CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN MARRIAGE MUSIC OF THE BANYANKORE IN NTUNGAMO DISTRICT, WESTERN UGANDA.

BY

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A Research dissertation submitted to the Department of Performing Arts and Film in Partial Fulfillment of the Award for a Bachelor of Arts in Music of Makerere University

September, 2026

Declaration

I, ANKUNDA HARRIET declare that this research dissertation is authentic and has never been submitted to any institution for any award.

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Approval

This research dissertation titled “Continuity and Change in Marriage Music of the Banyankore in Ntungamo District, Western Uganda” has been submitted for examination with my approval as the student’s supervisor.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved parents, Mr. Mugabi Edwin and Mrs. Lovence Natukwatsa Mugabi, whose love, prayers, sacrifices, and unwavering belief in me have carried me through every step of my academic journey. Your encouragement gave me strength when the journey felt difficult, and your selfless support made it possible for me to reach this milestone. I am deeply grateful to you, and I dedicate this work to you with all my love and appreciation.

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Abstract

This study examined the continuity and change in marriage music of the Banyankore in Ntungamo District, western Uganda. It sought to identify the types of marriage music performed, examine the elements that have remained constant and those that have changed, and analyse the factors influencing these continuities and changes. The study was motivated by concerns that modernisation and socio-cultural transformations are reshaping indigenous musical traditions.

A qualitative research approach grounded in ethnography was adopted. Data were collected through interviews, participant observation, documentary review, and mass media, and they were analysed thematically.

The findings revealed that while Banyankore marriage music continues to play an important role in expressing cultural identity, celebrating marriage, and transmitting social values, it has undergone notable changes in performance practice, instrumentation, repertoire, and context. Continuity has been sustained through oral transmission, cultural values, and the continued observance of customary marriage practices. Change, on the other hand, has been driven by Christianity, urbanisation, globalisation, technological advancement, commercialisation of weddings, and changing musical preferences.

This study concludes that Banyankore marriage music remains a dynamic cultural tradition that has adapted to contemporary realities while preserving its essential identity. It recommends continued documentation, preservation, and promotion of indigenous music to ensure its transmission to future generations.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Music is an important component of cultural life and it plays a significant role in expressing, preserving and transmitting the values and traditions of societies. In various African communities, music is closely connected to important institutions such as birth, initiation, marriage and death. Marriage music in particular provides a means through which communities celebrate marriage, communicate marriage, social values and strengthen relationships among individuals, families and the wider community.

Among the Banyankore of Western Uganda, marriage has traditionally been accompanied by various forms of music, songs, dances, and other musical practices. These practices have been performed at different stages of the marriage process and have served social, cultural, and entertainment functions. They have also provided a means through which knowledge, values, and aspects of the Banyankore cultural identity are transmitted from one generation to another.

Nevertheless, cultural practices change as societies respond to changing social, economic, religious and technological circumstances. Factors such as Christianity, education, urbanization, migration, mass media and modern technology have influenced the nature and performance of traditional music. As a result, some aspects of Banyankore marriage music have been modified, declined or replaced by contemporary forms.

This study therefore examines the continuity and change in marriage music of the Banyankore in Ntungamo district, Western Uganda. It seeks to establish the forms of marriage music practiced, examine the aspects that have remained continuous, identify the changes that have occurred and explore the factors responsible for these continuities and changes. The study contributes to the documentation and understanding of Banyankore marriage music and its significance within a changing cultural environment.

1.2 Background to the study

The Banyankore are a Runyankore-speaking people inhabiting southwestern Uganda, historically organised under the Ankole kingdom (*Ensi Nkore*), also known as *Kaaro karungi*

which existed until its abolition in 1967. According to Oberg (1950), the Ankole kingdom was a centralised polity headed by a king *(Omugabe),* whose authority extended over social, political, and cultural life. The Banyankore are an ethnic group among other ethnic groups that live in the Western part of Uganda. They inhabit districts like Ntungamo, Mbarara, Bushenyi, Kiruhura, Isingiro, and Kazo, which are part of the Ankole sub-region of Western Uganda. Some Banyankore communities can also be traced in the northern part of Tanzania, particularly the *Kagera* region, and the *Mutara* region in Rwanda. The Banyankore speak Runyankore language, which is closely related to Rukiga, Rutooro, and Runyoro (Lucky, 2019). During the pre-colonial era, the Banyankore were culturally organised into a centralized kingdom under the leadership of the *Omugabe,* from the *Bahinda* clan, although some areas retained considerable local autonomy.

Akampurira and Tunanukye (2026) note that Uganda's traditional kingdoms were abolished in 1967 under Dr. Milton Obote and restored in 1993 under President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni as cultural institutions without political authority. However, Ankole kingdom was not restored, largely due to disagreements between the *Bairu* and *Bahima* over the restoration of the monarchy, with concerns surrounding historical relations, representation, and the distribution of authority within Ankole. Mamdani (1996) argues that colonial and pre-colonial Ankole politics were marked by deep social stratification, where political power and cultural authority were concentrated among the *Bahima* elite, leading many *Bairu* to associate the kingdom with exclusion and inequality rather than cultural unity.

The Banyankore are traditionally divided into two major groups: Bairu and Bahima. These two have a shared ancestry, with the Bairu as the original inhabitants of the region and the Bahima as pastoralists who migrated to the area from the north (Mafeje, 1971). The Bairu, who were mainly crop farmers, grew food crops such as bananas, sweet potatoes, and millet (Roscoe, 1923). They often lived settled lives in permanent homesteads, with a strong emphasis on family and clan ties. Typical Bairu society was egalitarian, though existing research suggests they occupied a lower social status than the Bahima (Nahurira, 2022). They respected clan elders and had strong kinship systems based on clans *(enganda),* which regulated marriage and social conduct. These clans usually cut across both Banyankore

clusters. Polygamy was very common among these people, and bride price was usually paid in goats, beer, or agricultural produce. The *Bahima,* on the other hand, are pastoralists who rely on cattle herding for their livelihood (Herskovits, 1926). They rear large herds of long-horned *Ankole* cows. The primary item used in the *Bahima* bride price system is cattle, especially healthy, fertile cows. In contemporary practice, cattle may sometimes be supplemented or partially replaced with cash equivalents, but they remain the core and most culturally valued form.

Yoweri (1997) describes the traditional Banyankore social and economic organization in relation to occupational specialisation, identifying groups such as the *Abariisa*, who were primarily involved in cattle keeping, and the *Abahingyi*, who engaged in cultivation. He further identifies specialized groups, including the *Abaheesi* (blacksmiths), *Abanogoozi* (potters), *Abaremi* (shoemakers), *Abahazi* (leather workers), and *Ababaizi* (woodworkers). These occupational distinctions demonstrate the diversity of economic activities within Banyankore society and the interdependence of these groups in sustaining the community. This diversity was also reflected in the variety of musical genres performed in connection with different social occupations, social activities, ceremonies, and cultural occasions.
Although the Bairu and Bahima shared language and cultural practices, cattle ownership shaped social status and identity, influencing many aspects of life, including marriage arrangements (Roscoe, 1923).

Over time, the relationship between the *Bairu* and *Bahima* of *Ankole* has evolved from a hierarchical, cattle-based socio-political system to a more integrated one. The coexistence has been informed and shaped by education, socio-economic change, but also the abolition of Ankole kingdom that offered ground for equality, thereby changing the traditional political structures that had governed their relationship. Although my study focuses on the Bairu, some marriage practices and musical traditions are shared across Banyankore communities and therefore cut across the study population. Social organisation among the Banyankore is patrilineal, with descent, inheritance, and clan affiliation traced through the male line.
Marriage among the Banyankore is understood as a socially and culturally recognized union between a man and a woman that extends beyond the couple to involve their families and

wider kinship networks. Traditionally, marriage was preceded by approval of elders, family negotiations, and exchange of bride wealth, which symbolized the establishment of a relationship between the two families. Roscoe (1915) explains that Banyankore marriage was governed by clan and kinship rules, which involved family negotiations, marriage payments and communal ceremonies. He notes that relatives and friends participated in celebrations characterised by feasting, singing and dancing, demonstrating that marriage was a collective, social occasion rather than merely a union between two individuals. Mair (1969) observes that among the Banyankore, marriage was not perceived as a private union between two individuals but as a binding social contract between families and clans. This communal nature of marriage elevated its ritual importance and justified the elaborate ceremonies that accompanied it.

Natukwatsa Lovence, who was one of my research participants told me that marriage is creating an everlasting bond between two families, where the bride comes from and where the groom comes from. She asserted that when a girl gets married, she is born into her husband's family. Another research participant called Mugabi Edwin elaborated with the statements that are used in marriage negotiations at introductory stages. He said that *katerarume*, who is the middle man in these negotiations, seeks acceptance into the girl's family on behalf of the prospective groom, by requesting to be born into that family. These insights demonstrate that marriage serves as a significant institution for establishing and strengthening enduring social bonds and relationships between the two families.

Traditionally, readiness for marriage among the Banyankore was morally and socially defined rather than merely biological. Girls were considered fit for marriage after puberty and upon receiving domestic and moral instruction from female relatives, particularly paternal aunts, while boys were expected to demonstrate responsibility as heads of homes, cattle ownership, or productive capability (Roscoe, 1923). Marriage was highly valued as a marker of adulthood, respectability, and social legitimacy. Childbearing within marriage was central to the continuation of the lineage, and staying unmarried was socially discouraged.

Music is an important part of the marriage process of the Banyankore, as it accompanies key stages of the marriage and expresses the values, emotions, and relationships associated with

the union. Banyankore marriage music exists in various forms, including stories, folk songs, dances, recitations *(ebyevugo), omusiko*, *ekitaguriro*, *ebizino* (songs for women), *ebyeshongoro* (songs for men). Some of the marriage music includes songs like*: muhara wa mayombo* (Mayombo's daughter), *Reka nzinire omwereere omurungi* (let me dance for a beautiful child), and *Mwije tuhingire Kaitesi* (come, let's send-off Kaitesi) (Amanya, 2022).

Forms of marriage music among the Banyankore of Ntungamo include: *okuhingira* songs (give-away songs), instructional (didactic) marriage songs, *ebyevugo* (oral praise poetry in the marriage context), *ekitaguriro* (dance music) in marriage celebrations, contemporary marriage music, special tailored original compositions for the *Abagore* (bride and/or groom), *enshagarizi* music, among others. A detailed discussion of the Banyankore marriage music including the forms, functions, and performance contexts is presented in Chapter three. Banyankore musical traditions are predominantly vocal, characterised by call and response structures, repetitive melodic patterns and collective participation. Instruments such as *engoma* (drums), *omukuri* (end-blown flute), and various idiophones were used to support vocal performance. Marriage music among the Banyankore played a distinct function and symbolic role. Songs were performed at different stages of the marriage process, including courtship, bride introduction (*okweyanjura*) and present-day wedding celebrations. These songs served, instructional, celebratory and regulatory purposes. Nwezi (2003) argues that African music often functions as a pedagogical tool inclusive of moral instruction and social expectations within performance. In the Banyankore context, marriage songs communicated expectations regarding gender roles, respect for in-laws, fidelity, domestic responsibility and communal harmony.

Scholarly work on Ankole marriage music indicates that such songs were not randomly performed but were structurally and contextually organised. Amanya (2022) demonstrates that lyrical content, melodic contour and performance roles were carefully aligned with specific ritual moments. Songs employed metaphor, repetition and indirect language to convey culturally sensitive messages, particularly those directed at the bride, to guide and prepare her.

Despite their cultural significance, Banyankore marriage music traditions have been affected by social transformation. Agawu (2003) notes that colonialism, Christianity, formal education and globalisation significantly altered African Musical practices by reshaping performance contexts and value systems. In Ntungamo, these influences introduced church weddings, modern reception formats, and the widespread use of recorded music, which reduced reliance on traditional performers.

In contemporary times, marriage ceremonies increasingly reflect hybrid musical practices. While certain traditional songs, musical arrangements, and ritual sequences are retained, they are often performed alongside popular music genres or replaced by recorded music. Rwomushana (2024) observes that Runyankore marriage songs today reveal both continuity in thematic concerns and change in lyrical interpretation. Nevertheless, continuity remains evident in the persistence of symbolic functions, musical forms, and ritual contexts. Nettl (2005) argues that musical traditions are dynamic systems that adapt to social change rather than disappear. In Ntungamo, traditional marriage music continues to be recognised as a maker of cultural identity, even when performance styles and settings are modified. Thus, Banyankore marriage music in Ntungamo exists at the intersection of tradition and modernity, demonstrating both continuity in cultural meaning and change in musical structure and performance practice. Examining these dynamics provides insight into how indigenous music negotiates social transformation while sustaining its role within marriage as a key cultural institution.

1.3 Problem Statement

Marriage music among the Banyankore has traditionally played a central role in reinforcing cultural values, regulating social behaviour, and marking key stages of marriage rituals. Through specific songs, performance practices, and musical structures, marriage music historically functioned as a medium for cultural transmission within Banyankore society. However, in contemporary Ntungamo district, changing social conditions such as modernisation, urbanisation, formal education, religious influence, and the widespread use of recorded and popular music have significantly altered marriage ceremonies and their musical components.

While some traditional musical forms and symbolic functions appear to exist, others are being modified, reduced, or replaced; yet there is limited systematic documentation of how these changes affect the musical structure, performance context, and cultural meaning of Banyankore marriage music.

The lack of detailed scholarly analysis on the nature and extent of continuity and change in Banyankore marriage music-particularly in Ntungamo district- creates a gap in ethno musicological knowledge and poses a risk to the understanding and preservation of this important cultural heritage. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining how traditional marriage music among the Banyankore has been maintained, adapted, or transformed in contemporary practice, with specific attention to musical patterns, performance roles, and cultural significance.

1.4 Objectives

1.4.1 Main objective

To examine continuity and change in marriage music of the Banyankore of Ntungamo district in Western Uganda.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

1. To explore the types of music performed during marriage practices of the Banyankore of Ntungamo District in Western Uganda.

2. To examine the changes and continuities in Banyankore marriage music traditions over time.
3. To analyse the factors influencing continuity and change in the marriage music of the Banyankore of Ntungamo, western Uganda.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the types of music performed during marriage practices of the Banyankore of Ntungamo, Western Uganda?

2. Which changes and continuities are evident in the marriage music traditions of the Banyankore of Ntungamo?
3. What factors have influenced continuity and change in the marriage music of the Banyankore of Ntungamo district in western Uganda?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The primary beneficiaries will be the Banyankore community of Ntungamo district, particularly elders, cultural custodians, and traditional musicians. Their lived experiences, performances, and knowledge will form the primary data for the study, ensuring that the research reflects community perspectives and practices. This will contribute to the preservation of Banyankore cultural heritage by creating a record of marriage music practices, their meanings, and the changes they have undergone over time. The study will also recognize the important role of community members, especially elders, cultural custodians, and traditional musicians, in preserving and transmitting this knowledge to younger generations.

Academic beneficiaries will include students, researchers, and scholars in ethnomusicology, anthropology, and African studies, who will gain empirical data and localised analysis on continuity and change in indigenous marriage music. The study will also benefit educational institutions, as its findings can inform teaching materials, coursework, and further research on Ugandan traditional music and rituals.

Cultural and policy institutions, such as cultural centres, local governments, and heritage organisations will benefit from the study through evidence-based insights that can support cultural programming, documentation initiatives, and policy decisions aimed at safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

1.7 Scope of the Study

In this section, I explain the scope of the study, including geographical scope, content scope and time scope.

1.7.1 Geographical Scope

The study was conducted in Ntungamo district located in Western Uganda, within the traditional Ankole sub- region. Ntungamo district is predominantly inhabited by the Banyankore, and this provided an appropriate setting for examining marriage music within its indigenous cultural context. The district includes both rural and semi-urban communities, allowing the study to capture variations in marriage music practices across different social settings.

By focusing on Ntungamo district, the study was geographically limited to Kajara County, Nyabihoko Sub-County, and particularly in villages like Runoni, Rushenyi, Rukanga Central, Nyamitooma, Kitunga, and an exception of Itojo where I had to travel to meet a research participant. I chose these places because traditional Banyankore marriage practices are still observable there, but also, these places are experiencing contemporary influences such as modernisation, religious change, and exposure to popular music. This localised focus enabled an in-depth analysis of continuity and change in marriage music without overgeneralizing findings to all Banyankore communities in Western Uganda.

1.7.2 Content Scope

The content scope of the study focuses on the different types of Banyankore marriage music, their functions and performance contexts, the continuities and changes they have undergone over time, and the causes of these changes.

1.7.3 Time Scope

The study examined the continuity and change in Banyankore marriage music from 1900 to 2026. Primary data were collected through interviews and other fieldwork activities conducted between October 2025 and June 2026. The period from 1900 was selected to provide a historical basis for tracing changes in marriage music, while the study relied on oral accounts, documented sources, and contemporary observations to examine developments over time.

1.8 Ethical Considerations

My study was conducted with respect for the people and cultural practices of the Banyankore in Ntungamo district. Before collecting any information, I sought permission from local leaders and informants who took part in the study.

While conducting my study, research participants were informed about the purpose of the research and what their participation involves, and only those who agreed willingly were included.

The privacy of participants was respected. Names were not used in this study unless permission was granted, and information shared during interviews and discussions was treated with a lot of confidentiality.

Audio recordings, notes, and other research materials were kept safely and used only for academic purposes. The study was carried out in a way that does not disrupt marriage ceremonies or community activities. The researcher sought permission from relevant family members, and organisers before attending or collecting information during such events. Interviews and observations were scheduled at convenient times and were conducted without interfering with the proceedings, allowing participants to fully engage in the ceremonies and activities.

Lastly, I ensured honesty in the use of information by acknowledging all sources used in the study to avoid plagiarism. The findings have been presented truthfully and responsibly to contribute to knowledge about the continuity and change in marriage music of the Banyankore in Ntungamo district.

1.9 Literature Review

Literature review examines existing scholarly knowledge related to the study topic, thereby providing an understanding of what previous scholars Scholarly literature relevant to this study spans several interconnected areas, including ethnographic writings on the Banyankore of Western Uganda, studies on African marriage practices and rituals, and ethno musicological research on music in marriage contexts across different societies.

1.9.1 Scholarly writings on the Banyankore

Existing works have examined the historical background, social organization, and cultural values of the Banyankore, providing important insights into their way of life and institutions such as marriage. Roscoe (1923) provides an extensive ethnographic account of the Banyankore and their cultural and social organisation. He discusses Ankole as a country and describes the Banyankore in relation to the political organization, including the institution of the *Omugabe* and the rulers of Ankole. He further examines the organization of society through clans and social relationships, as well as religious beliefs and practices. Roscoe also gives a considerable attention to the economic life of the Banyankore, particularly pastoralism, cattle keeping, agriculture and various industries. Additionally, he discusses birth customs, marriage practices, illness, death and inheritance, warfare and hunting, and folklore in relation to social and cultural institutions.

Similarly, Oberg (1938) examines the social organization of the Banyankore, with particular attention to kinship and family relations. He discusses the organization of Banyankore society in relation to clans, descent, marriage and relationships between social groups, including the Bairu and Bahima. Oberg (1940) also examines the political organization of the kingdom of Ankole, including the institution of kingship and the systems of authority that governed society. He discusses the social relationship between the Bairu and the Bahima, noting that political power and cattle ownership were central to status and governance. In addition to the above, Mamdani (1996) discusses the Banyankore within a broader analysis of colonial and post-colonial governance in Uganda, focusing on how indirect rule shaped social and political relationships such as those in Ankole. He argues that colonial administration reinforced and restructured existing social hierarchies, particularly distinctions between the Bahima and the Bairu, by embedding them into systems of local authority and customary law. This process changed traditional institutions, including marriage and cultural practices, by redefining power, identity, and social roles. Although these studies offer valuable insights into Banyankore society, they do not examine marriage music particularly in local contexts such as Ntungamo district. This gap aligns with my study's objective to document and analyse marriage music forms and functions at the district level.

1.9.2 Studies on Marriage as a Social Institution in African Societies

African marriage has been widely studied as a social, economic, and ritual institution. Mair (1969) examines marriage as a central social institution in African societies and how it responds to social, economic, and cultural change. Her work focuses on the functions of marriage in regulating kinship, inheritance, gender roles, and social stability, while also examining the impact of colonialism, urbanisation, Christianity, and education on traditional marriage systems. Mair's (1969) work is comparative rather than ethnically specific, drawing examples from different African societies to show how marriage practices adapt over time while still retaining core social functions. Mair's work is very important to my study as she provides an important theoretical framework for understanding continuity and change in marriage practices. However, it does not examine music as part of marriage ceremonies, nor does it offer ethnographic detail from specific communities. My study will build from her framework to examine how marriage music among the Banyankore of Ntungamo reflects both continuity and change in response to social transformation.

Fortes (1978) explores marriage and family systems in African societies, emphasising that marriage rituals serve not only to unite individuals but also to communicate social values, moral expectations, and gender roles. He highlights how ceremonies are structured to reinforce the authority of elders, regulate behaviour, and ensure the continuity of social norms. While Fortes provides insight into the social and moral functions of marriage rituals, he does not explore how musical performance contributes to these functions or how they have changed over time, a gap my study will address.

1.9.3 Scholarship on Marriage Music (Scholarship on Music and Marriage)

Other studies have explored music and marriage in various African communities, highlighting the role of music in ritual performance, social regulation, and cultural continuity. Ethno musicological scholarship highlights music as a critical component of African rituals. Nketia (1974) emphasises that African music is both symbolic and functional, serving as a medium of communication, social regulation and cultural expression within communities. He highlights that ritual music conveys moral messages, reinforces social norms, and structures communal participation, illustrating how music is inseparable from social life. Similarly, Blacking (1973)

argues that music must be understood in its social and cultural contexts, emphasising that musical behaviour reflects the values, beliefs, and social structures of community.

Owisi (2018) examine the significance of music within the traditional marriage practices of the Isoko people of Nigeria. His study reveals that music is deeply integrated into the different stages of the marriage process and serves several functions, including entertainment, celebration, communication, moral instruction, and the transmission of cultural values. The study is closely related to my research because both recognize music as an important component of traditional marriage and as medium through which cultural knowledge, values, and social expectations are expressed and maintained. However, Owisi's study primarily focuses on the role and functions of music in marriage rites, leaving out how marriage music has continued, changed or been transformed over time or the factors responsible for these changes. My study addresses this gap.

Sanka, Yeboah and Bonku (2018)) examined traditional marriage and marriage songs among the Paasaala of Ghana, focusing on their cultural and social significance within the marriage ceremony. They demonstrate that marriage songs communicate advice, values and expectations concerning marriage and are performed together with drumming, dancing and other forms of verbal expression. Their study therefore presents marriage music as an important means of social education and cultural transmission. However, their study pays greater attention to the general social and cultural functions of marriage songs that to how these functions are maintained or transformed over different historical periods. My study builds on this perspective by examining how the functions and meanings of Banyankore marriage music have continued or changed from 1900 to 2026.

Onadipe-Shalom (2024) investigated Yoruba traditional marriage songs in Nigeria and examined the sociocultural meanings communicated through the songs. The study identifies historical references, prayers, humour and information about the bride and the groom as important elements of the songs. It also demonstrates that changes in traditional marriage ceremony have influenced the roles of performers and the manner in which performances are presented. Although the study provides valuable insight into the sociocultural meanings of Yoruba marriage songs, it does not provide a long-term historical examination of the musical characteristics that have remained continuous or those that have been changed. My study extends this area of

scholarship by examining changes and continuities in the types and performance practices of Banyankore marriage music over an extended historical period.

Ndione (1993) examined ceremonial songs among the Lebu of Senegal, particularly the *woyi ceet*, which are associated with the movement of the bride from her maternal home to her marital one. This study shows how music accompanies and gives meaning to the bride's transition into marriage and highlights the involvement of different members of the community in the performance. Whereas this study provides an important understanding of the relationship between music and the social transition of the bride, the study gives limited attention to the musical changes that may occur as marriage practices and social conditions transform and my study addresses this gap.

Eeugwu, Isaac and Onokere (2025) investigated the influence of technology and globalization on GbagyiNge-Nge marriage music in Nigeria. Their findings indicate that technological development and contact with other musical cultures have influenced performance styles, lyrical content and modes of presentation, while technology has also created opportunities for recording and wider dissemination of traditional music. Their study is important in demonstrating that changes in traditional marriage music can be influenced by forces outside the musical tradition itself. However, the study mainly focuses on technology and globalization and it gives less attention to the wider combination of social; and economic factors that may influence changes in marriage music, a gap that my research addresses.

Ajibade (2005) examines the role of performance in Yoruba nuptial songs in Nigeria, with particular attention to women's participation ad expression. He demonstrates that nuptial songs provide women with a socially acceptable space to express ideas about sexuality, marriage and relationships through humour, eroticism and satire. The study therefore presents marriage songs as a means of social commentary rather than merely entertainment during wedding ceremonies. Ajibade also notes that the declining performance of some satirical nuptial songs, particularly those associated with women, indicating that aspects of traditional marriage performance can change or become less frequently practiced. This work is relevant to my study because it provides a basis for examining the musical practices that may have declined over time in the Banyankore marriage music.

1.9.4 Scholarly works on the Music of the Banyankore

Scholarly literature on Banyankore marriage music has examined various aspects of the musical traditions of the Ankole region, including musical instruments, songs, dances, performance practices, musical terminology, transmission, gender roles, and other social contexts in which music is performed.

Gendered roles in Banyankore marriage music have been discussed by several scholars. Amanya (2022) examines the gendered dimensions of the Banyankore marriage music, highlighting how songs function as a means of social instruction and assertion of cultural roles. Her study shows that women often lead songs that instruct and advise the bride on domestic and social responsibilities while men dominate songs that praise the groom's family, cattle wealth, and social status. These performances are deeply embedded in communal life, reflecting both social roles and expectations. While Amanya provides valuable insight into the symbolic and performative roles of gender in marriage music, her work gives limited attention to the musical structure of these songs and does not analyse how performance practices have changed over time. My study will capitalise on this information to fill the gap.

Roscoe (1923) is in total agreement with Amanya's findings. Our works are related in a way that we focus 0on the same group of people, the Banyankore. However, my work will be specific to continuity and change in marriage music of the Banyankore of Ntungamo district, whereas theirs focused more on gender roles articulated in the marriage music.

Lucky (2019) observes that marriage songs among the Banyankore traditionally reinforced patriarchal gender roles, portraying men as authoritative, responsible for providing for the family, and occupying central positions in ceremonies, while women are depicted as submissive, supportive, and responsible for domestic duties. She notes that these songs serve as tools for socialising and instructing community members on expected behaviours, praising men for bravery or wealth and instructing women on loyalty and household management. She writes that in performance, men lead songs and play key instruments, whereas women provide backing vocals, danced and rhythmic support, reflecting broader societal hierarchies. Lucky also highlights that modern influences such as education, urbanization, religious teachings, and

exposure to new media are gradually reshaping these portrayals. She argues that changes as such give women more visible and respected roles in both lyrics and performance.

In addition to this, Rwomushana (2024) finds that many Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs continue to show men authoritative figures and women as submissive, obedient, and positioned within domestic roles, thereby reinforcing patriarchal social structures. However, she also observes that some performances create spaces where women subtly contest male dominance through lyrical expression, satire and vocal assertiveness, indicating emerging shifts in gender relations.

Furthermore, Nahurira (2022) navigates how musical and verbal performance practices enact and reflect gender roles within community rituals, demonstrating that music is a vehicle for social instruction and identity formation. She observes that in the performance of *Ebyeevugo*, men and women occupy distinct roles, with men leading recitations and that they assert authority through vocal expression, while women frequently engage in supportive or responsive roles. She asserts the idea of change in the contemporary performances as some women adopt more assertive performance roles and reinterpret traditional texts in ways that challenge earlier gendered expectations.

Keitetsi (2024) examines then role of traditional folk songs in contemporary Banyankore society, focusing on their relevance among young people. Her analysis addresses performance structure, gender roles, performance contexts, and the processes of continuity and change within the tradition. She observes that traditional folk songs have become less relevant to many young people, partly because younger generations possess limited knowledge of the repertoire. Her findings further link changes in the composition and perception of these songs to broader social influences, including education, religion, and modernity. She also identifies shifts in participation, particularly regarding gender, which shows that contemporary performance practices may differ from those associated with earlier traditions. Keitetsi's work informs mine because it shows that Banyankore musical traditions are dynamic and subject to transformation in response to changes in the wider environment. However, her study focuses on traditional folk songs only. My study builds on her understanding of musical change by focusing on marriage

music and examining its continuities, transformations and the factors influencing them in Ntungamo district.

Still on Banyankore music, komugisha (2019) focuses on traditional marriage songs performed during give away ceremonies, introduction ceremonies and weddings. Her work shows that marriage songs are not merely performed for entertainment, but derive their significance from the way performance brings together the style, themes, and values contained in the songs. Through these performances, marriage music becomes part of the communication and expression of cultural values within the marriage ceremony. An important observation in her work is that traditional marriage songs had become less frequently performed, which she associates with a weakening of their cultural value. Nevertheless, she emphasizes that the songs that remain in practice continue to have cultural impact. Komigisha consequently stresses the importance of preserving these songs so that their performance practices and cultural meanings remain available to the community.

Van Thiel (1977) makes an important documentation and understanding of the musical traditions of Ankole. His work examines musical instruments, songs, and dances, while also considering the cultural and linguistic context within these musical practices exist. Thiel attempts to understand and classify Ankole musical instruments using indigenous concepts, particularly the verbs used by the Banyankore to describe different techniques of producing sound. His approach is important because it recognizes that the Banyankore possess their own ways of understanding and organizing musical practices, and these should be considered when studying Banyankore marriage music. His work provides evidence that Ankole musical practices are diverse and that particular instruments and performance practices are associated with different communities and contexts. Thiel's work, however, addresses the musical traditions of Ankole broadly and does not specifically examine marriage music, neither does it trace the historical transformation of marriage songs and their performance. My study stems on his work to address the gap.

1.9.6 Continuity and Change in Indigenous Music Practices

Studies on continuity and change in traditional music practices show that African musical traditions adapt while retaining core features. Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2005) examines the relationship between music, dance and gender among the Baganda. She argues that Baakisimba

is not simply a form of entertainment or a reflection of existing culture, but also participates in constructing social relationships and ideas about gender. Her analysis shows that performance roles were traditionally divided according to gender, with men mainly associated with drumming while women were associated with dancing. The drums themselves were understood through gendered meanings, with particular drums being associated with male and female identities. She further explains that restrictions placed in women's access to drums were connected to wider beliefs about women's bodies, sexuality, fertility and their expected position I society. Nannyonga-Tamusuza found that such restrictions were not merely musical rules but ways through which male authority and power could be maintained. Her findings however, show that these gender boundaries were not fixed and that women increasingly took up drumming in contexts such as schools, churches and some cultural performances. Men also occasionally performed the dance. Her work relates to my study by showing how changes in social roles can influence musical practices. However, her study focuses on Baganda music and dance rather than Banyankore marriage music. My study bridges the gap by examining how social changes have shaped the continuity and transformation of Banyankore marriage music.

1.9.7 Other scholarly perspectives on Marriage and Musical Change

Ntozi and Kabera's (1988) study provides foundational insight into continuity and change in matrimonial systems among the Banyankore, detailing how age at marriage, bride wealth customs, and marriage types have historically shaped social life in the region. Their demographic analysis shows that traditional marriage institutions such as bride wealth and polygamy have persisted over time, even as socio-economic forces and patterns like urbanisation and fertility change and alter how marriage occurs. This work provides essential contextual understanding of marriage practices among the Banyankore, including age at marriage and this information is very crucial in understanding my work. However, this account gives limited attention to how marriage music has been maintained, modified, or replaced over time. My study addresses this gap by examining the continuity and change in Banyankore marriage music.

Facci and Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2008) examine how the music of the Bakonzo people of the Rwenzori Mountains has experienced both continuity and change between 1906 and 2006, providing a useful comparative framework for understanding the marriage music of the

Banyankore and how it has evolved. Their study shows that while many core performance practices, instrument types, musical structures, and cultural meanings have been preserved across generations, significant changes have occurred due to social, political, and cultural influences such as the spread of Christianity, Western education, and shifting ritual contexts. They document how traditional repertoires, including vocal forms and instruments like drums *(engoma),* flutes *(eluma),* and *endara* (xylophones), retain symbolic and ritual functions, even as participation, presentation, and contexts of performance adapt under contemporary pressures. The works mentioned above, however, do not specifically examine continuity and change of Banyankore marriage music. My study addresses this gap by examining the continuities, changes, and factors that have shaped Banyankore marriage music in Ntungamo district.

1.10 Methodology

1.10.1 Research Design and Approach

My research used a qualitative research design to develop an in-depth understanding of Banyankore marriage music within its context. This design was appropriate because the study examined participants' interpretations, experiences and cultural knowledge and these dimensions cannot be adequately captured through qualitative measures alone. Because marriage music is embedded in social relationships, cultural values, ritual practices, historical experiences and collective meanings, the qualitative approach enabled me to investigate how it is performed experienced and understood within the ceremonies and social settings. Drawing on the perspectives of the research participants, my study examined the types of marriage music, continuities and changes, together with the factors that shape them.

1.10.2 Study Population and Sample

The study population included Banyankore community members in Ntungamo district, particularly four elders, two married couples, eight cultural music performers, three cultural custodians, and one youth who had knowledge, experience, or involvement in Banyankore marriage music and practices. My family members, who had familiarity with the Banyankore community and its cultural practices around Rukanga and the neighbouring villages helped the researcher in identifying potential participants who were considered knowledgeable and

experienced in Banyankore marriage customs, traditions, and the music associated with marriage ceremonies. This assistance facilitated the purposive selection of participants who possessed relevant cultural knowledge and practical experience necessary for the study. My research participants were later assessed based on their direct involvement with knowledge about Banyankore marriage ceremonies and marriage music, their experience within the community, and their ability to provide information on both traditional and contemporary practices.

1.10.3 Data Collection Methods

The study used qualitative methods to collect reliable and relevant information in line with the study objectives. These methods provided information on Banyankore marriage music and its continuity and change and they are discussed below.

1.10.4 Interviews

Interviews were used as a primary data collection method to obtain detailed information from participants concerning Banyankore marriage music, its practices, meanings, continuities and changes. The study mainly employed semi- structures interviews, guided by an interview guide containing questions related to the types of marriage music, occasions on which it is performed, its functions, musical characteristics, and changes that have happened over time. The semi-structures nature of the interviews allowed me to ask predetermined questions while also probing for further information based on participants' responses. The interviews were largely conducted in a formal manner, although informal conversations were held where necessary to clarify information and obtain additional insights. I interviewed twenty participants, comprising of elders, traditional musicians, married couples and cultural custodians who were considered knowledgeable about Banyankore marriage traditions and music.

1.10.5 Participant Observation

My study employed both non-participant and participant observation to document Banyankore marriage music within its natural performance context in Ntungamo District. Through non-participant observation, I observed two marriage ceremonies, that is, Mr. Mugabi Edwin and Mrs. Natukwatsa Lovence Mugabi on 15th August, 2025, and Mr. Tindyeebwa Gabriel and Mrs. Nowomugisha Sarah Tindyeebwa on 31th December, 2025. During the Tindyeebwa's ceremony, I

participated alongside a performing troupe by joining in singing and performing on stage, while also observing the different stages of the wedding, the songs performed, and the roles of different participants. This participation enabled me to experience the performance of Banyankore marriage music form within the ceremony while simultaneously observing its contemporary practices and changes.

1.10.6 Mass Media

Mass media supported the study by providing additional information on Banyankore marriage practices and music, particularly through social media content (particularly tiktok and youtube), and selected Monitor articles. This information helped to complement and compare the data obtained from other sources.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

The study faced several limitations as discussed below;

First, the short time frame of one year for fieldwork limited the number of marriage ceremonies observed, which affected the breadth of performance variations documented. This period also covers study time

Second, reliance on oral accounts from elders and musicians was affected by memory recall challenges, particularly when describing past musical practices, potentially influencing the accuracy of musical comparisons.

Third, access to some marriage ceremonies and recordings was restricted due to cultural sensitivity and privacy concerns. These include: *okweyanjura* (introduction) ceremony, which every person that I approached expressed discomfort when I suggested allowing me to attend. This limited opportunities for observation and documentation.

Additionally, variations in individual interpretations of music and performance introduced subjectivity. For example, accounts of the traditional marriage process of the Banyankore and the music involved differed from one research participant to another, despite efforts to cross-check data through interviews, observations, and media analysis.

1.12 Data Analysis

The data collected through interviews, participant observation and mass media were analysed using thematic, musical and comparative analysis. Interview responses and field notes were first organized and reviewed to identify recurring ideas and patterns relating to Banyankore marriage music. Thematic analysis involved coding similar responses and grouping them into themes according to the study objectives, such as the types of marriage music, continuities and changes, and the factors responsible. Musical analysis was used to examine selected marriage songs in terms of their rhythm, melody, text, performance style and other relevant musical elements. Comparative analysis was used to identify similarities and differences between traditional and contemporary forms of Banyankore marriage music, particularly in relation to performance practices and musical characteristics. Information from interviews, participant observation, and documentary and media sources was compared and cross-checked through triangulation to establish consistency and enhance the credibility of the findings.

CHAPTER TWO: THE TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE PROCESS OF THE BANYANKORE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines marriage among the Banyankore, with particular attention to the traditional marriage process and the cultural practices associated with it. It begins by outlining the different forms of marriage practiced among the Banyankore and then focuses on the traditional marriage process, describing its major sages and the roles played by family members, elders, and other participants. The chapter also discusses the songs and performances associated with the different stages as these provide an important part of the cultural expression of marriage. Understanding these practices provides a basis for examining the continuity and changes that have occurred in Banyankore marriage music over time, which is the main concern of this study.

Marriage is a very important institution among the Banyankore. The end goal in life of any society member was/is to get married/marry and have children. Everyone desires to have a successful marriage. Winnie Namweeta, a married woman, and one of my research participants told me that Banyankore fear a person who has never married/been married. She said that Banyankore fear that the ghost of such a person is very ruthless. She echoed that Banyankore bury such a person with a banana trunk when they die as a proxy for their partner whom they were supposed to have while they were alive (Interview, Nyamitooma, January 4th, 2026). This belief shows the deep cultural importance attached to marriage in traditional Banyankore society, where marriage was regarded as an essential stage of social life, to the extent that dying unmarried was associated with spiritual and social consequences.

There are three major types of marriage among the Banyankore today, and these include the customary, church, and government marriage. My study will focus on the customary type. However, before the 1990s, when the influence of Christianity, formal education, urbanisation, and other changing social practices had become more pronounced, Banyankore had different ways and forms that were acceptable in society within which one could obtain a wife. It should be noted that Banyankore practised *okukiriza.* With *okukiriza,* a girl was forcefully carried by a man or a group of men as she attended to her chores. She was taken to a man's home, who raped her, since he had to make sure that he had slept with her, and after she had been at his place for a period of about four days, the family of the boy then reported themselves to the family of the

girl, notifying them that they had their daughter. This called for a fine from the family of the boy, and thereafter, her bride price was discussed, and she was brought back home and taken officially. Since the girl had already lost her virginity, she stayed at the man's place most of the time and made a family. This type of marriage existed up until around the early 2000s. There were many cases of girls who were "lifted" as they got back from school in the 1980s and 90s. Before that, they were lifted as they came back from the well to fetch water, as they grazed animals, as they worked in gardens and sometimes as they slept at home. One informant of mine told me that sometimes, the process was aided by trusted people like aunties or family friends, who came up with excuses asking the girl to escort them and the men who were already notified quickly took the girl away. There are some families in my home area where some women made families through this method. Winnie Namweeta, a married woman and one of my research participants told me that *okukiriza* was practiced when the man (family of the man) anticipated rejection from the girl or her family through the usual marriage procedures (interview, January 4th, 2026, Nyamitooma). In other cases, a boy would smear a girl with cow ghee as a mark to show that he wants her. She was supposed to move to the family of the boy before the ghee melted. This was another way of finding partners.

2.1 Traditional marriage process of the Banyankore

According to the elderly research participants, the traditional Banyankore marriage process was very long in the pre-colonial and early colonial period, often extending for about two years or more. However, with the increasing influence of Christianity, formal education, urbanization, and modern forms of marriage, the process gradually became shorter and less elaborate.

The process had numerous stages including: *okuriima, okweyanjura, okuha engaro, okucwa ebintu, okucheta ente, okujuga, okukurata ente, okuhuuta*, *okurariira, okuhingira, okwarama, okukoza omumahega,* and *okwiiha ahamuhanda.* There were special characters who took on special roles in spite of the fact that the community was highly engaged at every stage. These special people include: *katerarume* (the go-between), the father of the boy intending to marry, the father of the girl intending to marry, and the paternal aunt of the girl to be married, her

uncles, fathers[1]. At different stages of this marriage process, different types of music and dance were performed to add colour to the ceremony, but also to inform, warn, educate, and express emotion.

2.2 Okuriima

Okuriima is an investigative process within which the Banyankore used to understand and appreciate one's family if they had an intention of forming a marriage bond with that family. The marriage process started with identifying the girl that was to be married. A girl was usually identified by the father of the boy or a family friend to the boy's family who had seen the girl in places like the garden or at a party. In most cases, the father of the boy paid a courtesy visit (s) to the girl's home to check the cleanliness of the home, their conduct towards a stranger, how they talked, their food capacity, their clan, totem, and the conduct of the mother, among others. In other cases, he sent his friends to help him in this investigation. His family then got a woman, whom they called *Omuhara,* from the village of the girl to get them some information. O*muhara* was the name given to a woman who was born and raised in the community of one of the families involved in a marriage inquiry and had married into the community of the other family, where she served as a source of information about the family and its way of life. She played a very central role in sourcing information about the family of the girl and delivered it to the family of the boy. However, in other contexts, the Banyankore use the word *omuhara* to mean someone's daughter or to refer to the girl child.

When the father of the boy fell in love with the family of the girl, he got a middle man called *Kateerarume/kyebembera* to mediate between the impending marriage negotiations. All my informants asserted that they had to first fall in love with the family of the woman, particularly her mother, and then they could express their intention to marry a daughter of that family. The word *Orume* means morning dew. *Okuteera* means beating. *Katerarume*[2] therefore means the

[1] Among the Banyankore, the term fathers refers collectively to the senior male members of the family, particularly the groom's uncles and grandfathers, who traditionally participate in and guide marriage negotiations.

[2] *Kateerarume* refers to a person chosen to represent the boy's family during the marriage process. He goes ahead of the boy's family to introduce their intention to the girl's family and subsequently presides over the negotiations that follow. As the principal spokesperson for the boy's family, the *Kateerarume* communicates their intentions, and guides the discussions on their behalf. The term is derived from

one who clears the dew, paving a way for the old man, the groom's father. It was very pertinent that this person knows both families. He was sent to the home of the girl's father to break the news that a certain family was interested in their daughter. The father of the girl gave *Katerarume* a given date when the father of the boy could pay his family a visit. Until, no performance was made as part of the traditional marriage process. During my field work, I found out that families still make research about each other, though it is no longer widespread. This is partly because young people choose their partners and may have already lived together for some time before involving their families, leaving the parents and relatives with limited influence of the decision to marry. Consequently, no recent cases were reported during the study in which information obtained through *okuriima* led to the termination of a marriage arrangement.

2.3 *Okweyanjura* (Introduction)

Okweyanjura, meaning introduction, was an important stage in the traditional Banyankore marriage process. At this stage, the groom's family, accompanied by a few uncles and family friends, visited the bride's family to formally introduce the intention to marry the girl to her father and other members of her family. The team brought at least two pots of locally brewed beer, and after the drinking was done, the father of the girl asked them what had brought them. The team led by the father of the boy said that they were requesting to be born in that family. This was the statement used to mean that they would love to marry a daughter of that family. Many informants, including Rwangyezi Steven, a custodian of culture and one of my research participants told me that the conversation went as such:

> Father of the girl: "what has brought you here, my beloved ones?"
>
> Representative of the boy's family: "we have come seeking to be born into your family."
>
> Father of the girl: "but you are already grown men. How can we give birth to grown men?"
>
> Representative of the boy's family: "we have come to ask for the hand of your daughter (name) in marriage."
>
> (interview ,Itojo 13th February, 2026)

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okuteera orume, literally meaning "clearing the morning dew", which reflects his role in preparing the way for the elders of the boy's family.

The father of the girl then dismissed the meeting and told the other party that their matter would be looked into and that they would be notified about the conclusion later on. The team went back home. The family of the girl also got their *omuhara* in the home area of the boy, to give them information about that family. Thorough consultations and investigations were made to ensure that the family was worth sending their daughter into. There were certain vices that the families feared to bring into their homes. These include: night dancing, theft, poor sanitation, witchcraft, laziness, poor relations with neighbours, and drunkardness among others.

2.4 *Okuha Engaro* (Giving a Hand) and the First Performance

Okuha engaro, meaning "giving a hand" was a significant stage in the traditional Banyankore marriage process, marking the formal expression of agreement between the two families to proceed with the marriage. When it was established that the family was okay with the groom's family, the middleman was told to notify the family of the boy that they could come back. On this special visit, the number of people from the boy's family was bigger than that of their first visit. Every meeting commenced with drinking beer that was brought by the family of the boy. If, after making some consultations, the family of the boy was deemed unfit to send their daughter to, the family of the girl would then refund the locally brewed beer. When it was found fit for their girl, the father of the boy was then given a chance to introduce himself. This introduction included details of the family, background, tribe, clan, totem, and work, among others. After this introduction, the father of the boy then performed *ekyevugo.*

Ekyevugo is a poetic praise song of the Banyankore performed in a recitative style. The process of performing *ekyevugo* is called *okwevuga*. In this performance, the father of the boy talked about his clan, totem, family background and achievements. After his performance was approved by the father of the girl by giving him a hand, the mothers[3] of the girl, who all this while had been seated in the *omureere*, made an ululation called *empundu*. *Omureere* was the room after the main sitting room and it is where the women sat. When *empundu* was sounded, the men who were seated in the *omwiriiro* (eating place) were happy. This was because it was a sign that the women concurred with the *ekyevugo*, and agreed to give their daughter to that family. If at all the

[3] The mothers of the bride include her biological mother, aunties, both paternal and maternal, and the elderly women especially her grandmothers and grand aunties.

man lied or in cases where the mothers disagreed with the idea of giving their daughter to that family, they would remain quiet. Rwangyezi told me that

"...In extreme cases, they would tell their daughter, who all this time was seated in her room called *entarure*, to go through the men and move out. If she did, this was the end of the marriage process." (Interview, Itojo, 13th February, 2026).

If the bride to be walked through the men and moved out, it was called *okubenga.* In the field, I found out that this stage is practiced in contemporary Banyankore marriages disguised as *okweyanjura* (introduction). The *okuha engaro* stage concluded with the two families agreeing to proceed with the marriage arrangements, after which a date was set for the negotiation of the bride wealth.

2.5 *Okucwa Ebintu* (Bride Price Negotiations)

Okucwa ebintu, meaning the negotiation of bride wealth, was another important stage in the traditional Banyankore marriage process. At this stage, representatives of the two families met to discuss and agree on the bride wealth to be given by the boy's family before the marriage could proceed. The father of the boy paid another visit to the family of the girl on a day that is communicated by the family of the bride. He came with male elders in his clan, his brothers, and some of his friends. The number from the boy's family on this day was bigger than that of the previous visit. However, for every meeting that was organised, the women (mothers) followed the conversation as they sat in the o*mureere*. Mary Rweriisa, who was a married woman told and one of my research informants told me that the house was designed in such a way that there were two sitting rooms, *eiriro* (where the men sat), and *omurere* (where the women sat) (interview, 3rd February, 2026, Runoni). The wall between the two rooms had a hole called *endorero,* where the women peeped through to see who was causing trouble. This enabled them to identify individuals who were aggressive, disrespectful, or disruptive during the negotiations, despite not involved in the discussions. On this visit, the two families made negotiations about the things that the girl of the family needed. (According to my elderly research participants, in pre-colonial period, bride wealth could comprise of a variety of items, including: goats, sheep, cows, hoes, and the skin of the *omutooma,* (bark-cloth fig) tree among others. However, with the increasing value attached to the long-horned cattle, cattle gradually became the principal form of bride

wealth, and other items were nolonger commonly accepted as part of the bride wealth. The girl's family held a stronger bargaining position during the negotiations and therefore had greater influence over the decisions concerning the marriage).

When a consensus was reached, a date was set for the family of the girl to move to the boy's family and select the cattle. All of my informants said that the act of negotiating bride wealth was not a trade transaction. Rwangyezi argued that during trade, goods once sold are not returnable and this was not the case with bride wealth. He said that,

> *…if for any reason, the two became incompatible, the man was supposed to bring back the woman to her father. Upon agreement that the marriage could not go on, the father of the girl would refund the cows...they give it back to you, in its entirety* (Interview, 13th February, 2026, Itojo).

To effect this, the cows offered to the father of the girl had to have a lineage, and they could not be used or sold before they gave birth. It was the offspring that were used by the family. Bride wealth, therefore, was an attempt to console the family of the girl for their impending loss. Nothing could add up, in terms of value, to the girl's place in her family. As they negotiated the bride wealth, they considered a gift for the aunt of the girl, and she usually asked for what she wanted. In contemporary practices, the stage remains significant, although bride wealth negotiations may involve monetary payments in place of cattle. One of the introduction ceremonies I attended combined the formal introduction of the couple with the negotiation of bride wealth between the families.

2.6 *Okucheta Ente* (Selection of the Cows)

Okucheta means to select. *Okucheta ente,* therefore, means to select cows. The family of the girl moved to the family of the boy to select the cows they wanted for dowry. During this stage, the girl's father, accompanied by her paternal uncles and other senior male relatives from her family, visited the boy's family to select the cattle agreed upon as bridewealth. They wanted to see whether the cattle were young, malnourished, or indeed fit for dowry. They chose special colours *(ebiranga),* according to their preference. Tinkamanyire told me that the typical Bairu only gave two cows as bride wealth, which is one cow and a young bull (interview, January 5th, 2026,

Rushenyi). All my informants told me that this stage of marriage has been lost because people get married from far off places unlike in the past when families were in the same vicinity.

2.7 *Okujuga* (Bringing Dowry)

Okujuga is a word that Banyankore use to mean bringing dowry to the girl's home. It is also used to mean the sound of a cow among the same people. In this case, however, the first interpretation holds more meaning for this study. Different research participants had varying perceptions about this stage of marriage. To some, like Winnie Namweeta, a married woman and one of my research participants, the father of the girl left with the cows after the *okucheta* was done, and upon arrival at home, they made fire in the compound to welcome the cows, and then they were put with the other cows (Interview, Nyamitooma, 4th January, 2026). According to others like Mary Rweriisa, told me that the father of the girl made a selection and went back home. On another appointed date, the father of the girl came with a bigger number to the boy's home and took their cows and this was called *okujuga.* (Interview, Runoni, 3rd February, 2026). This stage marked the beginning of competitive performances. Dances and *ebyevugo* were performed in both families. These dances include *ruyomba, enjogyera,* and *ebyeevugo*. The participants were men and women from the girl's family together with the people that came from the boy's family escorting the father of the boy. From both accounts, however, upon arrival at the girl's home, the cows were welcomed with a fire that was lit in the compound at the home of the girl. Alongside the cows for bride wealth, the family of the boy considered a gift for the grandmother, the uncle, and the aunt of the girl. The uncle and the grandmother usually got a goat, but the aunt got a cow. When the bride wealth was brought, it was clear that the girl was leaving the home. Peninah Tinkamanyire, an elder and one of my research informants told me that the family of the boy got a boy called *mafuka* who brought a hoe to the family of the girl to do what the Banyankore call *Okushutika* (Interview, Rushenyi, 5th January, 2026). *Okushutika* is a term used to mean the commencement of the *okwarama* period. This was a time when the girl was cut off from any work, and she had to stay in her room called *entarure,* mostly weaving baskets. On many occasions, the brothers of the girl fought *mafuka* trying to deter him from delivering the hoe to their home. Rweriisa told me that the arrival of the hoe was another strong signal that the girl was now only a visitor in her father's home, and this is why the brothers

profusely fought the *mafuka* (interview, 3rd February, 2026, Rushenyi). *Okujuga* is still practiced till date among the Banyankore.

2.8 Okukurata Ente

Okukurata ente was a ceremony held at the bride's family after the delivery of the bridewealth. Depending on the capacity of the homes, a party was staged at the family of the girl, days after the *okujuga.* This ceremony was called *okukurata ente* (following the cows) or *okuriira ente* (eating for the cows) among other Banyankore. There was a lot of merry-making on this day. People performed *ebyevugo, ebizino, ebitaguriro, enjogyera* among other performances.

2.9 Okuhuuta

Okuhuuta was a customary social practice that formed part of the marriage arrangements, involving the sharing of drinks between the families of the bride and groom. It is nolonger practiced among these people. *Okuhuuta* in Runyankore means drinking. Following the *okujuga*, after the groom's family had fulfilled the bride-wealth requirements, they would repeatedly request to take the bride to be to their home. However, the bride's family could delay her departure by stipulating a number of times on which the two families would share beer together. Nathan Rweriisa, an elder, but also one of my informants told me that this provided an opportunity for the families to strengthen their relationship, become better acquainted, and allow the bride's family time to prepare her for the transition to her marital home (Interview, February 3rd, 2026, Runoni).

On each day of *okuhuuta*, the family of the boy carried at least two pots of locally brewed beer, usually called *Tonto,* to the girl's home and the family of the girl prepared food for them. Every visit after *okucheta* (selection of the cows) was characterized by *okwevuga*, *okutagurira,* and *okujogyera*. The host family started the performance and this was partly tied to the fact that pots were the main source of rhythm. The visiting family could not move with these pots since transportation was by foot, but rather they were to be found at the host's place. During this time, the two families are still studying each other and the impending marriage can still stop at this stage. This is why there was a longer period even after the bride wealth was given. According to Nathan Rweriisa, another reason for making this period longer, was because the girl was still young and they were buying time so that she could become of age (February 3rd, 2026, Runoni).

Her mothers[4] therefore started educating her as a wife in the making. In Ankole traditionally, a girl was spotted and prepared for marriage as early as when her breasts started growing. According to Mwamwenda (2002), among the Banyankore, the emergence of breasts signified the onset of puberty and prompted parents to place girls under stricter supervision. This was to preserve their chastity in preparation for marriage. Mwamwenda further notes that menarche was an important milestone, and mothers could even conceal its occurance if they wished to delay their daughter's marriage. The families that had boys did not want to miss a chance at marrying a well behaved, hardworking girl from a reputable family. They therefore expressed their interest in wanting to marry that family's girl as soon as she started puberty. This partly explains why the marriage process took a period of two years and sometimes more.

After the cows had been received, the aunt of the girl and her other mothers started making baskets, particularly a special basket called *kanyantwarire*. This is a large ceremonial basket traditionally woven by the bride to be with the assistance of women in her family as part of her preparation for marriage. This basket had to be very big, in fact many of my research participants reported multiple times that this basket e It was gifted to the girl later on when her family found her in her new home at the event called *okwiiha ahamuhanda*. They prepared other baskets of different shapes like *ebitemere*, and *ebyiibo*, alongside other gifts like *ebisisi, rukomyo, engyemeko,* and *enkyeka* among others, which were to be given to the girl as gifts (*emihingizo*). The primary role of *ekiibo* among the Banyankore is to hold mingled millet bread that is ready to be eaten.

Figure 1: A photograph of *Ekiibo* (basket)



Photograph taken by researcher during field work in Ntungamo, January, 2026

Figure 2: A photograph of *Kanyantwarire*



Photograph taken by the researcher during field word in Ntungamo, January, 2026

Figure 3: A Photograph of *Ekitemere*



Photograph taken by the researcher during field work in Ntungamo, February, 2026

Banyankore use *ekitemere* as a container to keep their things, especially foodstuffs like millet.

On the final round of *okuhuuta,* the family of the boy requested to have their wife. A day was agreed upon when this family could cut bananas for making beer. This meant that a week later, they could come for their wife because the beer-making process took seven days. Before colonialism, Banyankore had their own framework for the calendar. Days were called *embu* (sing. for *orubu*); the seventh day, which marked a week, was called *omwijuzo/omwijuza* (sing for *emyijuzo/emyijuza*). They determined therefore that after four weeks (*emyijuzo ena*), it was a month. They had their own understanding of months[5] also based on weather seasons. The Nkore calendar[6] started in September *(Nyakanga),* a month for taking seeds out for planting because it is characterised by heavy rains. The Banyankore have a saying that *nyakanga, eyanga embibo omunju. Okwanga* means to hate or to refuse. The statement therefore means that *Nyakanga* hates seeds in the house. The choice of the date depended on how much time it would take both families to prepare and organise the party, the menstrual cycle of the girl, the harvesting season, and the actual weather.

Figure 4: A photograph of *Engyemeko* and *Rukomyo*



Photograph taken by researcher during field work in Ntungamo, February, 2026

[6] The Nkore calendar went as such: *Nyakanga,* also known as *kicuransi, Kamena, Kashwa, Museenene, Muzimbeezi, Biruuru, Kaatambuga, Katumba, Nyaikoma, Kyabahezi, Kahingo, Nyairurwe.* The Nkore calendar starts with *Nyakanga* which is August and ends in July which is *Nyairurwe.* This arrangement is in sync with the planting seasons.

The *engyemeko* was a pot used by Banyankore women to hold boiled water for personal hygiene. *Rukomyo* on the other side was used to hold perfumes whose fragrance diffused throughput the bedroom, creating a pleasant and fresh smelling environment.

2.10 *Okurariira/Okwarama (*Resting Period)

The days leading up to the girl's give away were marked by a period of rest and preparation for the bride, during which she was cared for by her family and visited homes within her community. On these visits, she gathered girls in every family that she went to. She was given gifts wherever she went, and these became part of her *emihingyizo* (give-away gifts), which she went to her new home with. Mothers in these homes that she visited used this chance to educate her and her peers about marriage and tell her of some good herbs they know of. The knowledge of herbs would later be used in administering medicine to her children in marriage in case of sickness. These girls gave company to their friend and sang *omusiko*[7] till they got back to her home. There, they wove baskets, sang other types of *omusiko* particularly *okutiiha muyenje*, cried together, until the day when she was taken to her new home. This was called *okurariira,* and it went on for two weeks or months sometimes. Her paternal aunt was very close to her during these days. Most of the ladies told me that,

"when your cows were brought, you could not move anywhere, not in parties or even to fetch water."

Your family had an obligation to keep you safe for your man and they were very keen to prevent any harm from happening to you. Another reason why they kept the girl at home, was because they feared she could be raped by bad people on one of these visits, yet these Banyankore treasured virginity. They therefore said that *mumurinde atariibwa empazi* (protect her so that she is not eaten by ants). This statement was metaphorical. During this period, the bride's sisters took millet to the neighbouring homes to have it grounded. Those days, there were no machines to help in the grinding the millet. Grinding stones called *orubengo* and *esiiso* were used and every family had them since millet was the staple food of Banyankore. When the days grew nigh,

[7] *Omusiko,* sing: for *emisiko* refers to slow and somber traditional Banyankore song performed by the bride days to her give away ceremony and on the D day. The songs expressed sadness and anxiety about leaving her parents and siblings and entering an unfamiliar family, often portraying marriage as a transition into an uncertain future.

whoever took millet brought back *esaano* (millet flour) and after mixing all the flour, food was made for the impending visitors. It was also in this period when the *ekishaato* of the bride was brought to her family. All my informants told me that Banyankore used to put on animal skins and the bark of the *omutooma* tree. Penina Tinkamanyire, an elder, and one of my research participants asserted that they would put together the skins of goats, called *empu,* (singular; *oruhu*)put them in the sun to dry, and then weave them together with the veins of a cow (Interview, Rushenyi, 5th January, 2026). After they were dry, the skins underwent a process of making them soft called *okunyuuka. Okunyuuka* in *Runyankore* is squeezing. She told me that most times, this process was made easier by asking boys to overstep the skins, and sometimes sticks were used to make the skins softer. When it was smooth, cow ghee was smeared all over it, and it was warmed closer to the fire to make it softer, giving it a smooth, leather-like texture. This cloth was called *ekishaato*, and it was the bridal wear of the *omugore.* The bark of the *omutooma* tree (bark-cloth fig), likewise, was made softer and it was used to cover her head as they carried her to her new home. Among the Bahima counterparts, the cow's skin was used instead of the goat's skin. Wearing animal hides and skins was the norm among the Banyankore until the time they were introduced to clothes. Some families, especially the poor ones, still made good use of *ebishaato* around the 1940s. I was told that it was only the rich who owned two or more *ebishaato.* The normal citizens owned one and these people usually had a common day for cleaning them. The *ekishaato* for the *omugore* was usually well furnished, and it looked very brand new. With work taking over, Banyankore no longer get time to exercise some resting time before they are given away. They are busy looking for money

2.11 *Okuhingira* (Giving Away The Bride)

The day before the girl was taken; her mothers brought grass called *engunga* and spread them in the compound. They sang *ebizino* (songs for women) and sat there with their daughters until the boys told them that the groom's men had arrived. Mary Rweriisa told me that the party attendants and women on the party danced *ekitaguriro*, accompanied with songs that praised the bride's beauty. Her aunties on the contrary sung songs that were very didactic. When the visitors arrived, they retreated to the room of the bride and together they sang and cried. They sang songs called *emisiko.* Meanwhile on the outside, *ebyeevugo, enjogyera,* and *ekitaguriro* were performed until around 10:00 pm. When the men from the boy's family managed to remove the

enkoni (stick), from the top middle of the hut, the girl was then brought from the house, escorted by her brothers who handed her to the other family. The two speeches called *okuragaana amahame* from the fathers of these children were made, and the entourage set off to the boy's home.

The family of the boy arrived in the afternoon most of the time, and they ate for as long as they were there, because the girl was usually taken at night. The time spent at the bride's home was characterized by continuous singing and dancing. Mwesigye Hamton said that the family of the boy danced until a stick *(enkoni)* which had been placed in the center of the house was removed (Interview, Kitunga, 3rd February, 2026). It was only then that the girl was brought out of her room, called *entarure,* taken outside to break *akati keirembo* and brought back inside the house. Here, she sat at her parents' laps as she sung and cried to her loved ones. On this day, only two speeches were made according to Rwangyezi (Interview, 13th February, 2026, Itojo). He told me that the bride's father requested that his daughter be treated with care and respect, emphasizing that she should neither be mistreated nor beaten and that, if the marriage could no longer continue, she should be returned to her family rather than being subjected to abuse. In response, the groom's father assured him that the girl would be well cared for and treated as his own daughter.

On the night of *Okuhingira,* the brothers of the bride fought so hard so that she could not be taken (Interview, 3rd February, 2026). When they managed to bring her out of her room, she was made to sit on her parents' laps and was then taken to her means of transport, which was *ekigagara* (basket). Katakara told me that

"after they put you in *ekigagara*, you would stop crying and singing. That meant that you were defeated and therefore had to concede" (Interview, Nyamitooma, 8th January, 2026). Natukwatsa told me that there were special cases when the *omugore* (bride) ran through the banana plantations, crying and wailing. Party attendants had to run after her in such cases and when they caught her, the crying had to stop (Interview, Rukanga, 29th December, 2025).

Around 1900 till around 1970, Banyankore carried the brides in a basket called *ekigagara.* Because of this mode of transport, people never got married far away from home. The carriers took turns, and these were men from the boy's family. Katakara told me that on their journey as they took the girl, the family of the boy performed *ebyeevugo* with a message of pomp

portraying their power for managing to bring the girl to their home (interview, January 8th, 2026, Nyamitooma). They went singing, playing *omukuri, enzamba, akacence* among other instruments. When they arrived at her new home, they found people who were already singing and dancing, especially her sisters-in-law, who sang songs with warning messages for this bride. These messages included but were not limited to: "*oyije noruka ebyiibo, omanye ngu weija kushweerwa, oribate nka baka'baro ai abiwashanga"*. This is translated as "you should come when you know how to make *ebyiibo* (baskets), you should know that you have come to get married, walk like your sisters-in-law whom you have found here".

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1S5Fc2j_LWB3pDv7qJiLjHYMKzKmwfcC0/view?usp=drive_link

The link also has a perfect example of a song excerpt that was sung by the sister in laws of the bride to welcome her sarcastically in the new home. The lyrics mean that "she is running to eat the millet as if she participated in the growing, just open the hole so that she can enter, may the one who is standing at the door leave the entrance because the owner is already here, may the one who is standing at the door leave the entrance because the owner is already here." The girl was then made to sit on her father-in-law's lap, and she was welcomed into the new home. Research participant A told me that the girls were usually made to sit at the father in laws lap so that they would feel whether the girl had pulled her labia or not, and if she had, how big her labia was (interview, 15th January, 2026, Rukanga). The relatives, especially uncles, cousins, and brothers to the boy, and some community members, danced till another morning. All the other people from the girl's home left and she remained behind with her paternal aunt who left on the fourth day of her stay after she was sure that the daughter had slept with the husband. All my informants at this stage emphasized the value attached to virginity. The aunt left with a black spotless goat to symbolize the purity of the girl if she was found a virgin. If she was not, the aunt was given a hollow coin or a cloth with a hole, usually the cloth where they had their first encounter from and she left an ashamed woman.

Figure 5: A photograph of *Ekigagara*



Photograph taken by the researcher during field work in Ntungamo, February, 2026

Figure 6: Photographs of *Enzamba,* and *Akacence*





Photographs taken by the researcher during field work in Ntungamo, February, 2026 akacence

Figure 7: A photograph of *Omukuri*



Photograph taken by the researcher during field work in Ntungamo, January, 2026

2.12 *Okwarama* (Resting)

Okwarama was a period of transition in the traditional Banyankore marriage process during which the newly married woman remained in her room, in her husband's home but was exempted from most household work as she adjusted to her new status and surroundings. Ancient Banyankore did not allow a new bride to do any work. She sat in a room called *ekyaari* and made baskets all the time. All my older research participants told me that the bride had a special calabash, called *enkyeka* which was filled with *obushera* (porridge). Her role was to serve whoever came by to visit her, especially friends of her husband's family, but also some visitors from her home. All the female research participants agreed that this was the time when the family of the boy observed the woman's conduct and her work ethic based off of how much she rested, her waking up time, but also her sanitation. This time took about six months, though the period was shortened from around the 1950s when work started becoming the norm. By 1993 when Namweeta got married, women could be in *ekyaari* for only a week depending on the nature of their work. (Interview, Nyamitooma, 4th January, 2026). Those that did not work could still observe a longer period of *okwarama*.

2.13 Okukoza Omumahega

Okukoza omumahega was a stage in the traditional marriage process of the Banyankore that marked the newly married woman's subtle transition into household life. Following her resting period, the family of the girl paid a visit to her new home after her *okwarama* period, and they made her touch the three stone hearth. (*okukoza omumahega*). She mingled millet for the two

families, which they ate and performed *ebyeevugo* and *ekitaguriro,* and after this, she was allowed to do some simple housework like sweeping and cooking, and she kept weaving the baskets too. On this day, the baskets that she had been weaving during *okwarama* were lined up, and she was made to kick them. This was called *okushohora.*

2.14 *Okwiiha Ahamuhanda*

Okwiiha ahamuhanda literally translated as "getting the girl off the road" refers to a traditionally Banyankore practice that marked the transition of a newly married woman from girlhood into womanhood. Jane Katakara told me that after spending some months at her husband's home, the newly married couple later paid a visit to the bride's father's home. The woman was given a hoe by her parents, which she first used to dig in her father's compound, and after this visit, she was integrated into society as a newlywed woman (interview, January 8th, 2026, Nyamitooma). This process was called *okwiiha ahamuhanda.* Additionally*,* Namweeta told me that this stage in the traditional marriage process was very important and that it is still observed today among these Banyankore (interview, January 4th, 2026, Nyamitooma). Rwangyezi told me that on this day, the brothers of the newly married woman welcomed her with great excitement, greeting her by playfully pinching her as a way of expressing their joy at seeing her again (interview, 13th February, 2026, Itojo). The boy's family took great care of the newly married woman, providing her with nutritious food and milk, because they feared that if her parents found her looking any worse than she left her home, it would suggest that she had not been properly cared for and could lead to her being taken back to her family.

CHAPTER THREE: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE MARRIAGE MUSIC OF THE BANYANKORE

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine continuity and change in the marriage music of the Banyankore in Ntungamo District, Western Uganda. I focus on the various forms of music performed during Banyankore marriage ceremonies, the contexts in which these performances occur, and the meanings attached to them by members of society. I also analyse the factors that have influenced changes in the Banyankore marriage music, as well as those that have favoured its continuities.

3.2 Forms of traditional Marriage Music among the Banyankore of Ntungamo District

Different musics are performed by the Banyankore of Ntungamo during their marriage rituals and ceremonies. This music includes: *omusiko,* which is comprised of *omusiko, akachere,* and *okutiiha muyenje, ebyevugo, enjogyera,* and *ekitaguriro*.

Jane Katakara points to a gradual transition in Banyankore marriage music from the traditional *omusiko* to popular forms of music, particularly *Twist*, from the 1960 through to the early 1990s. She recalled *Twist* as a popular form of music among young people and music lovers in her communities and associated its emergence with the influence of Congolese music (interview, January 8th, 2026, Nyamitooma). Additionally, Tinkamanyire told me that the music was commonly played from cassette recordings accompanied by couple dancing, particularly during celebrations following the formal marriage ceremonies (interview, January 15th, 2026, Rushenyi).

I found out that most of the marriage music of the Banyankore is dance music. Indeed, Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2015) notes that music and dance in African contexts are interdependent. This explains the idea that much of the Kinyankore marriage music is dance music, meaning it is always accompanied by/accompanying dance. Against this background of musical transition, this section focuses on the forms of traditional marriage music performed among the Banyankore of Ntungamo with particular attention to the musical contexts in which they are performed.

3.3 *Omusiko* Music

Omusiko is a long, sensitive narration made by the bride, embedding emotional messages about her history, her family, her life before marriage and how she is about to leave it all behind for a

new home. According to the Runyankore-Rukiga English dictionary, *omusiko* is defined as a type of cry performed by a bride when she is going to get married. During fieldwork, I found out that there were three types of *omusiko*, namely: *omusiko, okutiiha muyenje,* and *okurira akachere,* as I will explain later in this section. *Omusiko* marriage music was performed unaccompanied.

During the period preceding *okuhingyira, omusiko* was performed by the bride together with girls from her neighbourhood. The singers moved from one home to another while singing, creating a collective performance characterized by slow, smooth, and expressive vocal delivery. Upon returning to the bride's home, the singing continued as she sat with her friends in the backyard of her father's home, where the music provided an opportunity for the girls to express the emotions associated with her transition into marriage.

At this stage, they performed another type of *omusiko/akachere* called *okutiiha muyenje.* These were beautiful sounds made by the group of girls that sat with the *omugore* (bride) in the backyard. Rwangyezi told me that the girls made sounds at different intervals, which were a replica of the sound of a crested crane. This music was only performed by the bride-to-be, and her peers who were camping in the backyard of her father. (Interview, Itojo, 13th February). Additionally, Mwesigye, one of my research participants, told me that no other person was allowed there. (Interview, Kitunga, 3rd February, 2026) On the final day of taking the bride, she performed another type of *omusiko* called *okurira akachere.* All my informants said that this was real crying expressed using music.

It embedded lyrics such as:

Nagyenda, obunagyenda, tindigaruka

Naaza ow'omwiiru, omwiiru n'engwe

Omwiiru n'ekicuncu

I am going but as I go, I am moving to Omwiiru's home. Omwiiru is a leopard, he is a lion

Such lyrics were sung by the bride out of fear of moving into a family that she did not know.

Omusiko was arranged in a call and response style, with a slow and smooth delivery that allowed the singer to express her emotions freely. The music did not follow a fixed musical structure, strict time signature, or predetermined rhythmic pattern. Instead, there was flexibility in tempo and phrasing according to the singer's emotions. The bride sang what she had learned during the

wedding ceremonies of her cousins, sisters, or peers, but this time, there was real pain involved. This pain could be felt by the attendees of the event. She lamented about leaving her family behind, only to be taken to a place where she knew no one. She usually received responses from her friends and sisters, who either encouraged or discouraged her depending on the lines used in the song. She sang to all her loved ones present, seemingly soliciting their help from the impending trouble.

Research participant A sung for me a perfect example of *omusiko* as she has sung during her marriage days and it went as follows:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1tB7VXTQXEC035ocZF_ic6ZPahu8IceVn?usp=drive_link

Ei ei oraregye ei ei oisibegye ei ei ya taata ei ei yangura ei ei *Yaanaga ei ei mwiiru waabo ei ei*	*Have a good night, have a good day, oh my father! He has bought me. He has disposed me off, poor me of his kinship*

3.4 Performance Context of *Omusiko*

Omusiko was mainly performed during the *okurariira* period till the actual night of *Okuhingira* (give away ceremony). This is the time when she visited her neighbours and relatives gathering girls. When the tour was done, the singing continued at her father's home in the backyard. On the day of *okuhingyira, omusiko* became more mournful, with the bride using the music to express grief, fear and emotional attachment to her family as she prepared to leave.

Despite the fact that *omusiko* was very colourful and an important part of the Kinyankore culture, it had faced total extinction among the same people by the time this research was conducted. The review of existing literature revealed a lack of scholarly research specifically documenting *omusiko* as a form of marriage music among the Banyankore. Additionally, all the research participants referred to *omusiko* as a practice of the past, and none provided a recent account of its performance among the Banyankore.

3.5 *Ekyevugo* Music Of The Banyankore Of Ntungamo.

I define *ekyeevugo* is a boastful oral expression (art form) of the Banyankore that exhibits celebration of one's identity, lineage, achievements, or social values. According to Nahurira (2022), *Ebyeevugo* are poem-like praise songs of the Banyankore. In her dissertation, she writes that *Ebyeevugo* were originally composed by the Banyankore men and that they carried messages of praise for their cattle, harvests, clans, elders, and *Omugabe,* among others. In addition, the performance of the *ebyeevugo* was also strictly for men because it was the men who did most of the work. Men participated in wars, defended and developed their communities, and these were some of the achievements they talked about in their *ebyeevugo.*

Okwevuga is the process of performing *ekyevugo* (sing. for *ebyeevugo*). During the marriage process of the Banyankore, the first performance of *ekyevugo* was presented when the father of the boy was given a hand (*okuha engaro).* Giving a hand during marriage negotiations among these Banyankore was a sign of acceptance of the family that came to request to be born (the boy's family) into the family of the girl. When the father of the girl gave you a chance, you then presented your story using *Ekyeevugo.* Rwangyezi informed me that'

"When they give you *engaro*, the first performance is *Okwevuga. Okwevuga* is to talk about yourself. It is your Curriculum vitae. That's why *okwevuga* is usually in first person."

Ekyeevugo was performed in every stage of marriage after the *okuha engaro* ceremony as mentioned in chapter two above. The aspect of first person speaker (I), that is alluded to is still prevalent in the performance of *ebyevugo.* Below is an excerpt from one of the ebyevugo that one of my informants performed for me.

Soloit *Rurindana rutacuragana abazaana nanye*

nkagaba ndarikaine nabo

Me who waits for my peers, me who does not cry/wail,

I had already made a deal with the *abazaana* (servants)

Audience Eeeeee

During field work, I found out that in many of the communities, people perform *ekyevugo* because it is part of a presentation, whereas in the past, *ekyevugo* had to be true in all forms and it carried first-hand information of someone's achievements confirmed by society members. However, some families that are traditional still demand for it before giving away the bride during *okuhingira.*

3.5.1 Structure of *Ekyevugo*

The structure of *Ekyevugo* is majorly call and the response. The performance begins with the *omweevugi,* the lead soloist who delivers a boastful presentation highlighting his achievements, prestigious family background, abilities, or status. Following each statement by the soloist, the audience or other people attending the ceremony respond with a vocal expressing approval and agreement with what has been presented. This alternation between the soloist's call and the audiences' response continues throughout the performance, creating an interactive structure in which the audience actively participates in the performance rather than remaining passive.

The *ekyevugo* took on this shape because of the investigative nature of marriage among the Banyankore. The two families knew almost every detail about each other, and based on the fact that *okwevuga* involved delivering first-hand information which was confirmed by the community members attending the event. During the performances I observed, the audience did not respond primarily because the content of the performance reflected their personal experiences. Instead, their appreciation was largely directed towards the performer's skill and ability while the performer used the opportunity to show and boast about their skill. In all cases, the performers had been hired specifically for the occasion and performed as a professional in anticipation for payment. During my research, I observed that *Ebyevugo* are still performed today among the Banyankore during their marriage ceremonies, particularly when they present the *omugamba. Omugamba* is a symbol of the *Kinyankore* tradition among the Banyankore, both the *Batembuzi* and *Bahima.* It is a cultural tool that comprises of important household instruments and it is prepared by the family of the girl. It is given to her as they give her away to her new home. The *omwevugyi* (performer of *ekyevugo*) comes from the family of the boy as it was done in the past. In the early 1900s however, both the families participated in *okwevuga,* singing and dancing and performance was competitive.

3.5.2 Costumes And Props Used In *Ebyeevugo*

Traditionally, *ebyeevugo* were not performed in specially prepared costumes. As all my research participants agreed, the performer appeared in the clothing of the day, which was *ekishaato,* a traditional Banyankore garment made from *oruhu* (animal hide). Therefore, the costume was not specifically prepared for the performance, but formed part of the performer's ordinary attire. However, this practice has changed with the emergence of staged performances, where participation is often limited to selected performers who dress specifically for the occasion. Men commonly wear shorts with a vest or shirt and tie a piece of traditional Banyankore cloth around the arm, whereas women war replicas of traditional Banyankore attire. The same dress code was/is observed across the other forms of traditional marriage music performed among these people. This shift reflects the transition of marriage music among the Banyankore from a largely communal form of performance into a more organized and visually defined stage presentation.

3.5.3 *Empuundu* (Ululation) As Part Of The *Ekyeevugo*

Empuundu is usually performed by ladies. *Empundu,* which is ululation, was led by one lady, and all the other ladies replied a semi tone lower. As earlier discussed, women did not sit with the men in ancient Nkore but this has changed in the contemporary Ntungamo society. They had their own sitting room behind the main one. Houses were built in such a way that there were two sitting rooms, *omuryaango* (main sitting room) and *omureere* (ladies' sitting room). During important visits as this, ladies who included the mother of the girl, her aunties (both paternal and maternal), and her sisters, attended in the *omureere*. Their consent was highly sought and when they concurred with the *ekyeevugo* of the man, they would make *empuundu* and then the father of the girl would shake the hand of the father of the boy. Failure to perform *empuundu* caused some agitation because it was a signal that the mothers did not like the family. On other occasions, they would tell the girl whom the family wants to marry to walk through the men and move out, and that was the end of the marriage. *Empuundu* is still used in the traditional music of the Banyankore especially during traditional dances. Women soloists will ululate to signal a change in motif, rhythmic pattern, song, or even to end the song.

3.6 *Enjogyera* And *Ekitaguriro* Music And Dance

Another major music performed by the Banyankore during marriage ceremonies was *enjogyera* and *ekitaguriro* music and dance. *Okujogyera* means to dance (used for women), whereas *Okutagurira* means dance for men. The activity is the same, but different terms are used to describe it based on the gender of the performers. Rwangyezi told me that after *okucheta enjugano* (selecting dowry), all the other visits were preceded by *ebyevugo* and *ekitaguriro,* which were competitive (Interview, 13th February, 2026, Itojo). It was the hosting family that would start the performance and later hand over the instruments to the visiting family.

Ekitaguriro is opened by *ekyevugo.* A male soloist then ushers in the dance and the drummers join in to establish the accompanying rhythm of the dance. Towards the climax, the ladies, led by a soloist who sang *ekirembeero* would come from the *omureere* and dance with them. *Ekirembeero* was a female chorus sang during the performance of *ekitaguriro.* The ladies came in at the climax to thank the men for dancing so well. The song texts in *ebirembeero* included:

Figure 8: Transcription of an *Ekirembero* extract from an *Ekitaguriro* of the Banyankore



Thank you so much those of you that never run away from the dance floor.

It should be noted, however, that if the ladies did not join the men, the dance would still take on its name.

When a dance was started by women, it was called *Enjogyera.* If a man sang a solo in this dance, the solo was called *karengo.* The men usually joined the ladies to *okubasooma,* and they were ushered in by *karengo. Okusooma* is to dance with someone in an admiring way. If an unmarried man danced with an unmarried woman admiringly, and she responded positively, the parents of

the boy (in attendance) would start their research about the family of the girl, and they would send a *katerarume.*

During my research, I noted that *ekitaguriro* or *enjogyera* is an umbrella name for any kind of dance and dance music performed by the Banyankore. The typical form of *ekitaguriro* begins with an *ekyevugo*, which introduces the performance, followed by singing in a 5/8 time signature and subsequently a shift to 8/8, marking the progression of the dance and its accompanying music. Dances that take on this shape include; *Ruyomba, Omuhigo, oruhinda* among others. Some songs however, do not combine both time signatures. They use either of the two, the main being 8/8.

These time signatures embed drum rhythms like these consecutively:

Figure 9: Basic rhythmic patterns used in Banyankore marriage music



These dances have a basic footwork that runs in the time signature of 8/8 and 5/8. According to Mwesigwa, the performance of *ekitaguriro* was very ecstatic in the olden days, and the performers were very flexible. They would spread their arms and jump as high as the rooftop, a trait that was being lost due to a lack of intentional continuous training (Interview, 2nd February, 2026, Kitunga).

During my research, I noted that the Banyankore perform *ekitaguriro* and *enjogyera* on wedding days, which is one of the stages of a marriage ceremony in contemporary times. The aspect of performance, however, has shifted from the communal role to individualistic approaches. Katakara told me that during her young days, everything was done communally, performance inclusive. She said that every evening after supper, her elder brothers and uncles would bring pots, stage them in the *omwiriro* (sitting room), and every person present had to dance and sing

(Interview, Nyamitooma, January 8th, 2026). Namweeta made a sad comment about this same aspect of communal participation during our interview, and she said that,

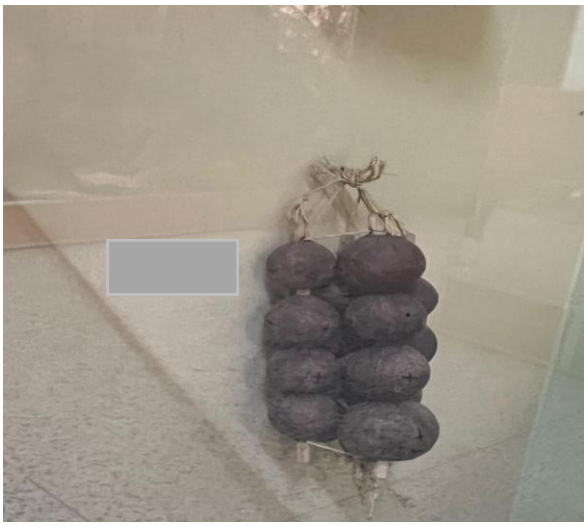
> *"it is so sad when people like us who participated in communal dances comprising our family members and neighbours are forced to sit and watch a select group that has been paid to perform on these marriage ceremonies…and they are dancing to recorded music…"*

(Interview, Nyamitooma, January 4th, 2026). What is your interpretation of this piece of information in relation to your topic?

3.7 Musical Instruments Used In *Ekitaguriro* And *Enjogyera*

Mwesigye told me that the dances were usually accompanied by a variety of instruments, the main being voice (interview, 3rd February, 2026, Kitunga). Many of my research participants told me that the common instruments used those days were pots *(enyungu*) and a flute (*omukuri*). Banyankore had different types of pots, namely, *orwaabya* (a bowl for eating, and one for preparing meat), *enkondo* (for cooking beans), *engyemeko* (used by ladies to warm water for bathing), *orunyweero* (where boiled water for drinking is kept*), and enjoga* (where *alcohol* is kept). These pots had different sizes and shapes. The Banyankore made a hybrid of *enjoga* and *orunyweero* as their main accompaniment because the former had a deeper tone, and the latter had a lighter sound because of its long neck, Katakara said (interview, 8th January, 2026, Nyamitooma). These pots were played by experts who understood the art of syncopation. The men put on *enjebajebe* (rattles) to accentuate their footwork while the ladies put on *amajugo.*

Figure 10: Photographs of *Enjebajebe* and *Amajugo*





Photographs taken by the researcher during field work 2026

Around the 1940s, drums were incorporated into the Banyankore ensemble as a more durable and practical alternative to the traditional clay pots, which, despite producing a preferred sound, were fragile, easily broken, and difficult to transport. The drums were more durable, portable, and better suited to repeated performances. There was a specific group of workers called *abaremi* who made drums. I found that these drums gradually became the main rhythmic instrument, replacing the pots and they are still used among the Banyankore. Other instruments include: horns (*amahembe*), *amajugo,* and *enzamba.*

Figure 11: Photographs of *Enjoga* and *Orunywero*



Enjoga



Photographs taken by the researcher in Ntungamo, during research 2026

3.8 Factors that have Favoured Continuities and Changes in the Marriage Music of the Banyankore

3.8.1 Education

Education has influenced the continuity and change of traditional marriage music of the Banyankore. In the late 19th and early 20th century, musical knowledge was mainly passed from older people to the younger generation through participation in everyday community life. My findings from the filed show that families formerly lived in extended homesteads where grandparents, their children and grandchildren lived close to one another. After supper, family members would gather, share beer, and participate in musical activities like *okweevuga,*

drumming, singing, and dancing. These gatherings gave children an opportunity to learn traditional marriage music through regular observation and participation. According to Ahuriire Paul, a performer of traditional music, this has changed because many children today spend much of their time at school, especially in boarding schools (interview, 31st December, 2025, Rukanga). Parents are also occupied with work and other activities and therefore, they have less time to spend with their children. As a result, children have fewer opportunities to learn traditional marriage songs and dances from elders. In some cases, people who perform in troupes only practice the music when they have been invited to perform at a particular marriage ceremony. This differs immensely from the earlier situation where music was part of everyday life and performers gained experience through continuous participation. Education has also introduced Banyankore to western approaches to music. The findings of this study show that some traditional marriage music is now performed with western-style harmonies. According to Kato Inson, a performer with Nabeeta light Entertainment, earlier Banyankore marriage music depended mainly on melody, with shorter musical phrases sometimes supporting the main melody. However, contemporary performers may add harmonies as result of exposure to formal music education. This has contributed to changes in the way traditional marriage music is arranged and performed.

Isabirye (2021) observes that music education in Uganda has for a long time given greater attention to western musical practices, while indigenous musical practices have received less attention in formal education. This helps to explain why young Banyankore who acquire most of their musical knowledge through formal education may become more familiar with western musical ideas that with the traditional ways of performing marriage music. However, education has not completely removed traditional marriage music. Educated Banyankore have also contributed to its preservation by documenting, studying and teaching traditional music. Education has therefore contributed to both continuity and change. It has reduced some opportunities for informal transmission while also providing opportunities for traditional marriage to be studied and preserved.

3.8.2 Religion

Several research participants observed that contemporary performances of traditional marriage music employ vocal techniques that differ from those traditionally used, particularly in vocal

quality and delivery. Tinkamanyire told me that the Banyankore sang their *ebirembeero* and *ebizino* in yodelling and vibrato style, yet the singing sounds plain and boring today (Interview, Rushenyi, 5th January, 2026). The introduction of Christianity, especially through Anglican and Roman Catholic worship, contributed to changes in the vocal style of Banyankore traditional marriage music. The adoption of western-influenced hymns introduced a more restrained and sustained manner of singing, which gradually influenced the performance of traditional music. Consequently, the increasing influence of hymnal vocal practice contributed to the gradual decline of these distinctive vocal techniques, resulting in to a more plain vocal delivery in contemporary performances. Natukwatsa told me that the vibrato and yodelling techniques have been gradually getting erased (Interview, Rukanga, 29th December, 2025).

Additionally, not only did embracing church music and church marriage erase the indigenous styles of performance, but it also caused a complete extinction of some marriage stages like *okuriima* and *okuha engaro*. Every marriage stage lost in this case implies some marriage music lost. *Omusiko* provides an example of a traditional marriage music form that has gradually become extinct as the marriage stages and practices with which it was traditionally associated have declined. Another profound type of marriage music that was lost completely is *omusiko* music.

Furthermore, the instrumentation of the marriage music of the Banyankore changed to suit the church marriage music. According to Tinkamanyire, major instruments for the Banyankore were pots (later drums), shakers, horns, flutes, rattles, and *amajugo*. These, however, were replaced with pianos and recorded music quite recently. A few churches, however, still use *obucence* and drums.

3.8.3 Changing marriage practices and cultural borrowing

Changes in Banyankore marriage practices have also influenced traditional marriage music. Most of my informants explained that some Banyankore marriage practices have changed as a result of borrowing from other cultural groups. Namweeta gave *okwanjura* as an example, arguing that the practice of making it a community celebration has increasingly become part of Banyankore marriage arrangements through influence from the Baganda (interview, January 4th, 2026, Nyamitooma). As explained in chapter two, marriage negotiations were largely between elders of

the bride's and groom's families. The community came in to witness the ceremony on the day of *okuhingira.* Her stand was very important because traditional marriage music is performed within particular stages and activities of marriage. When the marriage practices change, the occasions on which particular songs are performed may also change. The introduction of practices borrowed from other communities like *okwanjura* therefore creates new settings for musical performance and has also led to the adoption of new songs and styles. Songs such as *kanokooze* by Winnie Nwaagi, *sook'omunoonye* by Diplock Segawa, and other songs have become common in contemporary *okwanjura* ceremonies of the Banyankore. This has consequently changed the musical character of the marriage process, as songs associated with the newly adopted public ceremony have taken up space that was previously occupied by music performed within the more private family setting. The music has therefore shifted from an insider-oriented setting, where participation was largely limited to the two families, to a more public and outward-looking setting in which music is performed for a wider community audience. Lumbwe (2013) agrees with this argument in his study of Bemba wedding, music in Zambia, where he observes that interaction with other cultures has contributed to changes in the structure of wedding ceremonies and inevitably the musical arts performed within them. He further notes that continuity and change can occur together, as elements of earlier marriage traditions may remain while new cultural influences are incorporated into contemporary ceremonies. Similarly, Namweeta's example shows that the changing structure of Banyankore marriage ceremonies has created new spaces for musical performance and introduced new songs into the marriage process. The adoption of practices from other cultural groups therefore does not simply replace existing Banyankore traditions, rather, it creates a situation in which older and newer musical practices exist alongside one another, producing both continuity and change in Banyankore marriage music.

3.8.4 Modernisation, Technology and Social media

Modern technology has changed the way traditional marriage music of the Banyankore is performed and accessed. In the past, marriage music was mainly performed live, with singers, drummers and dancers participating directly in the ceremony. Musical knowledge was also mainly passed through direct interaction between performers and learners. I found out that traditional marriage music is now increasingly accessed through recorded music, CDs, tapes,

YouTube and social media. During all marriage ceremonies, recorded traditional music is played while people dance to it instead of having the music performed completely by live singers and instrumentalists. Ainebyoona Peter Clever, a performer, said that technology has helped in the continuity of traditional marriage music because recordings make it possible for songs to be stored and played repeatedly (interview, 31st December, 2025, Rukanga). Traditional songs can therefore reach people who may not have learnt them directly from elders. Social media platforms also make it possible for Banyankore to encounter traditional marriage music outside the physical community.

However, the increased dependence on recorded music has changed the nature of marriage music performance. Traditionally, marriage music was largely performed live, with singers and dancers responding to the particular people, occasion and environment in which the ceremony was taking place. The shift towards recorded music means that people can now simply play a prepared track rather than reproduce the music through live communal performance. Rwangyezi observed that even when traditional music is presented at contemporary weddings, it is played from recorded sources and performers dance to the music rather than produce the music themselves (interview, 13th February, 2026, Itojo). This suggests that technology does not only provide a new channel for traditional music, it changes the relationship between performers, audiences and the music itself. Participation has become more imitative and less interactive, while opportunities for learning performance skills through communal practice have declined. The recording is likely to become the primary model though which people encounter and imitate the music, replacing the live performance as the main site of learning. This represents a shift from participatory transmission to mediated transmission through already produced versions. Although the musical sound may remain accessible, the social knowledge surrounding the performance may become less fully transmitted. The issue therefore is not simply whether Banyankore marriage survives, but whether the communal relationships skills and performance practices that give the music its cultural meaning survive alongside.

Social media has intensified this process by increasing exposure to musical styles from the rest of Uganda and beyond. Through platforms such as Youtube, tiktok and other digital media, performers and audiences can easily encounter music from other communities and countries. The findings indicate that this exposure has contributed to the incorporation of external sounds,

performance styles and popular trends into Banyankore marriage music. Mwesigye observed that contemporary traditional performances may include elements associated with South African, Nigerian, Western and other musical styles (interview, 3rd February, 2026, Kitunga). Namweeta similarly identified the influence of Baganda, Nigerian music and European music, and the tendency of Banyankore to imitate musical rends from these people. She gave an example of *amapiano,* a South African music style, which has penetrated into Banyankore marriage ceremonies (interview, 4th January, 2026, Nyamitooma). These influences demonstrate that social media functions not only as an archive for Banyankore marriage music but also as a space of musical exchange and cultural negotiation. It enables the music to reach new audiences and adapt to contemporary tastes, while simultaneously making the boundaries in between Banyankore traditional music and other popular musical cultures less distinct. More importantly, modernisation has influenced not only how Banyankore marriage music is accessed, but also the type of music preferred during contemporary marriage ceremonies. The increasingly availability of popular music through television, radio, digital platforms and other technologies has exposed people to a wider range of Ugandan and international musical genres. Consequently, at many contemporary marriage ceremonies, people dance more to popular and foreign music than to Banyankore traditional marriage music as I found out. In this sense, recorded music has not simply replaced live performance, but it has also introduced alternative musical repertoires that compete seriously with traditional marriage music for space within the marriage ceremony. The music that accompanies contemporary celebrations is increasingly shaped by what is popular and widely circulated through modern media rather than only by the traditional musical practices of the Banyankore. This is what Ainebyoona talked about when he said that traditional marriage music may remain known and occasionally performed, but it is no longer necessarily the main music through which people celebrate and express themselves during marriage ceremonies (interview, 31st December, 2025, Rukanga)

3.8.5 Generational change and changing musical preferences

Generational change has also contributed to the continuities and changes observed in Banyankore traditional marriage music. Traditionally, musical knowledge was largely passed from older members of the community to younger generations through participation in everyday social and cultural activities. Young people learned by observing, listening to and performing

alongside older members of their families and communities. This form of learning created a close relationship between generations and enabled marriage songs and their performance practices to be transmitted through participation. However, changes in the social environment in which younger Banyankore grow up have created a gap between the musical experiences of older and younger generations. Young people today are increasingly exposed to formal education, popular music, technology and musical influences from outside their communities, which have contributed to different musical preferences and reduced familiarity with some traditional musical practices.

This finding is supported by Isabirye (2021), who in his study of indigenous music learning in Uganda, shows the importance of interaction between older musicians and young people in the transfer of indigenous musical knowledge and skills. His study found that meaningful, participatory learning between elderly master musicians and younger learners could strengthen cultural identity and facilitate the transfer of musical knowledge. Similarly, Keitetsi (2024), in a study of the relevance of traditional folksongs of the Banyankore to the youth in Ankole, found that traditional folk songs have become less relevant to young people, partly because the youth have limited knowledge of them. She further associates changes in the songs and their perception with education, religion and modernity. The findings of my study present that this generational gap is visible in the transmission of particular marriage music practices. For example, Katakara one of my research participants explained that performance of *omusiko* during *okuhingyira* ceremony had declined in the 1970s when she got married. She did not perform this music but had only heard about it from older relatives, particularly her mother, and aunties who performed it (interview, 8th January, 2026, Nyamitooma). This means that knowledge of the music survived among the older generation even when the actual practice was no longer being maintained by the younger generation. This also means that musical continuity does not necessarily mean continuity of performance. A musical form/song can remain known through memory and oral accounts while gradually disappearing from actual practice.

This generational difference is also reflected in the changing musical preferences of young Banyankore. While older generations were more familiar with marriage music learned through communal participation, younger people increasingly encounter music through schools, radio, television, recordings and digital platforms. As a result, popular Ugandan and foreign musical

genres are more familiar and attractive to them than traditional marriage music. This has influenced the music selected for contemporary marriage ceremonies where traditional songs are performed alongside or sometimes completely replaced by popular music. Komugisha (2019) similarly observed that traditional Ankole marriage songs have been less frequently performed, although those that continue to exist still retain cultural value. The generational gap is further demonstrated by the experiences of my research participants. Research participant A, an elderly woman, had first had knowledge of *omusiko* from performing it, and *ebizino* (songs for women) and *ebitaguriro* and from attending the weddings of her cousins, sisters, and neighbours when she was a young girl. During the interview, she was able to recall and perform the music with strong emotion. In contrast, research participants who got married in the 1970s and above, reported that they did not perform *omusiko*, but heard about it from their, mothers and aunts. These examples assert a shift from direct participation in the music to knowledge based mainly on oral accounts. This presents a serious challenge to the continuity of Banyankore marriage music because much of the knowledge is held by an ageing generation, while communal living and intergenerational interaction have greatly declined. Younger people are increasingly occupied with school, television, work, films and social media trends leaving fewer opportunities for them to learn such music from older relatives. This was also evident on myself, the researcher, who, despite being a young person from the area, had never encountered *omusiko* before undertaking this study. The findings therefore suggest that some marriage music knowledge may disappear with the passing of its elderly custodians if it is not documented and transmitted to younger generations.

3.8.6 Commercialisation and change g purpose of performance

Commercialisation has also contributed to changes in the performance, content and cultural character of the Banyankore marriage music. With this study, I found out that cultural groups are increasingly hired to perform at Banyankore marriage ceremonies alongside DJs, bands and other entertainers. In such contexts, the main expectation is often to entertain the bride, groom and guests and to create an exciting experience for the audience. Kato Inson, a performer and one of my research participants said that contemporary cultural performances are not necessarily presented in exactly the same manner as they were by the earlier generations (interview, 31st December, 2025, Rukanga). Similarly, Ahuriire Paul, a performer, indicated that performers

today may not aim to reproduce everything that was presented by Banyankore performers in the past, but instead consider what will attract and excite the audience (interview, 31st December, 2025, Rukanga). This means that payment and audience satisfaction have become important considerations in determining how cultural performances are presented. Ahuriire further explained that performers sometimes retain traditional performance styles such as *ekitaguriro* and *enjogyera* while composing new lyrics specifically for the particular ceremony. The lyrics may describe the bride, her family, clan, background, occupation or offer encouragement to the couple as it was done in the past. This shows continuity because the traditional performance style remains in use. However, commercialisation also creates pressure for performers to modify their presentation according to what clients and audiences find entertaining. The form of *ekitaguriro/enjogyera* therefore survives, but the context, content and purpose through which it is expressed have changed.

My findings further indicate that this emphasis on entertainment has affected some of the distinctive musical characteristics of Banyankore marriage music. Traditionally, the music involved specific rhythmic and performance features, including syncopated rhythms, coordinated footwork, ululation, yodeling and the use of vibrato (interview, 3rd February, 2026, Kitunga). However, most of my research participants observed that some contemporary performers give less attention to these features. The loss or weakening of such characteristics makes contemporary performances sound less deeply rooted in the musical practices associated with earlier Banyankore marriage ceremonies. Thus, performing a song in a traditional style does not necessarily mean that all the musical characteristics that previously gave the performance its cultural identity have been retained. Commercialization is also associated with changes in instrumentation and the increasing incorporation of musical elements from other cultures. Turyaheebwa Obed Kato, a performer and one of my informants said that contemporary cultural groups use instruments and musical approaches that are not traditionally associated with Banyankore marriage music. He added that performers also incorporate elements borrowed from other Ugandan and foreign musical cultures to stay in the competing category that garners gigs for themselves (interview, 31st December, 2026, Rukanga). In addition, recorded music has also been used during performances with dancers performing to a prepared track rather than producing the music collectively through live singing and instrumental performance. This works for group owners whose major concern is to save the money that would have been given to the

live performers. For performers whose primary concern is to entertain an audience, such changes may be acceptable as long they contribute to an exciting performance. Rwangyezi said that questions of whether the traditional instrumentation has been maintained, whether the correct footwork is being used, or even whether the characteristics of the traditional marriage music have been preserved have received less attention (interview, 13th February, 2926, Itojo).

The experiences of my research participants therefore reveal a tension between commercial entertainment and cultural preservation. On one hand, commercialization provides an opportunity for traditional performers to continue presenting Banyankore musical styles because cultural groups are still hired to perform a marriage ceremonies. On the other hand, the need to satisfy paying clients and contemporary audiences has encouraged performers to simplify, modify and combine traditional elements with other musical practices. As a result, some performances have retained an outward appearance of Banyankore traditional marriage music while losing particular rhythmic, vocal, instrumental and dance characteristics that were important to earlier performances. Commercialisation has therefore contributed to both continuity and change as it keeps cultural performance groups active, but it has also shifted the purpose of marriage music from transmitting and maintaining inherited cultural practices to providing entertainment and satisfying the expectations of a paying audience.

In conclusion therefore, the marriage music of the Banyankore has neither remained static nor been completely displaced. Rather, it has undergone a process of selective continuity and transformation, in which inherited musical practices continue to coexist with influences arising from changing marriage practices, social structures, education, religion, globalization, technology and media as discussed exhaustively above.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of the study on Continuity and change in the marriage music of the Banyankore in Western Uganda. It also presents the conclusions drawn from the findings and offers recommendations for the preservation and promotion of Banyankore marriage music traditions.

4.2 Summary of the findings

The study examined continuity and change in Banyankore marriage music and established that marriage music continues to play a significant role in socialisation, cultural education, identity formation, and the preservation of community values. Traditional songs performed during marriage ceremonies continue to communicate expectations concerning marriage, family responsibilities, respect, and social cohesion.

The study further established that several traditional musical elements have remained relatively unchanged. These include the use of indigenous language, which is Runyankore, in the performance of their cultural music; the performance of songs during marriage-related ceremonies; the transmission of cultural values through music; and the communal participation that characterises Banyankore marriage celebrations. Family members and community cultural custodians continue to play an important role in preserving traditional repertoires. These include: *katerarume,* aunt of the bride, fathers and mothers on both sides of the *abagore,* among others.

However, the study also revealed significant changes in Banyankore marriage music. Modern instruments, sound systems, recorded music, and contemporary music genres have increasingly replaced traditional forms of performance. Formal education, religious influences, technological advancements, changing social and cultural practices, and commercialisation have contributed substantially to these changes. Many traditional songs are now modified to suit modern audiences, while some are no longer performed during marriage ceremonies like *emisiko.*

The study additionally found that younger generations possess limited knowledge of traditional marriage songs compared to older generations. The gradual decline in intergenerational

transmission has affected the continuity of certain musical practices. Nevertheless, some cultural groups like Ndere Cultural Troope, and Nabeeta Light Entertainment Group, and families continue to preserve traditional music through cultural events, performances, and community celebrations like *okwanjura* (introduction) and *okuhingyira* (give away).

4.3 Conclusions

The study concludes that Banyankore marriage music remains an important cultural resource despite significant transformations it has undergone over time. While the functions of marriage music as a medium of cultural communication and social education continue to exist, the forms, performance contexts, and musical structures have changed considerably. The study further concludes that changes in Banyankore marriage music should not necessarily be viewed as cultural loss. Rather, it reflects the dynamic nature of culture and the community's ability to adapt to social, economic, religious, and technological environments. Nevertheless, if not balanced with deliberate efforts to preserve and promote traditional music, modernization may threaten the survival of certain traditional songs and performances.

The study also concludes that effective preservation of Banyankore marriage music requires deliberate efforts from families, educational institutions, cultural organisations, researchers, and government agencies. Without systematic documentation and transmission, valuable musical knowledge may disappear. Banyankore marriage music continues to serve as a vital repository of cultural knowledge and community identity. Although contemporary influences have transformed many aspects of performance, significant elements of traditional practice remain. Sustained efforts toward documentation, education, and cultural preservation will ensure that future generations continue to appreciate and benefit from this important aspect of Banyankore cultural heritage.

4.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made: use paragraphs not numbers.

Efforts to document and archive Banyankore marriage music should be made deliberate. Researchers, cultural institutions, and local communities should document and archive traditional Banyankore marriage songs, performance practices, and oral histories for future generations.

Cultural education should also be heightened. Traditional marriage music should be incorporated into cultural education programs in schools and community learning initiatives to strengthen cultural awareness among young people.

Community participation should be encouraged. Families and community elders should actively involve young people in traditional marriage ceremonies to facilitate the transmission of musical knowledge and cultural values.

Government agencies and cultural organisations should support cultural groups engaged in the preservation and performance of Banyankore traditional music through funding, training, and performance opportunities.

Digital media platforms should be utilised to record, preserve, and disseminate Banyankore marriage music to wider audiences while maintaining cultural authenticity.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

1. What types of marriage music are performed among the Banyankore in Ntungamo district?
2. How frequently are these marriage songs performed, on what occasions?
3. Who are the main performers of marriage music, and how are they selected?
4. What instruments are commonly used in marriage music performances?
5. How are the musical forms (rhythm, melody, and harmony) structured in traditional songs?
6. Which marriage songs or musical practices have remained unchanged over the years?
7. What aspects of performance, instrumentation, or lyrics are considered traditionally important and preserved?
8. How do elders describe the original forms of marriage music compared to current practices?
9. Are there specific songs that are passed from generation to generation without change?
10. Have there been any changes in lyrics, performance style, or instrumentation of marriage music over time?
11. How has modernisation, urbanisation, or exposure to media influenced marriage music in Ntungamo?
12. Are there new musical forms of instruments introduced into marriage ceremonies recently?
13. How have contemporary social values or religious beliefs affected the performance or content of marriage songs?
14. How is marriage music recorded, preserved, or transmitted via radio, television, social media, or recordings?
15. Do these recordings influence how music is performed live in marriage ceremonies?
16. Are there differences between music performed traditionally and music shared via media?
17. How do community members, the Banyankore in Ntungamo district, perceive the changes in marriage music over time?
18. Do younger generations value traditional songs in the same way as elders?
19. What challenges, if any, exist in maintaining traditional marriage music?

Appendix 2: Focus group discussion guide

Study title: Continuity and Change in the Marriage music of the Banyankore in Ntungamo district

1. When you think about Banyankore marriage ceremonies in the past, what comes to mind about the music, songs, and dances that accompanied them?
2. Can you tell me the different types of marriage music you remember, including the occasions or stages of marriage where they were performed?
3. What can you tell me about the people who performed this music, the instruments they used, and the ways in which they sang and danced?
4. When you compare marriage music of the past with what is performed today, what similarities and differences do you notice?
5. Can you tell me about any traditional songs, dances, instruments, or performance practices that have continued to be performed by the Banyankore? Are there any that have changed or disappeared over time?
6. As Banyankore marriage practices and ceremonies have changed, what have you observed about the changes in their music?
7. In your observation, what factors have influenced the changes in the marriage music of the Banyankore?
8. Thinking about the younger generation, what have you observed about how traditional marriage music is learned, performed, remembered, or even passed on today?
9. Looking at the changes taking place in Banyankore marriage music, what do you think has helped some practices to survive? What has contributed to others changing or disappearing, and what can be done to preserve them?