions that only triggered bitterness towards his father.

When Mganga had time, he tried to do the best for his children. During vacations Mganga organized for his children to visit their grandmother's place at Mkwachunyi, and they celebrated Christmas with their extended family. Mganga had constructed a modern house for his family at Vindo-Voi, on an expensive land, which was more than enough for his family. In most of the trips to Voi, Mganga would have memorable and close conversations with his children, much to the excitement of the children. For instance, Kifuso recalls how Mganga would humorously tell his children that, "I would make sure you all get a good education, but I will not give any of you money after I have taken you to school." The girls, still excited, would admire how their father would drive his Prado with one hand, or even sometimes with hands off the steering wheel. They were excited, and as Ashley and Christine recall, they longed for such moments. They wished such close conversations and trips will be frequent. But with the world demanding his music, Mganga could only afford the limited time. This longing made them cherish such trips, for they also got to learn about their father's interesting background through his own narrations. The six hour trips from Nairobi to Voi provided long hours, that were rare for the boys and girls. The long trips also revealed Mganga's authoritarian nature, for no one was allowed to eat in the car. The children knew too well this side of their father. At some point they feared this firm side of him, and as Christiana puts it, "sometimes guests would prefer to stay in the kitchen, when he was in the sitting room, to avoid his probing."

While the children seemed to be getting relief from the trips and goodies from their famous father, their mother Kitale had a different experience from her busy husband. As a result, the two

broke up in 1995. Reasons for the break-up were almost the same as with her co-wife. Four years before the second break-up Mganga became the Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, and briefly shifted to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Heritage and Sports, then to the Ministry of Roads and Public Works, then to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and finally to Public Service Commission. Mganga traversed these ministerial positions from 1991 to 2002. It can be assumed that had it not been for the seemingly obvious defeat of KANU by NARC under Kibaki in 2002, Mganga would have continued to serve under his mentor and a close friend President Moi. But sensing defeat, the calculating Mganga planned how to sustain his political life after Moi's exit. All those positions and political lobbying made Mganga too occupied to have quality time with his family. From 2001 onwards, Muungano Choir was gradually becoming less active towards the end of Moi's era. Mganga became too occupied with 2002 General Elections as he planned and strategized vying for Voi Constituency parliamentary seat. As Chola puts it, "Mganga was Muungano and Muungano was Mganga," and so did this statement reflect the reality of the time.

Even though the boys were in high school, Kifuso at Lenana High school and Duncan at Kenyatta High School at Mwatate-Taita, they were aware of the rifts between their parents. At some point his son confirms that he had to ask himself where the problem was. "How could two mothers just break-up with their father?" Kifuso posed. He came to a conclusion that his father could be the problem. For Duncan, the break-up only worsened the situation and added to his negative and bitter attitude towards his father. Admitted to Kenyatta High School in Taita, Duncan was made to stay with his grandmother, while his three siblings schooled at Nairobi. Of the four children, Duncan spent most of the time with his grandmother and relatives than anyone else. According to Kulola, the distance further strained the relationship from bad to worse, but naturally as a mother, she could not sit and see her son suffer in such situation. She did her best

to help her son heal, and with time Duncan started improving. Before his father remarried, Kifuso and Duncan stayed with their grandmother, until their stepmother Kitata came in; it was when Mganga took them to Nairobi. Their high school admissions set them apart, as Ashley went to Loreto Convent Valley Road (2004-2007) and Christina went to Buruburu Girls (2006-2009). As the children were coming of age, Mganga did not remarry, but had separately warned his two wives never to remarry. Even when Mganga broke up with his first wife Kulola, he had seriously warned her never to remarry, even as he went on to remarry. Obeying their man's directive, the two wives never remarried. As a father, Mganga continued to pay his children school fees and catering for their needs. Using his wide network of connections, Mganga sent his son Stephen Kifuso to USA for internship program. The bitterness Duncan had for his father created a barrier between him and his father. It became difficult for Duncan to accept any further support from his father even when it was about advancing his education after finishing high school. Despite Mganga's obvious failure to sustain marital relationships with his wives, he did his best to educate his children, though his two girls had their school fees paid up to university by Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta (2007-2013) when their father passed away in 2011. Ashley went on to become an actuarial scientist, while Christina went on to pursue Diplomacy and International Studies, both at the University of Nairobi.

Mganga might have been busy, and too absorbed by music and career, but not to an extent of failing to follow his clearly cut personal schedule for his hobbies. Unknown to many, in the year 2000 Mganga enrolled at Kenya Regiment Rifle Club at Lang'ata, Nairobi. Mganga's family, as well as Chola, confirm Mganga's penchant for guns and shooting sport. Ashley, Christina and Kifuso knew the four guns too well. When enrolling, Chola tried to discourage him about the sport, but what Mganga had set his mind on was difficult to dissuade him. Muriuki, a member of Kenya Regiment Rifle club, confirms Mganga as a sharp-shooter, who was inches away from

national fame. Muriuki states that, “Within four years after he started shooting, he turned out to be the best marksman in the pistol disciplines.” Muriuki further adds that, “He defeated big names that had been shooting for more than ten years. In 2009, he was the school’s best marksman, and during the competition other shooters were chanting his name.” In shooting club, Mganga became equally popular due to the sharp-shooting skills he had demonstrated. Years back during his childhood at Mkwachunyi, Mganga was well known for his sharp-shooting skills, and it was not a surprise that he was excelling at the same spot years later. In his characteristic nature, Mganga was equally determined to be at the top of his shooting skill, as he bought *Sig Sauer P 226 Blackwater Tactical*, a full size high capacity 9mm pistol, when he was on a trip to Las Vegas, in America. His burning passion for excellence saw him buy Chris Bird’s *The Concealed Handgun manual: How to Choose, Carry and Shoot a Gun in Self Defense* in his bid to conquer the new field, and he was sure to conquer it due to his childhood experience of sharp shooting. Whether it was for self defence or for fun, Mganga sought better understanding of the guns and the shooting drills, as well as through books. Chris Bird’s book was one of them. It was a book he was reading until his death, as confirmed by markers found in the book. So passionate was Mganga about guns that he humorously used to brag to his daughters that “Sig Sauer was the Mercedes Benz of Guns.” This was to make them understand the value of the top-range gun from a Germany based company – the gun that their father was proud of. This further confirms how Mganga loved fine things of life. Apart from Rifle Club, Mganga was a member of Ministry of Works Club at South B, where he played darts and squash; then manicure, pedicure and work outs would later follow. Tuesdays and Thursdays after work were exclusively meant for choir rehearsals, meaning his week was well packed.

Mganga did not just love the fine things of his life, he yearned to have them, and worked hard to get them starting from top of the range cars, guns, houses to jewelry. There is no doubt he loved

and acquired what he dreamt of when he was a boy. Christina and Ashley confirm that Mganga bought expensive three-piece suits, shoes, perfumes from the foreign countries he visited with his choir. The girls further recall how their father would consult about colours from the female choir members in order to get the best for his daughters. “It is one of the best experiences we enjoyed hearing from our father,” Christina recalled this fond memory with a broad smile.

In 2002 and 2007 general elections, Mganga tried to consolidate his family to portray the image of a family man, as expected by the electorate. Mganga reached out to his first wife Evangeline Kulola. Close people, like Benedict Mghanga, had played a part in uniting the family to guarantee his 2002 parliamentary seat victory. Kulola says that she agreed, since despite the break-up many years ago, they still were good friends, and termed their temporary reunion as being brought about by “the stupidity of love.” She knew and recalled what Mganga had taken her through, but still she could not fail to step in for his political advantage, despite some female campaigner’s sneering at her “as an opportunist out to get ‘Mheshimiwa’s attention after staying in the cold for long.” As Kulola recalls, such treatment rekindled memories of what she had gone through, when some of the Muungano Choir female members sneered at her when she rightfully sought to make Mganga have time with the family. Maybe it is true that time heals all wounds, and that is why Kulola stayed put, but memories stubbornly refused to fade away. However, with such treatment from the lead female campaigners Mganga had to step in and demand respect for his former wife, who was there to save face for his political victory. Mganga’s mother, realizing how everyone sought his famous son, became overprotective that, “It started working against Mganga’s chances,” Benedict Mghanga observed. But focused on victory, Benedict Mghanga continued mobilizing the voters. Mganga’s children, on the other hand, were not left behind in campaigning for their father. Kifuso came from the USA against his father’s advice to remain in America. In a bid to win the election, the family was united. When the final day came in 2002,

Mganga won the Voi Constituency parliamentary seat. Trying to take advantage of the situation, Kifuso made a lot of efforts to bring together his parents. He would call his father, without him knowing, that he was with his mother in order to get them talking. After trying and failing for the first time, he persisted, and for the third time they had a conversation, much to the happiness of their son. Even though Mganga was not living together with any of his wives, he constantly communicated with them, and had to finally accept their stands, but his command for them never to remarry still stood.

Mganga had several weaknesses, just like any other human being. However, some of his close confidants, like Stephen Kifuso, wonder how he could forgive some of his former tormentors. This observation is also made by Grace, when she recalls how Mganga took good care of his step-father, Josiah Mambo, who suffered from cancer. Mganga paid for his hospital bill and took care of him until when he passed away on 26th March, 1989. Some of the relatives he later came to assist used to look down upon him when he was just a boy. But how he related with them, and even assisted them, made Stephen Kifuso, his longtime confidant, wonder how he forgave his childhood tormentors. Knowing too well what Mganga went through, and how he came to treat the same tormentors and their children afterwards without any revenge, made Kifuso to conclude that, “Mganga rarely kept grudges.”

In Nairobi, during his university days, Mganga would visit his step-brothers from his biological father repeatedly, until they got used to each other. Gibran Mwandigha, who worked with East Africa Community from 1965 to 1977, recalls how Mganga had a desire to unite his vast family. Before their brother Patrick Niven died, Mwandigha confirms the growing bond between Mganga and Niven. This renewed brotherhood saw Mganga relocate to Niven’s place in Lavington, where he was provided with his own room for accommodation. Even when Mganga

relocated to State House, his step-brothers used to frequently visit him in a bid to bond as a family. But as Mganga became absorbed in his endeavours, family reunion took a back seat.

Even though Mganga might have had challenges in his own family matters, there was one area he successfully maintained all through his life – bonding with his mother. As Benedict Mghanga observes, “Mganga listened so keenly to what his mother would say and adhere to it without failing.” This mother-son bond was evidently so strong. There is a possibility that Mganga’s mother could have warned him not to pursue the family reunion issues. This was confirmed by Mganga’s cold shoulder to Benedict Mghanga’s advice to make peace with his biological father in Mwakitau. Benedict persisted on this quest, until Mzee Kimadu Hilarious died without meeting and reconciling with his famous and outstanding son.

Having been raised in a big polygamous family, Mganga knew some of his siblings and step-siblings. His early desire to reunite his expansive family could have been distracted by his busy life, but based on the gubernatorial plans he had, and using his son’s wedding as a launching pad for the same, probably Mganga would have been forced to look for them and revive the relations, considering that they were scattered across the county. Kifuso agrees with this idea, as he confirms that his father’s idea of the wedding was to be “a very big one.” If this were to happen, then it would have marked the beginning of Kimadu’s and Mambo’s family reunion, brought together by their illustrious son Boniface Mganga. If he had managed to bring together his choir members of diverse traditions, faiths, tribes and political affiliations, how much more could he do with people whom he shared the same blood with? Considering his charm, determination and gift of the garb, he would probably have brought his tribes men and women from Mghange, where his mother came from; from Bura, where his father left an expansive polygamous family spreading from Taita hills, Mwatate, Bura, Mwakitau and Taveta, and from Mkwachunyi, where his mother settled after remarrying Mambo, whose family and relatives spread across entire

Mbololo. He stood the best chance of going down in history as the first ever Taita Taveta County Governor with the institution of devolution in Kenya in 2013. Unfortunately, his untimely death scattered all his plans. The unfulfilled dreams provide worthy assignments to be accomplished by the children he left behind in order to keep the dreams of their father alive.

5.2 Music: From Nairobi to the world

When Boniface Mganga joined the University of Nairobi in 1976, Duncan Chola and his wife Keziah Nzingo, who became family friends until to date, knowing Mganga's inclinations, introduced Mganga to St. John's ACK Pumwani. Upon clergy's approval, Mganga started training, teaching, conducting and rehearsing with the church's choir. Chola and his wife Nzingo, who were also members of the church choir, saw what the youthful Mganga was doing, and were surprised. Chola observes, that the conservative Anglican Church was used to singing hymns in a manner that evoked little or no musical excitement. Chola recalls with excitement how "Mganga's innovation and creativity of incorporating ngoma and kayamba (drum and reed rattle) made a big difference. There was a total shift and big change during Sunday services." Soon the numbers in church went up. The little appreciation Mganga got from the church and from the Cholas helped him sustain his life as a student. Duncan Chola also organized with John Lusa, Posta Managing Director by them, to give Mganga some temporary jobs during vacations for his upkeep. As the relationship grew with the Cholas, Mganga's passion for music proved to be beyond the money he got, he pursued his passion. It did not take long before Mganga started visiting several church choirs, like St. Stephens, PAG, Our Lady of Visitation, Kariakor Friends among others, to quench his irresistible and consuming passion for music.

According to *Sunday Nation* record of 20th August 1995, Mganga confirmed that while he was conducting music in Mombasa, he interacted with the famous music teacher and co-author of the Kenyan National anthem, Graham Hyslop, at the Mombasa Cathedral, and Hyslop took interest

in Mganga, who was holding a sheet of music notes. In Nairobi, Mganga interacted with Hyslop frequently, and as Chola confirms, the famous music teacher used to train ACK St. Johns Choir at Pumwani. The interactions between these two music enthusiasts saw Mganga cross the border to Dar-es-Salaam University in Tanzania, where Hyslop used to teach music classes. In the 1995 interview, Mganga further revealed that as a result of commitment and hard work, he managed to balance his university education and music classes with Hyslop. A certificate in Theatre Arts, which included music, dance and drama, crowned his commitment and hard work. Noting his exceptional passion for music, Hyslop assisted Mganga to prepare for the associated board of the Royal School of Music examination, where he attained grade eight in the theory part and grade six in the practical singing. Mganga's consuming passion was like a vacuum cleaner, that seemed to absorb any musical knowledge.

On 22nd August 1978, when Mganga was just a third year university student, the whole nation was set in a somber mood by the death of its founding father, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. In this mourning session, notable Nairobi church choirs consoled the nation with their melodious tunes: Our Lady of Visitation Catholic Choir, under the late William Wasike; St. Stephens ACK, Njogoo Road, under the late Darius Mbela; Makadara Friends Church, under the late John Madenge and Arthur Agufwa; Kariakor Friends, under Dr. Arthur Kemoli; and St. Barnabas, under Mr. Otiende. As Chola recalls, the choirs sang in turns during this first ever state funeral. According to Kodi Barth, a member of the famous Muungano National Choir, the first state funeral, "Heralded the era of mass choirs." During this mourning and transitional period, Mganga featured nowhere among the seasoned and famous choirmasters, who led the country in turns with their consoling repertoires. Given Mganga's confidence and consuming passion, one can easily imagine how he was burning with desire to showcase his skills. But the busy galaxy of conducting stars cared less of the seeming nonentity's aspirations. As Mganga had not attached

himself seriously with any church choirs presenting, the choirmasters were justified to ignore him. It only took William Wasike, who was chairing all the mass choirs presenting, to give Mganga a chance. As Barth observes, Wasike had interacted with Mganga at ACK St. John's Pumwani and knew well his demeanour and mettle. Duncan Chola notes it was not easy for Mganga to get a chance among the who-is-who despite Wasike's intervention.

Barth records, that one day Wasike sought President Moi's attention and posed, "Mzee, some of our highly educated members here have no jobs," Wasike said while pointing to Mganga. Chola confirms that the new president told Mganga to avail himself at State House the following Monday. Mganga, on the same day he arrived, was offered a job as an administrative officer for special duties at State House. Mganga worked at the same position from 1979 to 1983. President Moi's offer drastically shifted Mganga from Mbotela to State House – it was a new dawn for Mganga's life, both musically and professionally. Chola states that President Moi requested the one thousand member choir be reduced to a manageable number. Some critics hold the view that the State House had predetermined plans on how to use the choir for political reasons. Their view is informed by how President Moi played an instrumental role in the formation of the choir and how it later sang the praise songs to President Moi. The number was whittled down to 450, and named the Nairobi Quarter Mass Choir. Barth records that the majority of members came from Our Lady of Visitation, Makadara Friends and ACK St. Stephens. Duncan and his wife, who had become Mganga's Nairobi parents, constituted a handful who came from other churches apart from the main three. President Moi's gave another directive to whittle down the number to 250, and even suggesting a name for the new musical outfit, which gives an impression of a man who knew what he wanted and how he wanted it done. President Moi had suggested a name, and of course it could not be anything apart from KANU Choir. Surprisingly, Mganga was against the name, and stood for what he saw in the choir's future from a technical point of view. Barth

recalls that Wasike, John Shibia and Chrispin Kodi picked the name Muungano Choir. President Moi approved it, and added the word National to it, to have the new Mass Choir of 250 members named Muungano National Choir. According to Chola and Esther Mzera, President Moi became the choir's patron, while Boniface Mganga, the director; William Wasike remained the chairperson; Duncan Chola, the treasurer and Gertrude Anyika, became the secretary. Even though some members missed the opportunity of being part of the choir, as Chola recalls, at least the majority, if not all of them, tasted Moi's generosity.

The amalgamation of several choirs inspired the name 'Muungano', and the inclusion of 'National' was meant to give the choir a national appeal of unifying all Kenyans through its music. Barth points out that, "the choir was defined by diversity of faith and ethnic background" and "in their ethnic diversity, they celebrated Kenya's rich cultures and customs." Muungano Choir Information Memorandum documents its vision as follows:

To remain one of the leading world class choirs, and to market Kenya's art, culture and make it one of the most preferred tourist destinations worldwide, and secondly, to meet its objectives of sharing music and culture throughout the world, while developing the relationships already established with other musical arts institutions and industry partners.

President Moi, as Barth records, bought uniforms for the choir and he used to pay air tickets for them sometimes. Such support from the president and a passionate director, seasoned chair, dedicated leaders, committed members and KICC for rehearsals at their disposal, the choir was ready to explore its musical terrain. The Muungano National Choir was then officially formed in 1979, the same year Mganga and Kulola got their first born son.

Considering the choir's presentation on 31st September 1978, where Mganga featured prominently while singing before President Moi, Mganga, as Barth records, had won the president's heart with his composition, *Mungu Bariki Kenya*. Therefore, apart from giving Mganga a job, President Moi had also come to appreciate his immense talent in music. With the president's interest in music, a symbiotic relationship steadily developed between the two.

Locally, Muungano National Choir, unlike any other choir in Kenya, dominated national celebrations during the Nyayo era. For instance, according to Muungano National Choir records, the choir performed during the 1979 Madaraka day. The choir's presentations were further extended to State House to entertain the president. As Chola states, "Muungano in a way belonged to Moi, who was its patron, and as a result enjoyed his generosity." In agricultural shows, Muungano National Choir featured prominently with its melodious traditional and neo-traditional African songs, which enjoyed ample airplay from the state controlled media. The Voice of Kenya (VoK) would be remembered for this role. As a result, Muungano National Choir was gaining momentum and popularity quickly. With guaranteed airplay from VoK, KTN among other media outlets, popularity was not only gaining, but it was growing very fast. According to Muungano National Choir's Information Memorandum, its repertoire gained popularity not only due to media coverage, but also because of how their songs, "Sprang from a fusion of the rich and varied rhythmic and melodic traditional and neo-traditional African tunes with exuberant and intense quasi-Western harmonic style."

In July 1989, Muungano National Choir sang two songs that really got the attention of President Moi. The first song was on chang'aa and bhang, and the second one was census-based, seeking to sensitize Kenyans on the forthcoming census in August. Earlier on President Moi had said that, "A nation could not be built by drunkards", and census being an obvious government exercise, the two easily provided topical issues for Muungano National Choir to compose songs.

Mganga, being a shrewd musician, had mastered the art of composing or arranging a song relevant to any situation. More importantly, Mganga held two positions which set him above his contemporaries when it came to music competition. As personal records prove, in 1982 Mganga served as the secretary for Presidential Music Commission (PMC), an organisation that recommended inclusion of music as a subject in the 8-4-4 education system. Mganga held this position from 1982 to 1987. Mganga served as an executive committee member of Kenya Music and Cultural Festival (KMCF) from 1980 to 1995. Mganga cleverly aligned Muungano National Choir's vision and objectives to Kenya Music and Cultural Festival. The role of KMCF or PMC was to advise the Minister on issues involving the conservation, preservation and promotion of Kenya's rich cultural heritage. So when Mganga was speaking for KMCF or PMC, in the same breath, he was speaking for Muungano National Choir. With these among other privileges, Mganga and his Muungano National Choir traversed the country and the region at large, performing their ever growing repertoire.

According to Muungano National Choir records, in 1985 the choir staged, "A successful concert at Chandaria Hall in Mombasa. The hall was not enough to accommodate the people who had turned up in large numbers." Their patriotic and folk renditions were magnetic, starting with *Kenya Yaenda Mbele*, that had become so popular across the country. *Tando Lamina* came and conquered the hearts of its audience, and *Mushere Mwene*, a Luhya song about an unfaithful woman, charmed them even more and sent them dancing. Disappointed by the end of the song, the excited audience demanded a replay of *Mushere Mwene* and *Tando Lamina*. The Kenyan audience was demanding Muungano National Choir music, and the choir under Mganga was more than willing to please its audience. Music was proving to be a key tool in achieving KANU's philosophy of peace, love and unity. While patriotic songs advocated for devotion and

support for Kenya under the KANU regime, praise songs deified Moi. Folk songs, on the other hand, naturally unified Kenyans, just as the choir's name did to its members.

The other side of Muungano National Choir was its charitable works. Africa Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) knew better this side, just like many other organisations that had partnered with Muungano National Choir. *The Chronicle* on Saturday 6th July 1991 edition records that AMREF partnered with Muungano National Choir to raise Kshs 30,000, which was channeled to AMREF under its legendary project of *Missa Luba* of 1990. Drawn by Muungano's addictive tunes, AMREF came back for the choir in 1993, when AMREF had its annual general meeting. By this time Muungano National Choir was a name to reckon with locally, in Africa, and globally. The fame, popularity and exposure Muungano National Choir enjoyed inspired the mushrooming of other choirs, even with state cooperations. Treasury Choir, Railways Choir, Prison Choir, Kenya Airways Choir, Postal Cooperation of Kenya Choir, Central Bank of Kenya Choir, Coffee Board of Kenya Choir among others quickly grew, inspired as they were by Muungano National Choir's glory. Therefore, Muungano National Choir introduced a choral epoch never experienced before. However, some choirs faded into oblivion for lack of persistence. *Daily Nation* of 26th January 1988 records that some choirs quickly organised themselves hoping to make it like Muungano National Choir. Others were formed knowing President Moi advocated for the promotion of Kenyan culture through music, and they saw an opportunity to be close to power and its consequent benefits and handouts. When their materially-inspired objectives failed, such choirs either lost relevance or regrouped to join a better choir, such as Muungano National Choir. Chola confirms that in late 1980s, a lot of people sought admission to Muungano National Choir. But even after re-grouping, the materially or financially motivated members found Muungano Choir's auditions so difficult for them to gain admission. Barth states that:

The auditions would be conducted by a panel of choir veterans to measure voice quality – pitch, range and projection. Two other things were important: aptitude to learn and remember complex arrangement with speed and accuracy, and one's reason to join Muungano National Choir. If you said you wanted to travel abroad or make money, you were likely to fail the audition. People who joined Muungano had to be defined by passion for music – period.

Apart from the strict auditions, Muungano National Choir's constitution prescribed membership limits. As recorded in an interview with the *Kenyan Times* on 25th November 1983, Mganga stated as follows: "We do not want to turn people away, but we cannot go against our constitution, which states that our numbers should not exceed 250 or go lower than 100." Driven by passion for music, and adopting a multi-dimensional approach in advancing its musical explorations, Muungano National Choir stood the test of time, unlike other choirs that it inspired.

Despite the mushrooming of many choirs, Muungano National Choir continued to make itself relevant by staging strategic concerts in Kenya for the public and for big organizations such as Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and United Nations Conferences. All these concerts gave them much needed exposure, while at the same time enchanting their audiences with their musical spells. When the United Nations had its 1981 conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy from 10th to 20th August, Muungano National Choir had a chance of presenting and created a positive impression, which the delegates took to their home countries. On 13th August 1986, Muungano National Choir had a chance to entertain Kenyan ambassadors and high commissioners, who had met in Nakuru to discuss diplomatic activities and roles to promote Kenya abroad. Bethuel Kiplagat, being a seasoned diplomat and chairing the meeting as the permanent secretary of Foreign Affairs, as Chola states, stressed the importance of the choir as an agent of promoting tourism in foreign countries. Back in Nairobi, Muungano National

Choir had made Kenya National Theatre their favourite spot for concerts. According to the choir's records, on Saturday 16Th and 17Th April 1988, Muungano National Choir staged a concert charging Kshs. 45 for adults and Kshs. 20 for students. This concert was sponsored by Kenya Conservatoire of Music. The same year in November, Muungano staged an impressive concert that spoke volumes about Kenyan culture. Singing twenty melodious songs in Kiswahili, Kikuyu, Kamba, Giriama, Luhya and Taita, the audience was set under spell that would take another choir with better performances than Muungano to dispel. Locally, Muungano National Choir, under Boniface Mganga, had not only conquered the stage and won the Kenyan audience, but it had also mastered its art enough for any new stage. As *Lincoln Journal Star* observed:

The choir was formed about 16 years ago under the direction of Boniface Mganga. It has become Africa's most noted choral ensemble with world's accolades. Kenya is often called the nation of a thousand choirs. Mganga's Muungano Choir surely is among the country's best.

Yet despite such global glory and recognition the choir pressed on. Boniface Mganga had this to say, "We (Muungano Choir) have hardly time to sit back and bask in glory." Mganga's undying and consuming passion and determination highly energized the choir. Adding these values to his ambitious nature, Mganga could be sure the choir was destined for great exploits.

"It is like the case of the wind that always blows down the tallest trees and the cavil we are getting is one of the hazards of rising above the rest." – **Boniface Mganga.**

Despite their resounding success, fame and connection to the centre of power, not all was rosy for Muungano National Choir. As John Kariuki documents in an interview with Boniface Mganga in the *Now Magazine* of 26Th May 1991 edition, "In the three years before 1987, hardly a day passed without Muungano National Choir appearing on television, and the choir was a

predictable feature at state functions. Then came '87, and the animosity that had been building spilled into the open, and Muungano was a haunted group.” Muungano’s growing popularity, recognition and support from the centre of power had a many a distractor’s tongue wagging. President Moi being the patron and taking part in its formation as a result of his love for music, many found it difficult to draw a line between President Moi’s patronage and Muungano Choir’s independence. It is as a result of lack of this clarity of understanding that Muungano was persecuted by some members of the public and rival choirs. When Muungano Choir was edged out of national occasions’ performances, Mganga attributed such deliberate discriminatory treatment to political and musical persecution. Mganga said:

We have suffered political and musical persecution from people who had an axe to grind, or ones who simply misunderstood our essence. I have been asked what an undersecretary in the Ministry of Culture is doing conducting choirs. And my answer has always been the same: I do it because I love music and this will be so till the last day of my life.

However, the support Muungano National Choir received from President Moi, as acknowledged by Mganga, could not be matched with any other. When it came to overseas trips, like the debut Australia trip of 1984, the president mobilized a funds drive and even came in person to welcome the choir from abroad. The guaranteed television coverage, both locally and internationally, by the Voice of Kenya crew, gave other struggling choirs a reason to fight for the same attention. Mganga confirms this conflict when he says, “I even heard one prominent choir conductor claim that Muungano sings well because KBC gave it good coverage.” But Mganga dismisses this obvious conflict by posing, “Now really, how does television coverage help in voice quality and performance?” He however acknowledges support from the centre of power when he says, “The choir obviously had initial support from the country’s centre of power, but

that centre of power has no musical experience, and music is what has ultimately decided the day.” From Mganga’s view, one can deduce that Mganga paints a picture of musical excellence that he expects his critics to see, other than the privileged support they received as a choir from President Moi, for the latter would not have made headway without the former. Still some critics questioned why the tax payers’ money was not being used to fund other choirs to travel abroad. The question brings in the political affiliations and connections factors. It is true other choirs sang well, or were even unique in their own ways, but most of them lacked strong political connections to link them to the centre of power. The Nyayo era, having imposed a one party state, expected maximum loyalty, and for one not declaring or demonstrating their loyalty openly, the state operatives treated them with suspicion. Mganga had long pledged his loyalty to President Moi, who became his political mentor, and the ruling party of KANU. As Kulola, his wife, puts it, “This was long before he formed Muungano National Choir.” As for state cooperations’ choirs, like Treasury or CBK among others, it would be a challenge for their respective employers to allow their staff to move freely, like Muungano Choir. However, Muungano Choir, as correspondences prove, had some of its finest members denied permission to fly abroad for global performances. To tame Muungano Choir, some choirs were formed to compete with it and were determined to outshine it. According to Mganga, “Some choirs were being formed for the purpose of phasing out Muungano, and such people have been quick to say a certain choir sings better than Muungano. The reference was obviously ill-meant.” What set apart Muungano from other choirs was love and unmatched passion for music, which was their sole motivation. In support of this, Mganga says, “Unlike other choirs, we (Muungano) had no church or institution to hold us together, and Muungano had to rely on the members’ commitment and love for music to keep it going.” In this case, Mganga’s tested leadership skills, accompanied by his charm and humour, played a key role in steering the choir for a period that

outlived other choirs. Mganga's consuming passion and skill, alongside strong and reliable team members, like Professor Washington Omondi, Senoga Zake, William Wasike among other seasoned music scholars and choir masters and music enthusiasts, provided confidence that his members needed to see their musical future achievable. The political connection factor cannot be underrated. What could one say of a man who dressed like President Moi and had proved to be one of his loyal friends? As his son Stephen Kifuso observes, "My father learnt a lot from President Moi and Moi loved him." This speaks volumes of President Moi's influence on Boniface Mganga. It was no coincidence that Boniface Mganga doubled as KANU Band Director. The band, mostly comprised of Administration Police and based at Administration Police Training College in Embakasi, had the maestro Mganga direct it to sing patriotic and KANU oriented songs. Mganga had won President Moi's confidence, and the head of state did not only made him KANU Band Director, but also gave him private assignment, as Chola observes, to teach music at Kabarak University, which is owned by the late president. However, the fact that KANU Band was not as vibrant as Muungano Choir, brings out Mganga's inclinations. While some critics thought of Muungano National Choir as an offshoot of KANU Party, it was KANU Band that squarely fitted their criticism, according to Mganga. Mganga clarifies, "If Muungano got a lot of support from KANU party, it was from the person of the president rather than the party. But most people never quite understand this." In the midst of all the criticism, Mganga seemed to be much concerned with the arts image. Mganga found it disturbing to see how critics used politics in music and music to propagate politics. According to Mganga, "In both ways results are counter-productive and exposing the image of the art to suffering." To critics who viewed his praise songs as deifying Moi, Mganga posed, "It is alright to sing about politics and patriotism, but one has to ask whether the song is potent enough to benefit the status of the person or them at issue?"

If it was not from the music pundits, politicians, detractors or the public, it was the religious purists. It was widely claimed that Muungano Choir was debasing some Christian songs by adapting their tunes. In 1988, when Mganga was an undersecretary in the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, another dispute arose from a music enthusiast and a secondary school teacher, now a principal at Kajire Girls High School, Phydiliah Kilimo, who had accused Mganga of claiming ownership of *Kaung'a Yachee* (a Taita gospel song translating to *The Coming of Sin*), when it was her own song she had composed when she was in Form Five at Murray Girls High School in Taita. Kilimo sought to have the song withdrawn from the festival due to infringement of her rights. In her letter Kilimo stated, "He (Mganga) has further altered the song, distorting its theme, and has eventually circulated its copyright without my approval, thus infringing of the rules of the Kenya Music Festival." In response to this dispute, Mganga denied claiming ownership, but admitted to have arranged it, and an arranged song cannot be taken as original. He further pointed out that Muungano Choir had arranged the world famous *Malaika* for choral performance, and there was no issue about it. In this context Mganga made it clear that Muungano Choir adapted many other African melodies and tunes, which was a common practice in the world of music. Internal intrigues, which came with crowds, also demanded Mganga's leadership and management skills. According to Esther Mzera, "Membership was split about fifty-fifty between men and women, and most members are married. The ages range from the early twenties to the fifties." Sometimes it was painful to leave a key member due to lack of funds. Mganga had to set aside some funds for such cases. The savings were obtained from concerts and their music sales, which was not that much, as Chola puts it. In some cases, political connections came in handy, as government parastatals contributed towards meeting the expenses. Delicate scenarios came, when a committed couple in the choir, wanted to go and there were limited resources. This was often the case with Mr. and

Mrs. Chola. They would consult with each other, while Mganga oversaw the agreement. In some cases while abroad, some members were tempted to extend their stay. In such situations, as Chola puts it, the authoritarian and firm disciplinarian in Mganga would be provoked, and all would return as planned. One of the challenges that Mganga really struggled with for a long time with little success was lack of local appreciation of Muungano Choir's musical works. On 30th June 1996, *Sunday Nation* had an article titled, "*Muungano: cherished abroad, shunned at home.*" Mganga lamented that he had found it difficult to market the choir's products locally. Mganga contrasted how the choir was well known and appreciated abroad more than in its home country. This cry for lack of appreciation of our local talents was clearly demonstrated during the launching of *Missa Luba* album at Lenana School Chapel. As expected, the choir had invited cabinet ministers and diplomats. Surprisingly, only one cabinet minister turned up after Mganga confirmed having reached out to all of them. Nearly all the diplomats came along with their spouses, families and friends, making the concert appear foreign in its own motherland. Though these challenges sapped Mganga's energy, Chola agrees that his passion remained intact, and his sense of humour unwavering, especially when conducting. Barth experience brings this out so well:

At the beginning of practice on a tour of St. Louis, Missouri, I was losing my voice and fell into a near whisper, for fear of being called out. It didn't work. Mganga stopped the choir in the third bar. 'Kodi B!' he called out. 'What's going on in your host's house? How long is the air conditioning on?' We were at the tail end of a long summer, and St. Louis was hotter than Lodwar. I told him the air conditioning stayed on all night. 'Don't turn it on again,' he ordered. 'Air conditioning seeps the moisture out of your voice. So instead of singing like my

third tenor soloist, you start singing like a girl who has not reached puberty!’

Guys laughed at me for a week.

Considering Mganga’s background from childhood, one cannot be mistaken about his resilience. He was not the type to give up, and he could go to great lengths to achieve what he wanted. Muungano National Choir was privileged to have him as their director, for any without short of Mganga’s attributes would probably not have propelled Muungano National Choir to successful heights he did. His vision for the choir was passion-driven, and only one with a more consuming passion could outsmart him. Therefore, with all the challenges the choir was facing, Mganga remained focused. Even when Muungano National Choir was edged out of performing during national occasions from 1987, Mganga accepted the low profile, but took to intense rehearsals. As Chola observes, Mganga was a good strategist. The discriminatory tactic came after Muungano Choir successfully managed to stage a ground breaking performance in Perth, Australia, in 1984, and made a name for itself. There was also something special about this trip. In 1984, as Muungano records confirm, President Moi had made the public know that Muungano National Choir would be travelling to Australia in November. Moi appealed to the public to contribute to make the trip a success. He stated that the trip would require Kshs. 1.8 million for the 60 members on board. To initiate this funds drive, he directed Culture and Social Services Minister, Kenneth Matiba, and Boniface Mganga to start raising funds for the trip. Immediately Kelly Brown, a musician, contributed Kshs. 7,000, Joseph Kamaru, Kshs, 1,000 and Kshs. 40,000 came from President Moi. *Kenyan Times* on 24Th November 1984 further records that Kshs. 2 million was successfully raised, and minister for Finance and Planning Professor George Saitoti exempted the sixty choir members from liability tax, which was gazetted. Muungano Choir records confirm these facts, and further reveal that the Indian Ocean Cultural Festival was set to take place in Perth from November 28Th to December 9Th. When the day came, the choir’s

success overwhelmed even its master. In the interview, Mganga told Kariuki, “I vividly recall our performance of *Waltzing Matilda*, and the end of it all, when the house rose with clapping and applauding, the choir stood there not quite sure what to make of it. We had never experienced anything like it and we were not sure how to react to it.” It was Professor Washington Omondi who told Mganga and his team that it was a standing ovation. After the successful performance, Mganga expressed the challenge of language barrier, since most of their songs were in Kiswahili. But despite the challenge, the reception was overwhelming, as Mganga says that as a Choir they, “Had to reach out to the audiences’ inner senses.” Their performance did not just remain memorable in Perth, but it set a good precedent for another thrilling performance. In 1986, as Muungano Choir records confirm, the choir visited Innsbruck and Vienna in Austria. How the President Moi supported the whole trip from the start, and even received the successful choir from Perth, did not sit well with some critics, particularly state functions organizers. They decided to edge it out. Mganga observes that, “The international acclaim the choir enjoyed made his detractors even more jealous, and from 1987 the choir was effectively edged out of performing during national ceremonies. Other choirs, especially the newly-created parastatal ones, were avidly jostled to take its place.” Such outright self-serving discrimination would have dampened the choir members’ spirit, or even scattered them. But Mganga held his team together, and instead of begging for a chance at the national stage, used the time to engage in consistent practising, with his eyes focused on the global stage. The overwhelming reception in Australia had given Mganga a taste that was addictive. The addiction would not allow him to stop, and every audience seemed to give the choir a dose of the same taste as their music. This shared addiction made Muungano National Choir’s audiences demand for more, as the choir rigorously fine-tuned their compositions to meet the taste of quality.

5.3 Choral Fireworks

What followed after the discriminatory treatment the choir faced, were musical fireworks on the global stage. As Muungano National Choir records reveal, in 1987 Muungano Choir was invited to Belgium to take part in a festival which ended on 31st August. The choir further toured Brussels and Michelin cities. In the same year the choir toured France for another festival in Dijon. The festival was scheduled from 1st September to 7th September 1987. The choir further got an invitation from London, but could not manage due to the diplomatic tension after Kenya pulled out of the Commonwealth Games, in unity with other Commonwealth African countries, to put pressure on the British to impose sanctions against racist South African regime. In Dijon International Folklore Festival, out of thirty countries represented, Muungano National Choir won silver medal alongside Argentina, while gold medal went to Turkey. Just like in Australia, in France the choir's performance created more craving. Muungano Choir got another invitation in 1988 performing in Lyon, Nantes and Paris. According to Muungano choir records, by 1988, they had recorded 4 albums and six singles. The repertoire was composed of their original compositions and arranged songs. This means the choir had varieties to entertain their audiences. These early performances in Europe had caught the attention of the global music organizations, such as International Federation of Choral Music (IFCM), which admitted Muungano National Choir in 1986. In 1989, Muungano Choir took their melodious voices to Tokyo, Japan, then to France again, but this time round visiting different cities of Monguyon and Montpellier. Muungano Choir's fame was spreading so fast and with the increasing demand, Mganga intensified rehearsals. As Chola puts it, rehearsals used to be on Tuesdays and Thursdays every week at Kenya International Convention Centre (KICC), but if there was any overseas trip, the rehearsals would mostly exceed the set days and time. In 1990, Muungano Choir was in Jaca, Spain. What is interesting, is how Mganga and his choir had mastered the art of 'reaching out to the audiences' inner senses', for in nearly all the foreign countries the choir performed in

Kiswahili, which was not their lingua franca, yet they demanded for more of Muungano Choir's performances. In 1991 Muungano Choir was invited by Helsinki Festival to perform during Finland's 75th independence anniversary held at the 'Daughter of the Baltic.' Asked by a journalist how Muungano Choir found its way to the heart of Finland, Mganga innocently responded, "Frankly, I don't know how they got our name and address." This implies that as the choir traversed the world, their music was getting the attention of many countries, some of which the choir's leadership was not even aware of. The choir was not just popular, it had gained global fame.

In 1993, Muungano Choir was in North America for the very first time since its inception. Apart from the choir visiting Chicago, New York, Boston, Saltlake City, Utah, Washington DC, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Cincinnati, Portland, Seattle, and Baltimore among others, they had a rare opportunity to be broadcast live on Bryant Charles Gumbel's show on NBC television, famed to have 12 million viewers at the time. This excited Mganga as he said, "We have had big shows in the past, but the appearance on that show is really exciting." The tour also set the stage for choir's recording in America, as confirmed by the excited Mganga:

The members have listened to some of the choir's earlier recordings, and the feeling is that there are some good songs that got 'wasted' by poor recording. We want to take advantage of the recording facilities in USA to try and capture our real music lost through poor recording.

The USA trip came with a lot of advantages, for the choir had special treatment, and the dignity accorded to it was just outstanding. The choir served as the resident choir, and was given an opportunity to perform at North Central Division of American Choral Directors Association Convention held in Lincoln, Nebraska. *The Lincoln Journal Star* described the choir as "world

class ensemble” after the outstanding performance. From the USA, the famous choir headed to Vancouver, Canada. In 1981, after the United Nations Energy Conference, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, with his host President Moi, were entertained by Muungano Choir at State House, and after the thrilling performance, the Prime Minister promised to invite the choir. This did not materialize due to his retirement in 1984. But their previous performance had set the stage, and in 1993 they moved the crowds with their intensely rehearsed renditions before proceeding to Madrid in Spain in 1994, where standing ovations, as Berth records, marked the performance excellence. Two years later, Muungano Choir was in North America again to stage their performances in Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska and Chicago. At this time Mganga had built a wide network globally that enhanced his music connections. One of the key friends he made was Ben Allaway, a composer, music researcher and enthusiast, who enhanced Muungano Choir’s music recording and shows in America. In addition to the shows, the choir was to record its songs with American Earthsongs Music publishing company.

The 1990 marked the defining moment for Muungano National Choir after it was commissioned by Phillips Classics to do its version of Father Guido Haazen’s *Missa Luba*, a Latin mass arranged in traditional Congo styles. During the inaugural performance Mganga was asked why Phillips Classics chose Muungano Choir, and he simply said, “They wanted the best and they chose us.” The Muungano Choir’s version of *Missa Luba* was officially launched on 25Th November 1990 at Lenana School Chapel, where Mganga’s second wife worked as a teacher. Muungano Choir records show how Phillips had dispatched producer Job Maarse to supervise the *Missa Luba* project, while Anthony Howard of Countrywide Films did the photography. The film crew came from Dutch Auro Television. To compliment the project, the crew made Muungano Choir documentary. The day was well planned with invited guests, music enthusiasts and the journalists expected. Even though invited cabinet ministers did not turn up, at least 150

people came, the majority being the foreign diplomats. But Muungano Choir's renditions did not disappoint, as the Guest Speaker Phillip Leakey, Lang'ata Constituency, also got impressed by the performances. In his speech he said, "The levels of breathtaking excellence should challenge Kenyans to strive for the same excellence in their daily lives." Ron Andrews, in charge of Polygram Records Kenya, highly recommended Muungano Choir's performance and termed it a "concert and not a mass." After their final rendition, the seventy-member choir was given a standing ovation with rounds of applause for a performance loaded with excellence. The *Missa Luba* album features: *Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Santus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei* and ten folk songs which include: *Bwana ni Nani?, Natufurahi Siku ya Leo, Yesu Wayinyanza, Nyathi Onyuol, Namvera Jesu, Kaung'a Yachee, Singo Jadolo, Vanga Yohana, Nasadiki – Amen* and *Vamuvamba*.

In Mganga's quest to revolutionize gospel choral music, *Missa Luba* was just an emphatic achievement towards the course, and its resounding success reverberates across the world, and in response to the high quality of composition and appeal to the inner senses, the world sought them with refreshed demand. The album opened floodgates of foreign tours in more than fifteen American states in 1993 and again in 1996. According to Muungano Choir records, 1996 was the year the choir travelled so widely, more than ever.

In 1999 Muungano Choir was in the Netherlands, Rotterdam and Maastricht, for the World Symposium on Choral Music (WSCM), which states in its website that it's a "meeting of the world's prestigious choral conductors and choirs." The fact that Muungano Choir was invited, confirms that its director Boniface Mganga and his choir all met IFCM standards. In 2000, Muungano Choir was invited to Jerusalem and Nazareth in Israel and Jericho in Palestine. Berth records, that Israel Programs Coordinator General had predicted before the concert that "the high standard of Muungano National Choir will contribute to raise the level of excellence that we seek

for all the event on the Bethlehem 2000 Calendar.” Berth as a member of the choir confirms that, “True to the prediction, Muungano came to town and performed with astounding success in Rammallah City in Palestine, at the Nativity Church in Bethlehem, then Jerusalem and finally, at the Musica Scara Festival in Nazareth.” As Esther Mzera once said, “Muungano Choir moved from strength to strength,” and its tour to the Middle East had literally climaxed all the continents of the earth. Then in a very strategic move, the choir took advantage of their visit to the land of the pilgrims, Israel, and recorded their *Muungano Live in Holy Land* album. What a way to usher in a new millennium with such a melodious album of seventeen songs? They include:

Jambo, Namvera Yesu, Amalwa Kachupa, Katoto Kadogo, Vamuvamba, Li Munjiru, Kaung’a Yachee, Lunch Time, Natufurahi Siku ya Leo, Resa, No Musalaba, Safari ya Bamba, Sigalagala, Nyenyeki, Shombo, Tando Lamina and Vanga Yohana.

In 2001, Muungano Choir was in USA again. Berth records the design of the concerts as “And the Muungano lived true to expectations. Opening the performance with mournful, heart-rending tune of *Balinikabi*, a Ugandan spiritual adapted in the victims of Sept. 11 attacks in the United States, the 28-member choir sent the over-booked concert hall into frenzy.” This emotional presentation set the stage for the quick buying of Muungano Choir’s album. Barth further records, “By Monday evening, October 1, only days into the tour, the choir’s previous *Missa Luba* and *Muungano Live in Holy Land*, had practically been sold out.” To crown this feat, again the choir recorded another album called *Mateso*, which was released in 2001. The melodious album contained fourteen heart-warming pieces, which include: *Mateso, Maina, Mushere Mwene, Wanamichezo, Bwana Kote Ninakutazama, Malaika, Niwara Nono, Bhazo, Ekebwe, Selina, Ngulo, Msichana Mrembo, Sikuta and Mateso* (Reprise). Just like the other albums, the renditions comprised of both secular and sacred. Later after the performances, Fairfied Ledger

noted, “This concert has given our entire Fairfield community unique opportunity for inspiration and renewal through the rich sonorities of song.” The concert, just like many others before, had charmed the Americans of St. Louis and left a memorable mark in their souls.

The Phillips Classics commissioned *Missa Luba* engagement with Muungano National Choir seemed to have taught Mganga and his choir the new tricks of marketing Muungano Choir’s albums, considering how the choir produced its albums in quick succession after the *Missa Luba* deal. This was in line with Muungano National Choir’s strategy of making itself financially stable through royalties and direct sales of their music. Taking advantage of better recording facilities in technologically advanced countries, as Mganga would put it, Muungano Choir was recording its compositions and arranged songs, both secular and sacred, and the strategy was working. Under Muungano Choir’s Information Memorandum, there was a plan to establish a website, which was to be used as a key marketing tool. However, before these plans materialized, Boniface Mganga joined politics and became Voi Constituency Member of Parliament in 2002.

Despite of him joining politics, his music contributions stand out as a legacy not only in Kenya, but to the rest of the world. His journey from Mkwachunyi to Shimo La Tewa to Muungano National Choir singing is a testimony enough that Mganga had an extraordinary talent in music, whose impact was felt widely. Singing for President Kenyatta to an extent of being noticed, joining Shimo La Tewa courtesy of the founding father and setting an exceptional record in the entire school, proceeding to charm President Moi with his consuming passion and talent further confirms Mganga as a music genius of his time. It can therefore be said that the late President Kenyatta identified the seed of potent talent and planted it at the national stage, and when President Moi took over in 1978, he watered it till it flourished and blossomed to give Kenya and the world a taste of its flavour.

Tragic death robbed the world of its citizen, whose soul was a spring of charming melodies that everyone would rarely forget. Who will forget the first ever mass choir (originally comprised of one thousand members) in Kenya? Through the choral outfit, they were branded the ‘emissaries of Kenyan culture’ by an Israel Minister, and indeed Muungano sold Kenya far and wide. Mganga’s ability to unite a group of diverse faiths and cultures for thirty three years and still steer them to enviable global music success will stand as an exceptional record for generations to come. His immense contributions in music in Kenya Music Festival, music commissions, lectures on African Music, choral music and culture in Kenya, North American and world universities, in the International Federation for Choral Music, and various world symposia all constitute Boniface Mganga’s legacy in music. Even as his soul rests, his spirit leaves on in those he mentored in music, like Juma Odemba, Richard Khadambi, John Maghanga, founders and members of St. Louis African Chorus in USA, among others. Boniface Mganga shaped the Kenyan choral music and sold to the world African choral music. He shall remain to hold a prominent place in the world of music.

5.4 FROM A HIT MAKER TO A LAWMAKER

It is worth noting that Mganga officially started his career in State House as an administrative officer in charge of special duties at the beginning of Moi’s presidency in 1979, a position he held until 1983. However, Duncan Chola observes that Muungano National Choir, which enjoyed the patronage of President Moi, brought Boniface Mganga very close to the president. In 1983, Mganga served as the senior assistant secretary in State House. Mganga held this position until 1987, when he was posted to the Ministry of Culture and Social Services as undersecretary. As Chola observes, “His knowledge and competence in music played as key factors in his career progression.”

When he joined the State House in 1979-1987 as an administrative officer in charge of special duties and founded Muungano National Choir, some Kenyans were curious to know the job description of an administrative officer in charge of special duties. This issue was discussed during the parliamentary debate of Thursday 14th November, 1991. “Mr. Fulana asked the Minister of State Office of the President the following questions:

“(a) What are the duties of special Duty District officer?

(b) In which district are they based?”

In response, the Minister of State Office of the President, Mr. Waithaka stated that:

“(a) There is no category of public administrators called special Duty District Officer.

(b) In view of the answer in part (a) of the question above, part (b) of the question does not therefore arise.”

However, Hon. Fulana persisted in demanding satisfactory explanations, as captured in the Hansard, but the minister remained economical with facts. With Hon. Fulana’s persistence, the minister provided ‘supplementary information’ which described the job’s role as “situation analysis and advising district commissioners regarding what was going on in their districts.” This implies that Boniface Mganga worked in State House as a state operative, a role that introduced him to the political terrain as well as linked him closely to President Moi.

Locally, Mganga was Voi Secondary School’s Board of Governor’s chair between 1987 and 1994. “This position,” Benedict Mghanga observes, “was a step for Mganga towards joining active politics.” As a board chair, Mganga had found the school with inadequate infrastructure. His tenure as the Board of Governors Chair had coincided with his position as the Under Secretary, Ministry of Culture and Social Services. Using his position and influence, Mganga

was instrumental in the funds drive that helped construct the new school's administration block, and bought a new television set for the students. As Mghanga observes, the move did not augur well with the local 'political bigwigs' who considered his school development initiative as politically motivated. Whether this was true or false, only time could tell. When his term as a Board of Governor's Chair ended in 1994 at Voi Boys Secondary School, Mganga became Board of Governor's Chair again in 1995-1998 at Kenyatta High School, Mwatate District. Despite the fact that Mganga's sociable nature and fame made him well known locally and internationally, the local positions, which he did not despise, connected him with his tribesmen and women at a personal level. He interacted with parents, teachers, education officers and local leaders, particularly those that were in Kenya African National Union (KANU). As Chome Abdi, who was Mganga's schoolmate and later political rival, puts it, "When he first joined politics in 1997 with KANU ticket, Chome and his close family members approached Mganga to seek his advice as well as his support." As Chome observed, Mganga gave his support to his Shimo la Tewa schoolmate unreservedly. As Chome further adds, "Mganga gave me ten thousand shillings as his personal contribution towards my campaign." Chome would later learn that Mganga had his eyes on becoming a permanent secretary, and as Mganga had put it, "The promotion was what he coveted most, as far as his career progression was concerned, and it was not far." Going by his popularity as a founder and a director of Muungano National Choir under the patronage of President Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi, "It was easy for one to believe that Boniface Mganga was destined for greatness," observes Chola and his wife Keziah. As Chola further observes, "Whereas Mganga had President Moi's ears with his mesmerizing praise songs, Moi too had a soft spot for Mganga." True to what Mganga had told Chome, he briefly got the position of an acting permanent secretary under Ministry of Culture and Social Services.

Between 1991 and 2000, Boniface Mganga did not only serve his country at the Ministry of Culture and Social Service, but also in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Heritage and Sports, Ministry of Roads and Public Works, Public Service Commission, and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. However, one cannot fail to realize a steady progression of career as years went by. His aggressive and ambitious nature fanned his career growth steadily in a manner that seemed to project more success in his career.

When Boniface Mganga became the Deputy Secretary in Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the position provided Mganga with an opportunity to kick start his political career. As Benedict Mghanga observes, Mganga was at first unwilling to join active politics. Chome too confirms this observation and adds that initially, Boniface Mganga had his dreams in advancing his career as a civil servant. However, having served as a chair of board of governors at Voi Boys Secondary school from 1987 to 1994, and again in 1995 to 1998 at the same capacity in Kenyatta High School, Mganga knew too well the infrastructural challenges the Taita schools faced. Being in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and twice as a chair of the school's Board, overlooking such infrastructural challenges would have been embarrassing for a man too ambitious like Mganga.

His role in the construction of a new administration block and purchasing of the television set for the school excited the parents, teachers, and students, but was not well received by the local politicians. Most of these political bigwigs were well connected, and given to their characteristic nature of politics, they perceived Mganga's role at Voi Secondary Schools as a threat. Such a threat had to be dealt with. It did not take long, Mganga was transferred from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to Ministry of Roads and Public Works at the same capacity of Deputy Secretary. As Benedict Mghanga learned from Boniface Mganga, the 'local KANU bigwigs' would soon organize for his dismissal to scatter his 'plans.' It is at this point that

Mganga took seriously his engagement in parliamentary politics, which would guarantee him serving his constituents without fear of victimization. Mganga had decided to steer clear of the perceived rivalry. He was going to vie come 2002 general elections.

Mganga's political plan could not fly without him being at the helm of KANU leadership at Voi Constituency. According to the then KANU Chair, parliamentary aspirant and Mganga's friend Abdi Chome, what appeared to be a well-orchestrated plan began to unfold. In 2002 Chome observes that, "Justin Muturi, later twelfth parliament speaker, came from Nairobi as a returning officer and declared Boniface Mganga as the new KANU Chair, Voi Branch. KANU elections results dated 5th October, 2002 signed by Hon. J.B Muturi (MP) confirms this position as the elections provided the new leadership as follows:

1. Chairman: Boniface Mganga
2. Vice-Chairman: Zahid Din
3. Secretary-John Hermon Kirure
4. Assistant Secretary-Wilson Mwang'ombe
5. Treasurer- Mwaidoma Mwanzo
6. Assistant treasurer-Japhett M Mwakala
7. Organizing secretary-James M Mboga
8. Assistant organizing secretary- Jacob Ndeleko
9. Women leader- Rose Ngoka
10. Youth Leader- Rama Bakari

Chome, recalling the rigged party elections, states that, “The systems wanted someone from the system.” What former KANU Chairperson alluded to is Mganga’s strong connection to KANU at the national level, and more so to President Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi, the political party leader. As it came out, Boniface Mganga had the blessings from far above, and Hon. Justin Muturi was just a prophet who was sent to go anoint Boniface Mganga in preparation for the forthcoming general elections. Ironically, the KANU manifesto 1997 through its KANU philosophy strongly states that “*KANU strongly believes in democratic principles, social justice and sanctity of human life.*” This irony was demoralizing for Chome to live with, considering how he had worked hard for it for quite some time. Disgruntled, Chome left for Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to form National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) and faced the new KANU Chairperson in the forthcoming general elections, just some few months away.

As political temperatures were rising, so were the political alignments and formations becoming clear, and parliamentary candidates increasing in their numbers. Moi had ruled Kenya for 24 years. Seemingly he had anointed Uhuru Kenyatta as the presidential candidate. The National Alliance Rainbow Coalition, a formidable political force, was determined to bring to an end KANU rule. KANU’s rule had made Kenya a one party state, and NARC was riding on the change wave that was blowing across the country. KANU, determined to retain its stronghold, had nominated Uhuru Mwigai Kenyatta as its presidential flag bearer on 14th October 2002. On the other hand, NARC had appointed Mwai Kibaki as its presidential candidate on 22nd October 2002.

According to the Electorate Commission of Kenya, nominations of parliamentary candidates were supposed to be handed in on 25th and 26th November 2002. European Union 2002 General Elections Observation Report records that: “KANU nomination of candidates appeared to be a coronation of candidates from the top rather than an election of candidates. KANU’s primaries

were repeated in at least twelve constituencies, mainly Nairobi and Eldoret East and Kuresoi.” Thus the European Union Observation Report confirms Chome-Mganga’s case. Despite those irregularities, campaigns were gaining momentum as elections drew closer. According to Electoral Commission of Kenya, thirty-four political parties had fielded candidates for what appeared to be stiff parliamentary elections. Out of these thirty four political parties, there were one thousand and thirty five parliamentary aspirants across the country, competing for two hundred and ten seats in the National Assembly. Indeed a stiff race.

In an apparent two party show out to outdo each other, KANU fielded 209 parliamentary candidates in an attempt to maintain its dominance, while NARC fielded 207 out of 210 constituencies in a spirited attempt to root out KANU’s dominance and establish the much anticipated change. The competition was stiffening, campaigns becoming louder by the day, media awash with the electioneering news and mass mobilization characterizing the mood.

At the national level stiff competition was evident. As for Parliamentary elections in Voi things were no different as Boniface Mganga for KANU, Abdi Khamisi Chome for NARC, Kilalo Christine Saru for Shirikisho Party of Kenya (SPK), Mwasi Edward Mwamba Forum for the Restoration of Democracy for the People, and Kayanda Paul Benjamin for Federal Party of Kenya all to on seat Basil Mwakiriongo Nguku Social Democratic Party of Kenya (SDPK)

Out of the five candidates, Benedict Mghanga observes, only two posed a serious challenge to Boniface Mganga. Mganga could not stop thinking and strategizing on how to outsmart them. Aware of Voi Constituency electoral history of electing a member of parliament for only one term, Mganga knew if it were not Abdi Chome, it could be him, but he would not have it on a silver platter, since Basil Mwakiriongo was a potential threat too. Benedict Mghanga notes that Boniface Mganga knew that only Eliud Timothy Mwamunga had managed to serve for

consecutive terms (1969-1983) by virtue of one party system-KANU, and that could work to his advantage. Though Basil Mwakiringo, who had the advantage of incumbency, could rely on his performance to defend his seat, but he did not pose a serious threat. As for Abdi Chome, Mganga was facing a rival he personally knew too well. An intelligent water engineer, whom he went to the same school at Shimo La Tewa, and was a well-known name in Voi. His expertise as a water engineer was an advantage in the race, considering the perennial water problem the constituency is still facing, and which Basil Mwakiringo had failed to address. In addition to his technical advantage, Abdi Chome had a good following in Voi central and neighbouring wards, which constituted the cosmopolitan electorate in Voi Constituency.

In order to cover the expansive Voi Constituency Mganga mobilized KANU officials and members to all the six wards of the constituency. In Mbololo, his home place, Mganga had an extensive network comprising of family members, friends, schoolmates and choir members. Boniface Mganga's illustrious musical talent had spread his name across Mbololo ward and beyond. Mganga's campaign teams, which mostly convened at Caltex Petrol Station and Lady Diana Restaurant, would be charged by Mganga with brief speeches and of course some handouts, and they will go shouting his slogan. Campaign strategies banked on constituency's problems like water shortages, wildlife invasion, electricity, education, roads, and health. In his public rallies, which crisscrossed the constituency's six expansive wards, Mganga addressed the problem affecting each ward, Dora Mbiko recalls. Mbiko adds that his fame in Muungano National Choir made him appealing to the electorate, as many people were aware that Mganga had Moi's ears, and his closeness to the KANU leader made many believe what he promised to do if elected.

As voting day drew closer, Mganga took his campaigns to a higher level of electorate mobilization, counter attacks, political machinations and intimidations. Knowing too well that

Abdi Chome and Basil Mwakiringo would give him a run for his money, Mbiko recalls that Mganga devised a smear campaign through the KANU Youth wing led by its leader Rama Bakari. True to its intentions, the smear campaign turned the currents against Basil Mwakiringo, as the majority of the masses bought the propaganda which was enhanced by its machinery's persistence. Benedict Mghanga observes that, "The smear campaign shook Abdi Chome, though not as strongly as Mwakiringo. On his side, Mganga was riding on the wave of his global fame, popularity and admirable closeness to President Moi, but Chome's challenge was still real. It was a challenge that Mganga took very seriously and would not take chances, observes Benedict Mghanga.

On Monday 23rd December 2002, the Electoral Commission of Kenya announced a crackdown on poll violence across the country and sent warnings to the involved politicians and their political parties. The 23rd December 2002 *Daily Nation* recorded the ECK warning: "Voi's Boniface Mganga (KANU) and Khamisi Abdi (NARC) were cautioned against malpractices. Mr. Abdi had alleged that his rival was distributing relief food through the provincial administration and that he had threatened him with a gun." Mganga being a licensed firearm holder and a former administrator under Moi, Chome's alarm was to be taken seriously, but Mganga knew his connections to the powers that be gave him immunity. The ECK warning brings out a parliamentary race dominated by two: Abdi Chome and Boniface Mganga, two former students from Shimo La Tewa High School. Though Mganga was older by eight years, he had started his administrative work as a District Officer at an early age. This position enabled him to master the systems of government at a personal level, and as a result he made contacts with many administrators very easily.

5.5 The other Muungano Choir

To avoid being drowned by NARC's *unbwogable* tunes and lyrics, Mganga revamped and brought on board a choir that was originally brought together by his music long time mentor, Leonard Mwawasi. It was a choir that was inspired by Boniface Mganga's musical genius as the founder and director of the Muungano National Choir. The other Muungano Choir was based in Mganga's childhood village, Mkwachunyi.

The choir drew close to one hundred members from Mwangarana, Kunde, Mkwachunyi, Kulele, Koenyi, Kirutai and some from Tausa. The Majority of the members were women, and a handful were Mganga's relatives. Being the patron of the choir, praise songs were composed that praised the music wizard. Mganga had sang for Moi, and knowing the impact of music, used it to the maximum for his political victory. He had sang for Moi and now it was his turn to be sung for.

On the last campaign day of his address Mganga passionately and convincingly vowed to implement his campaign pledges. Much to the excitement of the crowd, Mganga and his campaigning team, which included his own family, had done their best, and what was remaining was to send his observes to all the polling centres in Voi constituency and wait for his fate. When the vote counting was over, the parliamentary results were announced as follows: NARC won 125 seats, KANU 64, FORD D. 14, SAFINA 2, FORD ASILI 2, SISI KWA SISI 2 and Shirikisho Party of Kenya 1. NARC had clinched victory in the parliamentary elections.

Finally on 27th December, 2002 Voi Constituency results were as follows: Mganga Boniface got 4,054 votes (30.94 %) on the KANU ticket, Abdi Khamisi Chome followed closely with 3,888 votes (29.67%) on the NARC ticket, followed by Mwakiringo Basil Nguku who got 3,019 votes (23.04%) using Social Democratic Party of Kenya ticket, then Kilalo Christine Saru with 957 votes (7.30%) with Shirikisho Party of Kenya ticket, followed by Mwasi Edward Mwamba

Forum for the Restoration of Democratic for the People with 949 votes (7.24%) and followed by Kayanda Paul Benjamin 235 votes (1.79%) out of 13,400 total votes cast.

On 29th December, 2002, ECK Chair Mr. Samuel Kivuitu announced Mwai Kibaki the winner of the presidential elections. According to ECK chair, not all votes were counted, but there was no presidential candidate who could overturn Mwai Kibaki lead. Eventually, the ECK published the presidential elections in the Kenya Gazette on 30th December 2002. While the 209 elected members of parliament names were gazette on 3rd January 2003, Gideon Moi was gazzeted earlier as an unopposed KANU winner. Out of 64 parliamentary seats won by KANU nationally three came from Taita Taveta. Masden Madoka, Mwatate Constituency, Dr. Naomi Shaban, Taveta Constituency and Boniface Mganga, Voi Constituency all won on KANU tickets.

Mganga's political success received a lot of congratulatory messages across the board. Given to his popularity and outgoing nature, no women group, politician and any group of interest that closely knew Mganga could fail to congratulate him. One of the most striking congratulatory letter came from ECK choir Mr. Samuel Kivuitu on January 21, 2003.

On 9th January 2003, during first session of the ninth parliament, in line with new constitution, elected the speaker and his deputy, and had all members sworn in alphabetical order of their names. Before the establishment of official constituency offices at Njegawa House along Catholic Road, Hon. Boniface Mganga operated from home. There were no offices during Moi's time. According to Benedict Mghanga, Mganga made sure that he came over to Voi on most of the Saturdays, where his constituents would meet him to express their problems. Men, youths, and women hand in hand with their children in school uniform all knew their problems would be solved by their well-connected MP. Mganga had taken over the reins of a constituency with a myriad of problems. His campaigns had thrived on promising solutions to these problems, so

youths from Mwakingali, Sofia, Kariakor, Tanzania villages knew Mganga could connect them to jobs; for those who sought them and for those used to handouts, got their instant solutions and expected to go for more in future. Men and women from far away areas within Voi Constituency, like Mbololo, Kasighau and Sagalla, trooped to Mganga's Vindo home on Saturday with their different problems. According to Evangeline Kulola, being the MP's wife, people flooded to Mganga, and all wanted solutions to their problems. Kulola notes that, "Serving as a member of parliament is a position that comes with a big challenge of being Mr. Fix-it according to every member of the constituency's understanding." Though Kulola admits that Mganga's programme coupled with his other responsibilities, such as director of culture and assistant minister of public works, did not seem to bother Mganga but rather appeared to enjoy every bit of it. But its price took a big toll on the family again. Kulola observes that, "Once again Mganga was slipping away from the family, just as during the days of traversing the globe with Muungano Choir."

5.6 The Ninth Parliament, Boniface Mganga and the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission. 28th April-6th June 2003.

"I would like to appeal to all delegates to shun away kind of prejudice against each other so that we can write a constitution for posterity. We must all avoid everything that will ruin this debate"- Boniface Mganga.

Accompanied by the late Vice President Michael Kijana Wamalwa, the first lady Lucy Kibaki, Cabinet ministers and diplomatic corps, His Excellency President Mwai Kibaki officially opened Constitution of Kenya Review Commission on 30th April 2003. Under the chairmanship of Prof. Yash Pal Ghai, the 628 delegates comprised of the ninth parliamentary district representatives, trade union representatives, non-governmental organisation, professional organization representatives, women organizations representatives, religious organization representatives, political parties representatives and special interests groups. It was a wide representation that

touched every single Kenyan. According to verbatim proceedings of the commission, Mganga's key contributions in this vital constitutional review process touched on sobriety of the delegates, the position of Prime Minister, support for Article 281 (1) on Ethics and Integrity Commission, Affirmative Action and Devolution. Going by the tribal nature of Kenyan politics and its politicians, the constitutional review process was being hijacked from the onset through tribal factions. Mganga, delegate number 100, would be remembered for having blamed the commission for failing to set clear regulations to guide the delegates, and even control regional interests and tribalism from hijacking the process that was brought about by the position of a Prime Minister debate. On commissions, Mganga supported the proposed commissions, stressing on Ethics and Integrity Commission, but insisting that commissioners should have "sound education backgrounds, appropriate experiences and relevant training." Mganga went ahead to give his own example during his tenure in public service commission and cited incompetent commissioners and sought to bring to an end the culture of incompetence. Therefore considering academic backgrounds would be key. On Affirmative Action, Mganga viewed the legislation as having patriarchal undertones if it supported women for elective posts, because according to him, "By putting a legislation you are actually telling them (women) - without helping you cannot excel." Alongside delegate Khalwale, Mganga's view was women and men should compete for elective posts, opportunities and resources equally, without having such a legislation. Mganga would be remembered to have said, "I would hate to think that my daughter will not believe she does not require to get a particular grade to go into a school of medicine to be a doctor, or to go to the school of law to be a lawyer." To express his opinion against the Affirmative Action, Mganga later clarified his position, as recorded in *Daily Nation* 12th May 2003 edition, where he said that he "supported affirmative action through administrative policies and not through legislation."

“It is worth noting that in Kenya we are unique and we need to encourage our own homegrown structure and system of government peculiar to our situation.” – Boniface Mganga

Mganga’s submissions on devolution expressed full support for the new system. Mganga challenged his fellow delegates to think beyond colonial boundaries in formulating the new devolved units. His support was also informed by the fact that nearly the entire Coast Province was marginalized, and devolution was deemed to bail out such areas. Mganga’s contributions in the constitutional review process demonstrated a sober leader, who was out to make a better constitution; as he had put it, “I would like to appeal to all delegates to shun any kind of prejudice against each other so that we can write a constitution for posterity. We must all avoid everything that will ruin this debate.” Truly Mganga did not express his patriotism through patriotic music only, even in politics his inveterate trait of patriotism stood out among other patriots.

Mganga’s performance according to his 2002 election pledges would have its verdict in 2007 from the electorate. As Benedict Mghanga observes, after Mganga established an office he set the Constituency Development Committee in line with the constitution. CDF records further reveal that the accounts were opened to receive funds from the national government. Considering Mganga’s score card based on projects done, as confirmed by records, he prioritized water, health, electricity, education, roads and land issues. Mganga made follow-ups and allocated resources through CDF kitty for the construction of Irima Water Project that helped ease pressure on water shortage. As records available demonstrate, Mganga prioritised education through the CDF kitty. More than one hundred students received bursaries, and the construction of classes was allocated funds in several wards. Kajire Secondary School and Boniface Mganga Primary School stand out as examples. Kulele dispensary was established during his tenure. Constant

follow-ups, as confirmed by correspondences, saw Kulele, Mwakiki, Tausa receive electricity under the electrification programme. Rukanga-trading centre, Moi High School – Kasighau, Kajire Secondary School, Ikanga Trading Centre, Wongonyi Trading Centre, Allan Mjomba Secondary School and Ghazi Trading Centre received electricity power during 2006/2007 financial year, when Boniface Mganga was the Assistant Minister of State for Public Works. What shall remain outstanding during Mganga’s tenure, is Taita Taveta Members of Parliament Manifesto that was presented to President Kibaki. The memorandum presented the following issues in detail as captured in the document: water, electricity, roads, Ikanga Airstrip, minerals, human-wildlife conflicts and complementation, Kilifi-Taita-Taveta boarder conflict, Makueni-Taita-Taveta boarder conflict, industrialization in Taita Taveta for agricultural products value addition, and environment pollution. Mganga, being instrumental in the designing of the memorandum, read it before the president, and even though not everything was implemented, at least a few items like roads and Ikanga Airstrip were achieved.

When 2007 came, the electorate was ready to pass its verdict regarding Voi Constituency parliamentary elections. Fourteen contestants were willing to challenge the incumbent Boniface Mganga. Campaigns were very stiff and challenging, as Benedict Mghanga observes. Boniface had ditched KANU and was vying using Social Democratic Party of Kenya, after he missed the ODM ticket which he really intended to have. Through its constant criticism of the government, ODM had managed to make Coast Province its loyal stronghold. Kifuso observes that, “It was this ODM wave that Mganga wanted to take advantage of in addition to his performance record.” Dan Mwazo won the ODM ticket. ECK records Kilalo Christine Ruth of Shrikisho Party of Kenya, Mdari Cosmas Charles of Chama Cha Mapindizi, Mlolwa Jones Mwangogo of National Rainbow Coalition, Mwakima Vincent Mwalenga of Party of National Unity, Mwakiringo Basil Nguku of Party of Hope, Mwambi Richard Mwangeka of Kenya National Democratic Alliance,

Mwapea Michael R. Mwangulu of Kenya African Democratic Union Asili, Mwashimba Peter Lenjo of Kenya African Democratic Development Union, Mwazi Jonah Nyange of Kenya People's Party, Nzano Apollo Mwalemu of The Independent Party, Shambi Manuel Mwawaza of Democratic Party of Kenya, Wanzah Bhanji Bharat of Chama Cha Uzalendo and Amin Yassin Mohamed of Chama Cha Mwananchi as cleared candidates for the position. All crisscrossed the constituency to convince the electorate to vote for them. At the national level, the stiff competition was for two: Raila Odinga against the incumbent Mwai Kibaki. When the results were out, Mwakuleghwa Danson Mwazo led with 6,259 votes (30.1) followed closely by Abdi Khamisi Chome with 4,310 votes (20.8%) while Mganga Boniface came third with 2,191 votes (10.6%) followed by Vincent Mwalenga Mwakina with 1,934 votes (09.3%) then Jones Mwagogo Mlolwa with 1,632 votes (07.9%) then Apollo Mwalemu Nzano with 1,517 votes (7.3) and the nine other contestants shared the remainder of the 20,761 of the total votes cast.

Mganga had lost, and joined the list of one-term serving Members of Parliament. The loss did not make him inactive in politics as he continued lobbying, planning and strategizing for a seat come 2012 elections. Before his death, Mganga had expressed interest in vying for the gubernatorial seat in Taita Taveta, which showed a shift from a parliamentary seat. Unfortunately, he did not leave to accomplish his dream, as a fatal road accident took away his life in 2011.

CHAPTER SIX: MGANGA'S FINAL MOMENTS

“Every man’s life ends the same way. It is only the details of how he lived and how he died that distinguish one man from another.” Ernest Hemingway

American political journalist and scholar Norman Cousins downplays death by saying, “Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live.” Cousins prioritizes exploration of our innate potentials and abilities over our physical deaths. This wisdom succinctly reflects Boniface Mganga’s life from childhood, whose growth was chocked with circumstances and challenges, to meteoric rise to stardom through passionate and deliberate exploration of his capabilities and potentials. At the age of thirty, Boniface Mganga had not only made a positive musical and cultural impact in Kenya, but also across the world. From forming and coordinating a choir at the age of twelve, singing for President Jomo Kenyatta at the age of fifteen and securing a scholarship for himself, setting a record as the first pupil to get 30 points for CPE at Mkwachunyi Primary School, demonstrating exceptional music and leadership capabilities at Shimo La Tewa High School, proceeding to the University of Nairobi despite all odds, and forming one of the largest ever choirs in Kenya - Muungano National Choir - and directing it to global success at the age of twenty-five, Boniface Mganga strived to “die empty” in the words of Dr. Myles Monroe, and no doubt his family, community, country and the world at large expected a lot from his abilities.

On 5th July 2011, at night, whispers were heard on the grapevine that the illustrious son of Taita had had a fatal accident. The rumors which were circulating very fast were confirmed by Regional Traffic Commandant, Joshua Omukata. Commandant Omukata officially stated that Boniface Mganga, who was alone in his Toyota Prado, hit a trailer as he was overtaking on his way to Voi from Nairobi at 8.00pm, and died on the spot. According to traffic police account, the bloody accident occurred 50 kilometres away from Voi town, between Tsavo Bridge and

Manyani Prison. It was the same black spot where Prof. Katama Mkangi had an accident on 7th March 2004. The sad news, which was widely broadcast by the main media outlets, caught those who knew him by surprise. Mganga's family was shocked, Kenyans were shocked and his family lost for words. Death had cut short a promising life.

As condolences and confirmatory calls streamed from across the world to Mganga's family, his daughter Ashley and Christina wept uncontrollably. His sons were shocked, and his wives struck by the reality of their husband's sudden death. It posed a big challenge to present the sad news to Mganga's mother. Grace, alongside other relatives at Mkwachunyi, mustered strength and courage, and eventually presented the news in the most delicate way possible. As the sad news sank, so helpless, weak, confused and dumbfounded did Mganga's mother become. As Grace puts it, "The news shrouded Machocho in a suffocating sadness." The sudden death of her beloved son struggled to sniff out her own life. Grace confirms that women had a difficult task of not only consoling the distraught mother, but also making her come to terms with the sudden loss. It was a task that would not be achieved soon. As Mganga's brother Ali confirms, it was common knowledge that Mganga was the apple of their mother's eye. As a result of this bond, Mganga's death's implication on his mother could not be underestimated.

As Duncan Chola confirms, when Mganga's remains were transported to Pandya, burial arrangements began in earnest. According to former Voi Constituency MP, Dan Mwazo, there were three burial committees which were formed to oversee and coordinate Mganga's send off. The committees were: Nairobi (the main) Committee, chaired by the then MP Dan Mwazo and Vice Chair Major (Rtd.) and former Mwatate MP Marsden Madoka, Mombasa Committee, which brought together friends and organizations that knew Mganga, and thirdly the Voi committee, which was tasked with making arrangements for the final resting place and all relevant processes and rites. Through consultations with the family, the three committees agreed

that the burial day was to be on 16th July 2011. The international choral community also mourned Mganga as renowned choral music clinician, whose mastery was well known in Vancouver, Canada, Sydney, Australia, Rotterdam, Netherlands, Nanur, Belgium, Oslo, Norway and Buenos Aries, Argentina. In United States of America, one of the leading composers and a very close friend to Boniface Mganga, Ben Foster Allaway, established a memorial fund in honor of his late friend for many years. To publicize this initiative, Allaway wrote:

“A memorial fund has been established in Des Moines, Iowa to help his family, which has two daughters in college at present. If you wish to contribute to this fund, please send checks payable to:

Boniface Mganga Memorial Fund

Wells Fargo Bank

2840 Ingersoll Avenue

Des Moines IA 50312

The fund is managed by Ben Allaway, who managed Muungano two U.S Tours."

As the funds drive climaxed in high gear, where Hon. Najib Balala was the Chief Guest, Mganga's body was airlifted from Pandya Hospital morgue to Lee Funeral Home in Nairobi. Kenyan leaders, such as Former President Daniel Moi, Raila Odinga, Kalonzo Musyoka, Uhuru Kenyatta, Mr. and Mrs. Calist Mwatela, Naomi Shaban, Thomas Mwadeghu, Marsden Modoka, Mwandawiro Mghanga, PS Leah Guyo, Justus Msanga Mbogholi, among others contributed to give their colleague a descent send off. The chair of the committee, Hon. Dan Mwazo, noted that contributions superseded the estimated budget by far, and during the religion mass held on

Thursday, 14th July 2011 at All Saints Cathedral. In his vote of thanks, he appreciated all for showing their love for the departed hero and a music wizard.

The day was cool and cloudy. A somber mood engulfed All Saints Cathedral, as mourners joined others in the church, each with a program in hand bearing Boniface Mganga's picture and above it caption 'Celebration of a Life.' Most of the mourners in black suits and dresses quietly joined other mourners in the historic church. Every mourner sat at their designated places, but one could not fail to notice the choirs, which had graced the day to give their master, a music wizard, a befitting send off. The programmer Philemon Mwaisaka tried his best to run the programme with precision. Some of the family members seemed emotional, while others seemed strong enough to stand before the congregation. Muungano National Choir members expressed their emotions in the most melodious manner they knew best, followed by Utalii College, where until his death Boniface Mganga was the chair of Board of Governors. Mass choirs too, out of respect for their departed colleague, expressed their sorrow musically in a manner that evoked emotions. The choirs never disappointed with their stellar performances to bid farewell to a music wizard and a leader.

Speeches were read, and eulogy read by the first born son, Stephen Kifuso. But there were a few whose substances stood out. Gershon Misumi categorically stated that during Boniface Mganga's tenure, the college was able to have, "Successful completion of the refurbishment of quest rooms at Utalii Hotel, had the establishment of Mombasa and Kisumu branches of Kenya Utalii College, the restructuring and improvement of terms of service for the college and the attainment of ISO200 certification." Misumi acknowledged Mganga's vast network that greatly catalyzed the college's progress. And Mganga's "Unique ability to get along with people at different social and economic levels" is what the institution would really remember him for. Of course the requiem mass would have been incomplete if Mganga's mentor, confidant and close friend

former President Moi would not have come or been represented. The latter sufficed. The speech was read by Major (Rtd) Marsden Herman Madoka, and considering the role the former President played in Mganga's life, it will serve the purpose of this work to have its verbatim account:

It is with profound shock and sorrow that I learnt of the untimely death of Boniface Mganga in a road accident. Boniface Mganga was a distinguished citizen of this country who entertained people with patriotic songs which will be heard and appreciated for many years to come as a founder of Muungano Choir, the late Boniface Mganga touched the hearts of many Kenyans by their messages of peace, love and unity. The finesse with which he conveyed his message of patriotism endeared him to many Kenyans including myself. I enjoyed his songs and brought Boniface Mganga close to me and as a result he became a role model for many other people. I grieve with members of his family and people of Taita where he came from. I pray to God to give them strength at this time of sorrow.

According to Madoka, the speech was signed by Moi. The former president could not make it due to undisclosed reasons, but he seemed to be following every step of the funeral. Giving his own account, Madoka said that before Mganga died, he had shared with him about his plans of becoming Taita-Taveta's first governor. Mganga had therefore planned to meet Madoka to get his opinion and support for further lobbying, strategizing and planning. In pursuit of his gubernatorial dream, Mwalenga was also waiting for him after Mganga had informed him about his plans. Mzee Kifuso confirms that Mganga had also bought several utensils for women groups to set the campaigns rolling. His son Kifuso confirms that key among his plans, Mganga had strategically planned to have his son, Stephen Kifuso's wedding, as a launching pad for his campaigns in Voi. Unfortunately, he passed on before they met. It was a great dream cut short. In

his vote of thanks, the chair of the Mganga's farewell committee, Dan Mwazo confirmed Mganga's fame when he was young. According to Mwazo, he heard about Mganga during his childhood in 1968 due to his powerful talent. Indeed despite his childhood challenges, Mganga remained determined. In the depth of his challenging circumstances, Mganga chose not to be drowned by them but rise above them.

On 15th July, 2011, the procession left Nairobi for Vindo-Voi, where Mganga was to be accorded his last respect before burial. On Saturday 16th July 2011 mourners in and out of the country arrived for Mganga's send off. The service was presided over by ACK's Rt. Rev. Dr. Samson Mwaluda of Taita-Taveta County on behalf of Taita –Taveta clergy. According to Chola, dignitaries from the political class made their way to Mganga's expansive home in Vindo to send off their colleague, while Muungano National Choir, Kenya Utalii College Choir and several local church choirs sang hymns melodiously in a befitting manner to a choir master and a music wizard. When time came for viewing of the body, wails filled the air, sobs and suppressed sobbing could be heard from crowds and mostly from the family members, both from immediate and extended family. Mganga's step-brothers Gibran Mwandigha and Ngati all came to witness their brother's burial. Unfortunately, they were seeing him for the last time after staying apart in silence for many years when he was alive. Finally, Mganga was buried, but his mother was adversely affected. Her beloved son had gone, a son she had valued when everyone including his biological father had taken for granted, a son she was ready to suffer for and fight for to be a better person, was no more. Definitely, it was a gap that no one could fill. Charo and Kulola observe that after Mganga's burial, his mother started ailing frequently and on 24th November, 2016 she too passed on.

And as Ernest Hemingway puts it, "It is only the details of how one lived and how one died that distinguish one person from another," Mganga's life presents valuable details and lessons that

deserve preservation for future generations. Mganga's mother's life also portrays the role of a mother who believed in her child even when no one did, and how such conviction helped shape his child's destiny. Despite Mganga's marital life being shaky, Mganga managed to unite his children from his two wives, and left them living harmoniously, unlike in his own polygamous family, where his father's openly showed discrimination. It will undisputedly go on record that Mganga left a permanent mark in the world of music and scaled the heights of global musical success at an age that no other Kenyan has ever achieved. The Muungano National Choir and its later splinter groups with this influence across the world stand out as one of the monumental legacy of Boniface Mganga, that must be sustained by its members and reclaim its illuminous glory of 1980s and 1990s.

Eventually Moi arrived at Mganga's home few weeks after the burial. Neighbours seeing a helicopter landing in the compound knew someone special had arrived. The day's trip was well arranged. Madoka, who had read Moi's speech at All Saints Cathedral, called immediate members of the family, local leaders and clergy, who organized themselves to receive the former president. Accompanied by his long serving press secretary, Lee Njiru, Moi expressed his condolences to the entire family and gave them a good 'pole.' Chola adds that Moi was visibly moved by Mganga's loss. A loss of gifted music wizard whom he had natured, mentored and groomed. Moi arriving in person to pay his last respect is a statement enough that paints a picture of a close bond between the two. It was a bond that only death could break though his memories still live. As Mganga lay in the grave, his legacy in music across the world shall speak of his genius to many generations to come.

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APPENDICES
Boniface Mganga's life in pictures.



In the above undated photo, Mganga leading his fellow pupils in rehearsals.

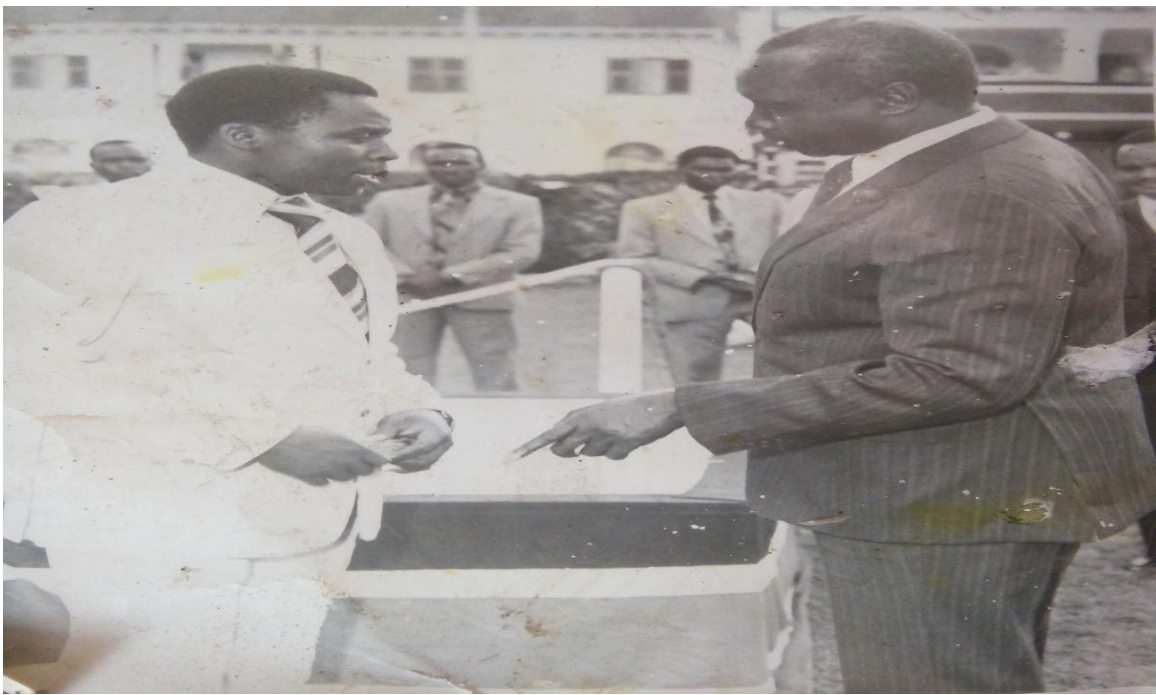


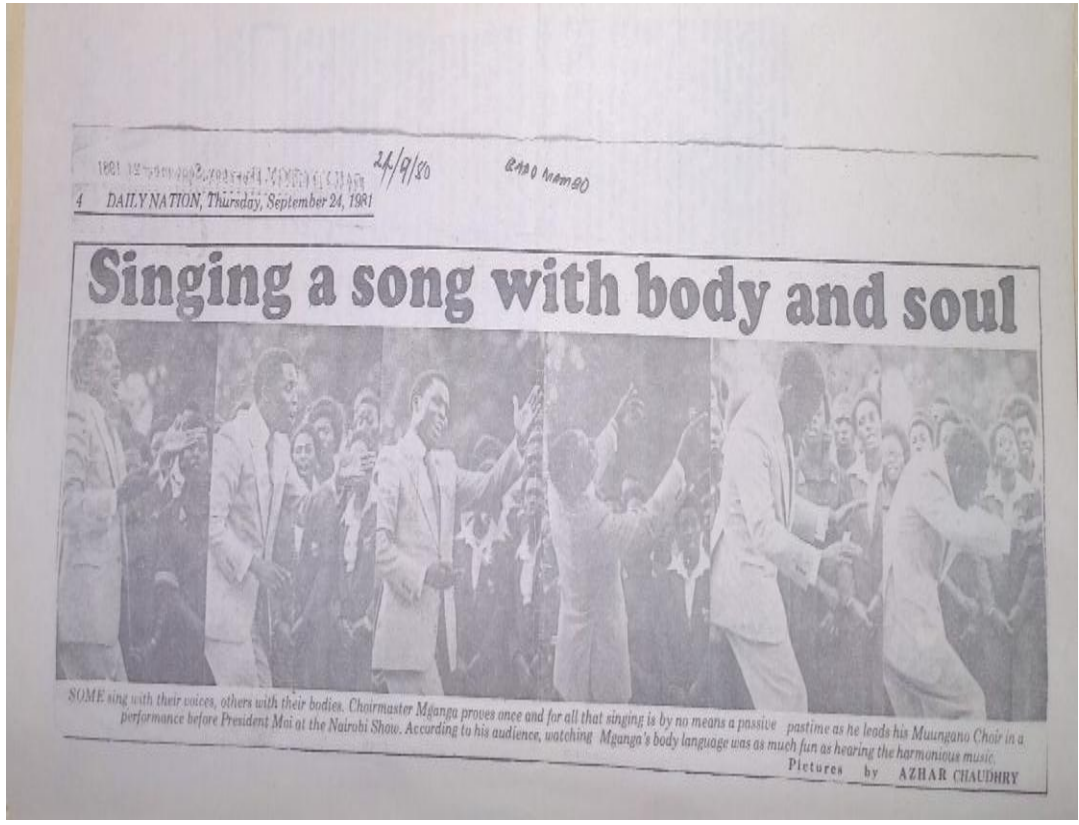
Boniface Mganga graduating in 1979 from University of Nairobi.



Above with his first wife Evangeline Kulola during their wedding on 4th March 1981 at St. Andrews PCEA, Nairobi.

Mganga listening to President Moi as his fellow choir members are looking on.





A performance before President Moi during the Nairobi Show in 1981 showing Mganga in different moves as he conducts the choir. Source: *The Daily Nation*.



Above Muungano National Choir performing during their first trip outside Africa in Australia in 1984. Below Mganga posing for a photo after a thrilling performance.





Above, Muungano National Choir under Boniface Mganga Performing in Europe.



Above, Boniface Mganga introducing his fellow choir members to President Moi at state house.



Boniface Mganga
May his soul rest in eternal peace.